

CHAPTER 6

Deep Democracy and Innerwork

Ancient concepts of leadership included the qualities of priests, kings, queens, diviners, and politicians. For example, in the Chinese book of changes, the *I Ching*, the hexagrams frequently speak of the leader as a sage who looks toward heaven and attempts to convey this information to the people. The wise leader senses the present and the future timespirits and helps the people adjust to them.

The leader herself is a timespirit, a priestly role in a field; it is a role that no single individual should ever expect to fill sufficiently. Leadership is a group project, and all of us are necessary to fill it.

Expecting Attack

Nevertheless, we all tend to identify certain people with timespirits such as the leader role or the disturber role, and then we expect the people who fill the roles to be one-sidedly perfect or evil. A group cannot tolerate people in the leadership role who show anything but the archetypal qualities demanded of that role. We demand of our leaders that they be skilled politicians and diviners, powerful and loving at the same time. We demand nothing short of perfection from our leaders.

Thus, if you are called on to take a leadership role in a group, you should realize that that group will require you to be whole and fluid by

representing the changing process of the public. Since the group's primary identity, the "we" of the group, is projected onto the leaders, as the field changes and evolves, the idea of the leader evolves as well, and the past identity for the leadership, or the "we" timespirit, will be challenged. Wise leaders will realize this and encourage their groups to develop their own evolving leadership potential.

Even the most capable leader must be challenged, because a group that is utterly satisfied with its leader would be one in which time had stopped. A good facilitator should even hope to be attacked, especially when working in groups other than her own; otherwise, the group would not have any leaders of its own.

For instance, I once worked with an organization that had been suffering from a "cold war." They had had so many conflicts over the past twenty years that they were close to disbanding. My wife, Amy, and I sat with the entire group one evening in order to help them process their tension. As soon as everyone had assembled, the members began screaming at each other. Every time we tried to say something or make a suggestion, the middle management leaders turned on us and blasted us. After just a few minutes, I felt miserable. I was hurt and hopeless and could not even follow what the people were saying.

I went off and sat in a corner by myself and worked on myself while the others continued to fight. It is not easy to work on yourself alone with so many people around, but I managed. I could not understand their attack on me, so I took over the side of the critics in my imagination. I said to myself, "Army, shut up! We know what is right and how to do it." "I doubt that," I replied, "because if you knew what you were doing, you would know that violence is not going to help." That is just what I had failed to realize! I saw immediately that the people attacking me were potential leaders who were not doing their job very well.

Armed with this knowledge, I reentered the conflict and challenged my erstwhile attackers to show their true leadership. I challenged the most vocal critics, the middle management group, to model the kind of leadership they complained the executives lacked. Our critics now were able to do a marvelous job, in fact, and resolved the complex and long-standing problems. They solved their own problems and simultaneously demonstrated their immense leadership abilities.

Like all attackers, they were aware of the kinds of changes that needed to be made, but, also like all attackers, they were convinced that the big "bosses" needed to make these changes. When challenged and encouraged to make the changes, the attackers succeeded in solving their own problems.

Since the leader or facilitator represents a spirit in the organization, some issues a leader is attacked for may have little to do with her personal psychology. For example, if someone attacks the leader for being a tyrant, the leader should first examine herself for this problem, then ask if the tyrant is a background timespirit. She might help the group by embodying the tyrant and creating roles for a tyrant and a victim in the field. The leader should good-naturedly act like a tyrant and tell the others what to do. Embodying this role, or any role that the leader may be attacked for, is a step toward helping the whole group discover and transform its own viewpoints.

I remember once working with a schoolroom situation in which the learners were attacking the "teacher" for being a tyrant. Even when the teacher changed, the students continued their attack. At this point, I gave the tyrant a role in the group and told everyone to be quiet and settle down. Surprise! Everyone was happy. The tyrant had been insufficiently represented.

The Leader as Process Worker

Who is responsible for events in a group? The facilitator is usually given the responsibility, but she does not have sole responsibility for what happens. The entire field is responsible for the process that is happening. The leadership timespirit and everyone in the group are responsible for that process.

It seems, however, as if we place the responsibility for the world's events on our leaders and fail to realize that the course of events depends upon personal psychology, group awareness, and the global field. The best leaders can, at the most, be responsible for assisting a group in its awareness and for helping it process the evolving field and events.

The best leader may not be a leader in the conventional sense at all. A good leader is prepared to look at both her own personal psychology and the group's process as well in order to facilitate the group's process. She must take everything personally and at the same time not take everything personally. She must be able to give up her position and admit defeat and her faults, but she must also realize that she is unimportant and inconsequential to the entire development of the group. If she sees herself as too central to the organization, if she takes everything too personally, she robs the group of its own process and development.

Above all, a good facilitator realizes that the leadership position is just another role. It is a product, image, and feeling representing the group field, and it just happens to coincide, for the moment, with the facilitator's personal psychology. She understands that part of her momentary fate is to be a leader, just as other times her fate is to be a carpenter, parent, child, or disturber.

We either shy away from taking leadership because we expect ourselves to be perfect, or we are attracted to the role because of the power associated with it. Power, however, cannot ultimately be attached to the person in the leadership position; we confuse personal power with the field forces that create the leadership timespirit. A person in the leader role can only channel processes, not create them! Whenever we find ourselves scrambling to escape from the leadership role, we have identified too much with its one-sided nature.

The Leader's Unconsciousness

I learned long ago from private practice that fairness and neutrality to all parts of a group are essential leadership qualities. If I did not like something about a client, I would unwittingly try to repress my dislike. Of course, the client would sense this and eventually go elsewhere to complete his work. Now I know that disliking someone is a process that can be used constructively and usefully for the client. When I dislike something about someone, I am generally being disturbed by a part of that person that is not being used actively. If I can identify what disturbs me and then help the client have more access to that part and to use it more consciously in his interactions, my feelings change.

Objective neutrality is never completely possible. Our own psychology gets in the way and keeps us human. My first trip to the Middle East brought up my troubled relationship to my own Judaism, which I had not encountered before. I was born in 1940, at the beginning of World War II, and as a small child, I was beaten for being a Jew even before I was old enough to know what that was!

When I was four I wanted more than anything else to be an Italian Catholic like everyone around me and to grow up being as tough as the others. I managed to become a tough kid and avoided my Jewish complexes. I unconsciously became anti-Semitic, but it was not until I worked in Israel that this whole complex came out.

I had a feeling that our work in Israel would be troublesome, because even before I arrived, I was inundated with fantasies of conflict. I

worked with my fantasies as much as I could, but a feeling of fear and trepidation still remained. I had recurring fantasies of being attacked and criticized, and I assumed that these critics and attackers in me had to be integrated. I tried to understand and integrate the attackers' energies and ideas as much as possible, but I failed to realize that the attacker in me was attacking me for being anti-Semitic!

My outer work in Israel went fairly well. The seminar participants were happy and interested in our work. However, in spite of myself, I lost my neutrality. I found myself harboring resentment and discontent toward the Israelis. I secretly judged and criticized them for their brutal repression of the Palestinians. I was at war myself, without realizing it, and I, too, had become a repressor, repressing and judging the Jews as I imagined they repressed the Arabs!

Sure enough, my anti-Semitism surfaced in the midst of a group process at the seminar when the theme of the Holocaust appeared, and I made the absurd recommendation that the group discover the Nazis in themselves by acting like Nazis. The intervention was well intended, but the metaskill—that is, the way I used the intervention—was unconsciously aggressive.

Even though the seminar participants were able to use the idea and even to make personal discoveries with it, my approach was unsuccessful because behind the intervention was a secret attempt to reeducate Israel. I was unconsciously getting them back for what they were doing to others. Even more disturbing, I was upset with them because I did not want to be identified with them.

I was lucky. The group of participants was probably the most liberal and enlightened in Israel at the time. They resolved the group process because of their own wisdom and because of the help of a wonderful and wise woman who stepped forward and pulled the group together. She spoke slowly and clearly, telling us that she, too, had once been full of hatred, fire, and rage about the past. But through her own innerwork and belief in herself, she had burned up the wood for that fire and finished up her own rage. She saved the day by filling the leadership role I was incapable of filling.

Grass-Roots Leaders

I learned many lessons from this. I now know that innerwork can never be finished. I remembered how essential detachment is. I saw how neutrality is disturbed by inflation, by believing that we know better. I

thought I was wiser and knew better than the others. In the moment I believed that, I became just another timespirit in a troubled and conflicting group field. I also realized that I had repressed my own personal history and how important it is to realize our one-sidedness as well as our wholeness. If I do not admit that fate made me into being a man, a white person, an American, and a Jew, how can I also be a woman, a black person, a Christian, and a Moslem?

And finally, I learned that my own unconsciousness can be compensated for by others who are able to take responsibility for the leadership role. This realization has opened me up to the wisdom of others.

This experience resolved one of my most troubling questions. I have always been worried by the unconsciousness and ineptitude of world leaders. I have wondered how the world has continued to exist. How has the world managed to keep going, considering that there have been so few truly divine leaders? The experience in Israel showed me that humans have a divine aspect, a capacity for compassion and love and the ability, at the last moment, to fill the facilitator role. Without such spontaneous "grass-roots" leaders, this planet would have vanished long ago. Wherever such compassion occurs, we must honor it, learn from it, and praise the people who carry it.

Worldwork and Innerwork

I think of another example that illustrates the importance of being able to work on oneself in the midst of chaos. My wife, Amy, and I were working for an organization where we were living temporarily. Working for an organization and living on its property at the same time are a twenty-four-hour-a-day job, a job that requires a high degree of consciousness. It is similar to working in a foreign country at war. Living with the group with which you are working means that you cannot escape the field for a minute; you are inextricably tied up with all the timespirits and the field. There is nowhere to go to get outside the system.

One late evening at the organization, I was talking to one of the organization's managers, and, because of my fatigue, my one-sided criticisms and judgments of the organization slipped out. I acted like a wise guy and told the manager that I thought his group needed to change and be more sensitive. He nodded politely at my wise suggestions and seemed to understand my criticisms. Soon after we parted,

however, I was visited by a number of others who were hurt and upset about the conversation I had had with the manager.

I had to wake up quickly and realize that there was no privacy. A field has no boundaries. Since my criticism had been thrown back in my face, I decided to accept my own ideas as applying to me. I worked on myself and tried to take on what I had accused the organization of. I assumed that I must be insensitive. Where was I being insensitive to myself or to others? Pursuing this question allowed me to make some important discoveries that relieved my negative feelings toward the organization.

Next time the entire organization met, I was able to be much more neutral and open. In fact, I found myself feeling loving toward the group. Before I could even speak about my feelings toward them, a small group of members came forward and insisted that we all proceed more sensitively.

Everyone in the room felt better! The people in that organization taught me how human it is to project upon a client, couple, or organization that only they need to change and to assume that the facilitator is in order.

Inside and Outside in South Africa

I suppose one of the strongest lessons I learned about innerwork and detachment happened during the end of my first trip to South Africa, just before the system of apartheid was seriously and successfully challenged. As I was leaving the country to go back to Zurich, I lost my temper and got into a terrible fight with the airline personnel.

The fight began at check-in. As I was waiting for my seat assignment at the airline counter, I just could not restrain myself anymore. I belligerently asked the woman at the counter, "How can you work in a place that discriminates so terribly against blacks?" To my surprise, she listened to my provocative remarks and quietly replied that she was thinking about leaving South Africa herself. She confided to me that the airline we were traveling on had a segregation policy "for white purposes." Blacks and whites were seated in different sections.

I had remained fairly calm during the whole trip, but now I felt completely justified in my anger. Even though I had seen much worse than this segregation during my stay, I lost my cool and became furious. I went with Amy and two other friends straight to the manager.

I confronted the manager about the segregation policy, and of course he exploded back at me. I ignored the recommendations of the wise Aikido masters and was in the midst of the worst kind of battle, yang against yang, power against power. The manager yelled at me, "Who told you that we segregated?" I wanted to protect the clerk at the check-in desk, so I yelled back, "You must have a segregation policy, or else you wouldn't be so upset." He threatened me with an investigation, and, seeing that the fight was going nowhere, I simply left.

Feeling dangerously self-satisfied (it is always dangerous to win), I boarded the plane, but my rage and indignation were still present. As soon as I got on the plane, I saw that the plane was indeed segregated. Whites sat in the front, followed by the Indians, and the blacks were in the back of the plane! I discovered that, to "punish" us, the manager had decided to seat us as the only whites in the black section!

I was so furious that I decided not to ride on that airline ever again. I was still in the field of South Africa, even as I was leaving it. Even as the airplane was taking off, I could not be contained. The devil had gotten in me, and I found myself breaking a cardinal rule of air travel: do not leave your seat during takeoff.

Still acting belligerently, I left my seat for the bathroom as we were leaving the runway. An enraged steward tried to restrain me, calling me names and forcibly restraining me. Suddenly, a fully intoxicated passenger stood up and tried to throw me back into my seat. I finally sat down, steaming but pleased that I had managed to give a good hard shove to the drunken passenger before sitting down. I was fuming, but I realized that it was time to work on myself.

This time I went inside myself and worked internally on the whole problem of segregation and discrimination. I sunk into inner space, working with my own internal biases, prejudices, repression, and victimization. I found out how I had been inhibiting myself in various ways and discovered that I had not been letting myself experiment with life the way I really wanted to.

I felt better, and after a few minutes, when we were in the air, I arose again to find that the field had changed. On my way to the bathroom, the drunken passenger whom I had elbowed earlier spontaneously came up to me and apologized for being so brutal with me! I was so shocked by his sudden humility that I could only mumble an apology for elbowing him. We became friends on the spot.

Inspired by this interaction, I went over to the steward who had been so nasty to me and apologized for having gotten out of my seat during takeoff. I gently recommended to him that we both keep our

cool when serving others because we might avoid aggravating dangerous situations and better resolve emergencies. I told him I was learning about this myself. To my surprise, the man began to cry and said that he had never had anyone deal with him so sensitively before.

All of these experiences have shown me that people are not just good or evil but rather temporarily become timespirits, capable of changing when situations are processed. Innerwork is not the only response to outer injustice and to conflict. Confrontation and direct action are also necessary, but in situations where they do not work, or where they merely aggravate an already inflamed conflict, we have no choice but to work on the problem internally, to change the outer situation by changing the inner one. Working with a field means dealing with the issues wherever they appear: in groups, in our relationships, dreams, body symptoms, and fantasies. Racism, segregation, and insensitivity need to be worked with at all levels. In a relativistic universe governed by nonlocality patterns, process-oriented field work means following awareness, whether our focus is on outer or inner events.

Questions

1. What metaskills are talents of yours?
2. Which metaskills do you yet need to learn to deal with groups?
3. If one of your group projects has not gone well, what can you learn for your future work?

Exercises

1. Imagine your next potential group experience. What kind of person could possibly attack you?
2. Consider this attacker as an inner one and take his side until you can understand and feel the way he does about you.
3. Carry on an inner dialogue between the two of you until you become neutral, open to both sides or until the tension is gone.
4. Consider the possibility of talking about or replaying this attack and resolution scene at the next group meeting.