

TF 1

Unceasing movement, negativity

Unselfconscious expression or explicit assertion of unceasing change (inside and outside) as basic to human existence. Awareness of past and future in the present. Sense of negativity: what IS is always drifting toward nonbeing and transformation, and comprises hidden dimensions.

TF #1 carries a threefold emphasis:

1. on unceasing movement
2. on hidden dimensions
3. on negativity

[1] When I look at my present position which I have held for 18 years, what most strikes me is the constant change both my environment and I myself have experienced. It's as if no thing stays were it is. So, constant vigilance and reflection are required. That is hard to sustain, and most people can't keep up with such radical change.

[2] When I consider that we are always working on moving targets, plus the fact that we ourselves are also in motion developmentally, it often seems to me as if I were a swimmer working against the tide all the time. It's also obvious that the change we see is internal and external at the same time, so we are always provoked to grow along with the change, merging with it, so to speak, to hold ourselves together.

[3] People always complain about change or at least rate of change. But what is most surprising to me is that, as much as there is an emphasis on not staying in one place, to speak of change only makes sense if we simultaneously hold on to the identity of what is changing. Because if something that changes doesn't at the same time keep its identity across the change, we can't even say of it that "it" is "changing." So, the two aspects are actually related. "I am changing" means that 'I' am identical with myself across all changes, and that is the real miracle of it all.

The reader may have noticed that there is a progression in the excerpts, in that they become increasingly more emphatic about the unceasing character of movement and change. In [1], the idea is only introduced, while in [2] it is much more elaborate. Finally, in [3], the dialectical essence of unceasing motion is spelled out in expressing that "I am changing" refers to an 'I' that remains identical with itself across all changes, such that identity is based on nonidentity or change, and cannot exist outside of it.

Probing questions:

- a. What complications might arise from the fact that the situation you describe is in constant flux?
- b. What would happen if this situation changed further, as it has changed before?
- c. What is gained by assuming that this situation will remain stable?
- d. In what way is this situation determined by past events or trends foretelling the future?

TF 2

Preservative negation, inclusion of antithesis

Seeing change as the canceling, including, and transcending of what exists, leading to differentiation of events and situations through inclusion of what they exclude, and resulting in opening up hidden dimensions in conceptual space.

TF #2 captures the logic of moving from one thought to another. This motion is in three phases:

1. A base concept is stated.
2. The base concept is made more explicit, that is, related to an idea so far excluded from, outside of, apart from, or contrary to the base concept.
3. A new base concept emerges that generates a more differentiated version of the base concept, by integrating the base concept with the element(s) introduced under (2).

[1] I am presently in a situation where lots of folks think they need to criticize me and take me to task. And while this is frustrating, even painful, to experience such opposition, I am more open to such criticism than I was a year ago. So I am realizing that I have to expand the view I have of myself, to put these criticisms to rest. Without addressing them in a constructive way, I won't get anywhere.

The first speaker describes a situation of being broadly criticized by others. He asserts being taken to task by them, and expresses the painfulness (negativity) of the situation. He is stating the thesis: I am being broadly criticized. Moving to a second thought, the speaker states that it has become easier for him to be open to criticism, and furthermore, that he knows that he has to expand the view I have of myself, thereby embracing the antithesis derived from his critics. In the last sentence, the speaker fails to state a full synthesis. He only states that a synthesis of his present view of himself and others' critique needs to be constructed by him. In terms of TF #2, this is a weak use of the thought form, the synthesis step being incomplete, with the synthesis only pointed to.

[2] I structure my opinion of myself according to how my actions were reflected off other people. That is the only way you can ever find out what you are like anyway, to take what bounces off other people, add them all up, and see how they jive with how you feel about yourself, and reassess things. You can then believe that you have a somewhat objective view of yourself. In short, you have to take your opinion of yourself and jive it with that of other people, to arrive at a more objective view of reality.

The second speaker describes the way she arrives at a more objective picture of herself than she originally tends to possess.

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Speaking from a social-emotional position of S-3/4 or S-4/3, she makes clear that she feels a need to add up all that "bounces off other people" as an antithesis of her own original view of herself. In this way, she can test how others' view jives with how she feels about herself, and can then reassess herself. In the last sentence, having taken on the antithesis, she takes

the third step – that toward synthesis – declaring that you have to “take your opinion of yourself and give it with that of other people, to arrive at a more objective view of reality.” This more objective view of herself is the new reality she is seeking.

In terms of using TF #2, the speaker moves a little bit further into the third, synthesis, step of her move-in-thought than did the first speaker. She does not only announce what she will have to do to acquire a more objective view of herself. She speaks from experience of having done so, and asserts in the synthesis step that taking on the antithesis and “jiving it” with one’s own feelings about oneself is the way to arrive at a more satisfying view of who one is. For this reason, we would score the second speaker’s use of TF #2 as moderately explicit, and assign a weight of “2” to it when coding a cognitive interview.

[3] We are suffering from the problem that the previous solution has become the present problem. We thought we had found a solution to hiring staff of the highest quality, using stringent selection. But then it turned out that the entire reward system had to be revamped, because the people we hired scoffed at the ranking they received in terms of compensation. So, we had to commit ourselves to new salary levels, because otherwise we would have lost a good deal of the people we hired. This is why we are now reconsidering to hire less qualified people in some positions, not to get into that kind of quandary. And so the cycle goes on, since who knows what kind of issues the job market will confront us with in the future.

The last speaker goes directly to the gist of dialectical movement by saying that “the previous solution has become the present problem.” This does not only mean that the previous solution did not work, it implies something about solutions generally: that they tend to stop being solutions and tend to pose problems not initially foreseen. By putting it this way, the speaker implicitly endorses TF #1, unceasing change, and its cyclic character.

Continuing on, the speaker describes the solution adopted in more detail. The solution had an unforeseen consequence, in that “the entire reward system had to be revamped.” This is the antithesis of the solution, an unforeseen consequence. As the speaker describes the antithesis, it needs to be embraced to contain employee discontent, and this leads to a somewhat unwanted synthesis where his company has to commit itself to new salary levels. Because the synthesis arrived at turns out to be financially unsatisfactory, the company is now going beyond it, thereby making it into a new thesis. The thesis consists of the consideration “to hire less qualified people in some positions in order not to get into that kind of quandary” again. The speaker clearly indicates that he expects this second thesis to encounter its own antithesis depending on how the job market develops, in which case another cycle of moves-in-thought (and action) would start up.

The reader will agree that the third example embodies a full-blown, explicit usage of TF #2. Not only are all three steps described by the thought form clearly articulated, but it is also seen that due to the fact that TF #1 is fully implied, the change the solution is trying to stave off is going to continue although it is presently unknown in exactly what form.

Probing questions

- a. Is there something we might be excluding, conceptually and in terms of the real world, that would be important to include, so we have a broader picture of how this situation might develop further?
- b. What emerges when you take other, similar, situations into account?
- c. Can you discern a counter-tendency to what you have been describing?
- d. What might be the process of integrating this counter-tendency into the situation to manage the change that is occurring?

TF 3

Composition by interpenetrating opposites, correlativity

Emergence of something new through an interchange of opposites – energy or ideas. Composition of something that includes its ‘other’ as a necessary ingredient, or as “figure” vs. “ground.”

[1] Any coaching that has any quality behind it will make you understand that it is a necessary element of what you need to do, to be able to understand that different bosses have different styles in terms of what they like and dislike, and that you need to pay attention to how different executives respond. If you are reporting to somebody who is a screamer, then you have to figure out a way to counteract that. Otherwise there will be two screamers, and nothing gets done.

The first speaker addresses issues captured by TF #3 only weakly. Her notion is that what happens between a boss and a report is based on correlative energies, and that therefore, as a report, one cannot respond to one's boss in kind. What gets composed by way of strict correlation of two tempers is a dysfunctional synthesis. The implied notion is, of course, that a synthesis that works includes a true antithesis, here brought about by not screaming. But this idea is not developed very far.

[2] I think you have a feeling of the world around you and how it works, conscious or not. When there is a change and someone recognizes it, something that was unconscious will suddenly be recognized. You begin to realize that you believed something that you were not even aware of. You would never have found out that you had that view unless there was something opposing it, or a different view to contrast with it. And so you have to thank the other guy for understanding yourself better. You now realize you are propped up by something other than you, in relation to which you are functioning.

The second speaker has a slightly better grasp of what's involved in TF #3. When a change occurs in your world, and an antithesis is thus born, you suddenly realize that in assuming nothing would change, or taking something for granted, you had not realized the thesis you were asserting, thus the situation itself that you were in. Once you become aware of a change or a different opinion, you are then forced to acknowledge your view as an assertion that differs from the change that is now occurring (or the opinion that is different from your own). You owe it to the change, or to the articulation of a different opinion, that you now know what your own beliefs are. As a result, “you have to thank the other guy for understanding yourself better.”

Here, understanding oneself is seen as being composed of interpenetrating opposites. What you so far took for granted as “my belief” (without knowing it) is really part of a cultural energy field in which your belief is in opposition to other beliefs. It is only through the process of confrontation that you become aware of what you really believe in, since it is different from, if not opposed to, what others believe. In contrast to the first speaker, then, the second speaker has a more differentiated awareness of the reciprocity that characterizes different opinions.

[3] I am always struck in this organization by the correlation that prevails between people and events, but also just between people and events taken by themselves. There seems to be little that remains in place when a major event such as a change in a C-level position occurs, despite

the usual attempts to deny that there is any change going on. Although the interaction is often more pronounced in one direction than another, from the top down, new attitudes in an organization are rarely legislated from above. I've seen significant behavior change coming from below as well. For instance, my own boss recently became very much more open to dialog with me when the signals from above were more democratic, so to speak, rather than behaving in an authoritarian way as usual. So, there is a give and take of influences trickling down and trickling up, so to speak, and these energies meet and create something new that couldn't emerge otherwise and can't be rendered by linear causalities.

The third speaker can be credited with an even more acute awareness of what TF #3 captures. He says:

[3] I am always struck in this organization by the correlations that prevail between people and events, but also just between people and events taken by themselves. There seems to be little that remains in place when a major event such as a change in a C-level position occurs. Although the influence is often in one direction, from the top down, new attitudes in an organization are rarely legislated from above. I've seen significant behavior change coming from below as well. For instance, my own boss recently became very much more open to dialog with me when the signals from above were more democratic, so to speak, rather than authoritarian as usual. So, there is a give and take of influences trickling down and surging up, and these energies meet and create something new that couldn't emerge otherwise.

The speaker describes events in his organization as an outcome of separate but interpenetrating forces acting on people at different organizational echelons. Changes on one level will inevitably have an impact, and reset constellations and opinions, at a lower level. Even those changes that seem to originate "from above" are rarely strictly legislated but have some foundation in work that is done "below." As a result, middle-level managers can open up and turn democratic under the influence of executive-level policy, which then frees up energies at lower levels that so far have been stifled.

As seen from the interpretations above, there is an increasingly more accurate expression in the excerpts of the essence of TF #3.

Probing questions

- a. How does this situation come to pass considering the contradictory influences in the environment?
- b. Which of the aspects of the situation are "figure" and which are "ground"?
- c. In what way is what you are describing (A) partly or entirely owed to what is antithetical to it (non-A)?
- d. Might these events or findings be in correlation to each other?

TF 4 Patterns of interaction

Patterns of motion in interactive relationships with focus on motion.
Processes of “give and take” that negate, contradict, critique, bring about a shift in, social reality.

[1] Most people go through their daily work just doing what is assigned to them. They don't seem to notice that their jobs are defined on the basis of an interaction between what they do and what people in other parts of the company do. This is really what we call “corporate culture” but nobody ever thinks much about how constantly interactive and patterned it is.

[2] I think a lot of people find the interactive nature of work in this company rather appealing. It really means you are dead in the water if you are trying to do things on your own without getting perturbed by what others are doing. Aside from the “feel-good” aspect of collaboration, there is a deep structural necessity involved. In order to do a good job you really need to be aware of who you are interacting with, and in this sense everybody is your “client.” You will be much more effective if you are willing to respond to others' priorities and allow yourself to get changed by them.

[3] It's not easy to be open to interactions in this company. We don't have a culture that focuses on mental growth through a continuing process of mutual contribution. There is such a rigid hierarchical structure in place that the influences and energies all seem to derive from the top. It is as if processes become frozen in most people's thinking. This often bereaves people of the opportunity to act spontaneously, and follow their perception of what is needed, not only on their own level of accountability, but also at lower or higher levels. As a result, interaction between people and teams often only occurs at a local level, and movement that should have an influence upwards and downwards gets bogged down, and no real change or transformation ever seems to occur. It is as if we were moving in place all the time.

The first speaker is only pointing to the interactive character of corporate culture, whereas the second speaker elaborates it further. Most emphatic is the third speaker. Dealing with the same issue more critically than positively, he regrets the absence of an awareness of interaction and the series of changes and transformations it typically produces in a lively give and take in the flow of work.

In the last sentence, the third speaker even moves a little bit into a Context perspective, pointing to some of the structural underpinnings of the lack of interaction and spontaneity he perceives. However, this excursion into Context is not at the center of his attention. The speaker's articulation is actually much closer to TF #6, which is critical of any attempt to arrest motion, either in thought or reality:

TF 6 Critique of arresting motion
and process (reification)

Assertion of the relevance of motion, and critique of denying, hiding, or disavowing change. What exists cannot be isolated from unceasing change since it is a form, not a thing.

Contrasts: 7, 28.

The third quote is an example for the case in which two thought forms of the same class

may be candidates for scoring. While Context and Relationship are not at issue here, one might indeed argue that since TF #4 is primarily used from a critical perspective, the movement-in-thought in [3] might better be scored as exemplifying TF #6.

The reification that is commented upon does not seem to be primarily one of thought but of reality itself. However, as the speaker makes quite clear, the corporate culture s(he) is describing is rooted in the thinking that takes place and is encouraged in the organization in question. Ultimately, the absence of spontaneity is grounded in the absence, in thought, of ongoing processes of interaction.

A more forceful expression of TF #4 [3] would look like this (adapted from BB, 1981, 46):

Individuals and society clearly are in constant interaction so that what one perceives as defining an individual is largely mediated by the society the individual is in. Take the way education works. Here, the process is rather cyclical. Society works on the individual who works on society. One maintains one's sense of self and purpose through this working on [and in] society. You realize your deepest potential through this constructive reworking of the society. And you arrive at a position in which to do this through using those educative techniques which society has forced you through.

Probing questions

- a. Is there a pattern to the interaction between these two events, situations, persons, ideas?
- b. Is there a pattern of influence that you can discern?
- c. What are the shifts in energy (political or other) that are involved here?
- d. Is there a pattern to the movements for and against that you can discern?

TF 5

Active, practical nature of knowledge

Active (questing) and practical (rather than passive) character of knowledge; knowledge as always 'under construction', never absolute.

[1] We built the business by functioning as a team, stimulating a lot of debate. I like to bring myself right down into what my co-workers are doing. Everyone functions somewhat autonomously, and they all know what their mission is. And as long as we are all clear regarding the mission, I don't need be with them on a day by day basis. But there are cases where I really literally need to sit down and go through an analysis with somebody, and just provide another opinion on other ways of looking at things. I am a colleague of yours, so let me help you figure out what we are doing here.

The first speaker focuses on the interactive and practical knowledge in a rather direct way, naming team work and "sitting down with the guys" as his procedure of work. There is little indication that the speaker understands the intrinsically transformational nature of knowledge that TF #5 captures.

[2] People find it hard, I think, to make a distinction between information and knowledge. One is static, and the other is thoroughly dynamic. Knowledge is also often very personal and derives not only from an interaction with data, but with other people. It's really the fact that people interact with each other, each of them with a different kind of knowledge they bring that creates actionable knowledge. And while in most cases there is a specific paradigm behind the knowledge exchange that makes ideas similar, there is still enough conflicting movement between ideas to come up with really surprising insights at times, and these can then easily turn a long accepted paradigm on its head.

The second speaker is emphatic when it comes to distinguishing information from knowledge. In her view, the first is static, not dynamic, a sure way to remain thinking about knowledge in terms of formal logic rather than dialectic (since the latter requires one to see knowledge as under construction). By dynamic the speaker means "actionable," thus stressing the practical aspect in knowledge. In addition, she strongly includes the notion of conflict of ideas, aware that such conflict can lead to transformations of knowledge, and thus can topple long-accepted paradigms, which would start another cycle of research.

[3] We could boast a higher effectiveness here if we paid more attention to how actionable is the analytical knowledge that we are using in great quantity in our organization. This knowledge is often not very unified, and quite atomistic, so it's rather "information," not knowledge or insight. And how do you transform such information into knowledge? Only by using it, trying it out, seeing where it leads. So, the struggle is to find the pieces of knowledge that are actually actionable, and to honor the fact that those pieces alone are real knowledge. Such knowledge enables people to make changes in themselves and outside of themselves, and to produce a constant kind of growth. And that would seem to me to be what real knowledge is all about. "Strategies," for instance, are mere abstractions, abstract hypotheses, and only executing them brings them closer to knowledge of what works and what doesn't.

The third speaker is also emphatic about the contrast between knowledge and information. Information per se is not really useful since it does not lead to insight. This speaker, too, retains a rather static, instrumentalist notion of knowledge, speaking of "finding pieces of information that are actionable" in order to acquire knowledge. However, she is more of a dialectical thinker in that she understands that it enables people "to make changes in

themselves and outside of themselves, and to produce a constant kind of growth.” Rightfully, she sees strategies as mere abstractions as long as they are not implemented and used.

It would seem to fall under the discretion of the coder whether s(he) wanted to give a weight of “2” (moderate use of TF #5) or “3” (strong use of TF #5) to the last two segments.

The highest level of use of this thought form is found in the following segment (BB, 1981, 51):

I think students tend to begin, or at least they come here, with a set of abstractions that are fairly thin. One of the things I am always doing is to get them to see where these abstractions come from, what purposes they serve, the defenses and *strategies* that they may in fact be – that they are not a blueprint for the way the world is, but our *way of making sense*. If they can do that then they get some sense of complexity; they see that the structures have to be flexible and *that they are ones that we make*. I am not trying to do away with abstractions, but make them more earned, more selfconscious to students when they *apply* these abstractions.

“Earning the abstractions” is an apt way of articulating the dialectical view of knowledge, which is a transformational one. Often, not even development theory, in its use of concepts like “stage” and others, is, alas, managing to think in the spirit of TF #5.

Probing questions

- a. How could we strengthen our insight into this matter by involving others, another person, group, etc?
- b. What other ideas or new data can we bring to bear on this issue?
- c. How can we apply this theory in practice?
- d. What would a more workable theory have to account for?

TF 6

Critique of arresting motion and process (reification)

Assertion of the relevance of motion, and critique of denying, hiding, or disavowing change. What exists cannot be isolated from unceasing change since it is a form, not a thing.

This thought form presupposes all those we have discussed and draws conclusions from them. Acknowledging unceasing change and all of its consequences turns the mind to thinking *critically*. A critical thinker avoids “casting things in cement,” knowing full well that they have a history and, in most cases, a future, and that in reality we are dealing with unfolding *forms*, not things.

TF #6 emphasizes that this applies to thought as well, and that any hypostatization of an idea, which casts it as something absolute and beyond error and empirical test, is therefore counterproductive. It only limits mental space and narrows the conceptual field base concepts open up and roam in.

Examples

[1] What our executive team suffers from most is the way that its members look at their mandate as if was set in stone. The notion is that the company is structured in terms of “departments” and “divisions,” and if you take that on faith, you end up with a number of silos that do not communicate with each other. But these silos are really objectifications of processes that are company-wide. So, the real task of a good team coach is to make these guys realize that, instead of hanging on to their notion of separate responsibilities, they need to care more about what their function is relative to other “departments.” But since their reputation and pay is based on being separate, that’s very hard to do. What is worse is that the notion of “my silo” also leads to separate world views that are unshakable, where we encounter the impossibility of holding more than a single viewpoint at a time.

[2] A lot of people don’t see me as a risk taker. But this is a bland, benign environment proud of not moving, not being exciting or cosmopolitan. I don’t think I am at the leading edge of risk taking, but the company is too risk-averse for my taste. It’s not culturally diverse. It’s slow to react to changes in the marketplace. This slowness has a lot to do with the risk tolerance. While this company believes that it merely avoids trends and fads, it was actually the inability to react quickly that kept them out of trouble. But that only works for so long. The company avoided a lot of disasters by not moving, but what they see as “not moving” is actually different from moment to moment. And as president, I would change that procedure, and make people aware that we are only kidding ourselves by thinking that it is wise not to move.

[3] I think the temptation to see events as objects and isolated from each other is built into our language. The assumption there is that you have nouns and verbs, where the verbs define the changes or actions that things (nouns) undergo. And so, it becomes easy to kid yourself that by just describing things you are really capturing the essence of what defines them. In reality, it’s quite the other way around, where there are only processes, but most of them are changing so slowly that they seem to be non-existent. And language can’t really describe this movement accurately, except perhaps through poetry, since it’s not linear. I think that’s why great poetry can be so powerful. It captures tiny as well as immense movements through what’s beyond nouns and verbs, a whole different dimension And once you adopt a more “poetic” way of speaking you begin to see that disavowing change is only a lame way out of thinking hard.

All three excerpts above focus on the difficulty of avoiding making things out of processes or

forms in transformation. All point to the thinking that is behind objectification and the results of conceiving of reality as a static context rather than reality in motion. The speaker in the third excerpt sees the main cause of hypostatization in language itself, the notion that verbs are subordinate to nouns and describe what things “do,” rather than “are,” as nouns do. All speakers agree that by viewing reality as static blinds one to the change that unceasingly goes on in reality. In organizations, that leads to a kind of mental suffocation, a constriction of the mental space of work.

The first speaker is critical of conceiving of organizations as static contexts definable in terms of separate silos rather than interacting processes and functions, while the second speaker demonstrates that by not acknowledging and appreciating change, a company is threatened in its survival in the long run. Only the third speaker is more explicit about what the movement that is buried by way of objectification actually looks like, thereby taking a small step toward TF #7 that articulates embedding in Process.

Probing questions

- a. Might we be simplifying the topic by assuming we are dealing with fixed entities (aspects), rather than something undergoing unceasing change?
- b. What emerges if we look at this as a historical process, with us in the middle of it?
- c. Are we falling prey to abstractions, or “things, that blind us to the process that is actually going on?
- d. How would you trace this result to the process it emerged from?

TF 7

Embedding in process, movement

Focus on the fact that what exists is embedded in an ongoing process or motion, with the past and future as an aspect of the present.

[1] When you get out of college you are quite perturbed because the real world has evolved and just isn't what they tell you there. In fact, the college is itself part of this world but is late in recognizing that fact. You might as well come out of a monastery. You first go through a period of disenchantment with the world (rather than with yourself), and you need some time to "rebound," so to speak, to get into some kind of balance where "college" and "real world" live in some, however fragile, balance.

The first speaker sets disappointment in the real world against a background of ongoing motion indicated by the term "rebounding." Graduates' disappointment is understood by placing it in the context of the prior moment of their being college students, and a projected subsequent moment of reaching a point of equilibrium (BB, 1981, 60).

[2] For me as an anchor man, the issue is how I can report on what's happening in the world without stopping the process we are always in that never stops. How can one report about an event without just making a shallow linear causal connection to something that happened last year? That just doesn't capture the larger reaches of historical motion where the past and the future are both parts of the present. Even the term "news" is mistaken in this regard because it isolates a piece of the stream. And when we speak of being "carried by history," we neglect the single event that has its own authenticity.

The second speaker is well aware of the embedding of events in the historical flow. It is difficult for a reporter to do justice both to the flow and the authenticity and uniqueness of single events embedded in the flow.

[3] You can get a better sense of where this company stands now if you understand how it developed. We have to look at the history of the market segment we are serving [banking]. Even twenty years ago, the notion that computers could define the infrastructure of banking would have sounded ludicrous. So, banking has to be seen in the context of the digital "revolution," where what was previously a static entity hierarchically related to other entities (such as departments) now is simply an element of a larger, ongoing process. This conception of banking is not of type "if A then B," not even "if and only if A then B." What we rather need is a kind of developmental accounting of the history of banking. There are no discrete events. What we see is rather the continuation of a spasm. Cause-effects chains don't explain anything, they just describe some surface phenomenon and know nothing of disequilibrium.

The third speaker evokes historical explanation as a way of understanding what is going on in an organization. The way computers have changed banking cannot be understood in terms of linear causal explanations because it is the result of a myriad of factors both on the side of technology and of its use by human beings. The speaker emphasizes a contrast of the situation of banking with today's banking culture. "There are no discrete events" means that there are only historical moments embedded in an ongoing stream of change, and these moments cannot be adequately captured by linear causal explanations.

Probing Questions

- a. Would it be more enlightening to understand this event (situation) as part of a larger process?
- b. What is the historical or political environment this event/situation is embedded in?
- c. What have been some of the precursors of this situation or event?
- d. What consequences might this event or situation have, looked at long-term?

TF 8

Contextualization of part(s) within a whole; emphasis on part
Attention to an organized larger whole of which something is a part or element, and which forms the encompassing context of something.

1] I think as coaches, we have arrived at a turning point. There are both internal and external pressures now to change the field in a more professional direction. On the one hand, there now exists a critical mass of coaches who have gone through conventional training and find it lacking in depth, incommensurate with their practical experience. On the other hand, buyers of coaching are also dissatisfied, since no robust way of measuring coaching effectiveness has been found. So clearly, in this context, coaching cannot keep up its reputation if its practitioners don't begin to see the larger picture of the field, and move to a more integral notion of what coaching is all about. It seems to me that work on this bigger picture of coaching has barely begun.

The first speaker expresses that something is missing in contemporary coach education and practice. No exact measures of effectiveness have been formulated, and the coaching industry at large is therefore dissatisfied. Coaches themselves also find their education to be incommensurate with their practical experience, which is much broader than what they are taught in school. What is needed is a more integral notion of coaching, but what this notion is, is only pointed to by the speaker.

[2] When you begin a relationship with a client, it takes a while to begin to see the client's agenda items as pieces of a larger puzzle that is the person him- or herself. For this reason, I have adopted the practice of an elaborate "intake" where I find out as much as I can, not only about where the client "comes from," but where s(he) is in terms of maturity and therefore, where s(he) is going. And it's quite amazing how the pieces of the client's agenda begin to fall into place once you understand their function in the larger context of the client's way of sense making. Nothing is any longer an accident, but everything adds up almost as if it were an equation with a solution attached to it.

The second speaker has a clearer picture of the larger environment of the part she is dealing with, namely, individual clients. She sees the context of a client's set of goals represented by the client's developmental profile. In the speaker's mind, it is the client's developmental level from which her goals and actions ultimately derive. The speaker does not describe the larger environment of the client's goals in detail; she only refers to it.

[3] What our executive team has increasingly realized is that we can't be effective by focusing our attention on our company alone. We need to see the team as well as the company within a larger context, and that context is the competitive market. We are part of this larger environment. So when we rebuilt the team two years ago, our main purpose was to make sure that team members have a strong relationship with some segment of the world out there, and can therefore help us see our work as embedded in the global market. I don't mean this in the simple sense of best practices, where all you do is look outward, never wasting time thinking about how you are unique and different. It seems to me that acting "strategically" means precisely to go to the limits of the largest environment in which one's work as a team can be seen and conceptualized.

The third speaker expresses what TF #8 captures most successfully. For him, even the immediate company environment a team functions within is an insufficient standard for strategic planning and action. It is ultimately "the environment of the environment" that needs to be considered. For the speaker, strategy implies the largest possible environment. For this reason, he reiterates TF #8 to locate the company environment within an even larger

whole, namely the market, thus using TF #8 recursively.

In short, TF #8 says that anything your thought may touch is a part of a whole you are initially not talking about. To the extent that what you are focusing attention on exists, it is embedded in a larger whole without your knowing. You can choose to ignore this whole only at your peril. You can also explore it further, using other Context thought forms. Only in this way will you discover what it means that what you are talking about really exists, not just actually.

Probing questions

- a. How would your view of this situation/event/person change if you saw it (more objectively) in a broader context?
- b. What does this situation, event, person contribute to the larger context of which it is an element?
- c. Is this occurrence typical in the context in which it occurs?
- d. Is this situation meaningful in itself, and in what way does it reflect a larger context?

TF 9

Equilibrium of a whole; emphasis on whole

Attention to the balance of an organized whole, or the way in which it forms a Gestalt. Holistic perspective in which the parts are subordinate to the whole.

TF #9 takes a first step at grasping the nature of wholes. This thought form pays foremost attention to the Gestalt qualities of the organized whole in question. Emphasis falls on the fact that an organized whole is always in search of an equilibrium, whether by way of a move to a higher level of development or by letting parts of itself collapse or get virtualized. To grasp the balance of wholes requires taking a *holistic* view.

[1] Consulting is often seen as a process restricted to consultant and client. That suffices perhaps if you want to get a first cut at what the responsibilities of a coach are. But generally, that is a recipe for ineffectiveness. Because the consultant has to understand a whole lot more than the single client s(he) is dealing with. There is a whole universe of structural and personal relationships out there that, in some form, have to enter into consulting work. In fact, “effectiveness” is based on there being an equilibrium between the work of the consultant and the larger environment surrounding and embedding it within itself.

In these examples there is a progression in the direction of greater clarity about the nature of organized wholes. The first speaker only points to “structural and personal relationships” as crucial to the nature of the embedding whole.

[2] It’s easy to get caught up in a myopic vision of your own capabilities, where the environment in which you do your work is not seen as a potent source of your identity. In fact, it’s only by stepping back and looking at yourself from the outside that you can see how influenced you are by the environment, and how potentially different you would work and develop in an alternative setting. That is also good to realize so as to not get hooked into your present situation, and maintain the option to move out of it if need be. The environment in which you work is changing on a daily basis, and the balance of things today is not what it will be tomorrow. There are of course different ways of assessing that balance, either short-term or long-term, in terms of corporate culture or otherwise. Whatever kind of balance you might choose to focus on, you have to have some pretty clear notion of it in order to know where your work is going, and in what way you are contributing to the balance of the whole enterprise.

The second speaker enters more deeply into the different kinds of balance one needs to Consider And/Or Understand.

[3] this company constitutes the worst environment for development. It just doesn’t amount to an optimal, holistic holding environment. Our culture has, i think, truly evolved, but the equilibrium between the past and the future has been difficult to find. The sheer size and weight of the business and its impact on our revenue, on the public perception of us, has changed the way we function here. And if anything, what we are struggling with is: how do we mature as a bureaucracy that has some deep-rooted politics? This is a culture with one foot in the entrepreneurial camp, and another foot in the ideology that “we have to manage things not for growth, but for sheer size.” And to equilibrate these two sides of the business is a difficult act to pull off if you cannot take a broader view of what is actually going on. There ultimately has to be some kind of balance between these two facets of the business, and we suffer from not

achieving that balance right now. Most of us don't even realize the search for equilibrium we are engaged in.

Only the third speaker is more explicit, pointing to two facets of company equilibrium (as he sees it), that of bureaucracy and politics. The speaker vaguely refers to TF #3 (composition by interpenetrating opposites), but essentially stays with his emphasis on balance within the organizational culture that, for him, defines the whole. Its absence is therefore a definite defect of the environment as he experiences it.

Probing questions

- a. Are these facts part of a larger Gestalt that you can discern?
- b. Taking a big-picture perspective, what do these details amount to?
- c. Have we viewed this event/situation sufficiently holistically?
- d. How does this occurrence disturb the equilibrium of the situation as a whole?

TF 10

(Description of) structures, functions, layers, strata of a system

Grasping the nature of organized wholes. System descriptions in historical, functional, structural, mechanical terms, or in terms of strata and levels composing a whole. Emphasis on the complexity of what exists, and modeling such complexity. Difference between the model and what it models.

[1] To do my work effectively, I need to keep my toes in four different waters: (1) research and product development, (2) portfolio management, (3) meeting with prospective clients and maintaining the relationship, and (4) maintaining the relationship with current clients. You have to do all four I believe in my business to be successful. These tasks form a system. And the trick is, maintaining the balance. Right now, I am forced to emphasize the latter two aspects (prospective and current clients), and therefore I feel I am doing only a part of the job I ought to do, and this is not a good feeling. And all that goes together with managing the business, which is probably a fifth spoke here. And it is the first two that I want to spend more time on and integrate better, rather than being reduced to emphasizing two out of five functions that make up the enterprise as a whole.

The first speaker focuses on integration of parts in a larger whole, describing a number of functions that go together in creating an enterprise. The functions are treated as separate pieces, and the whole comes off as a sum of its parts, some of which remain favored and some of which are neglected. We gain an additive understanding of the enterprise as a whole. While limits of separation are hinted at (TF #22), the main emphasis remains within the Context class of thought forms. In focus are the partial functions. They make up a whole, although this whole is described as closed, static, not transformational.

[2] It is often hard for me to link what I do as the firm's representative outside the company, and what I do in my internal role. I struggle to see the inside and outside as parts of an integrated life, but often can do that only in my mind, not in my gut. And still, I know that in reality the two sides of my professional life are entirely inseparable. What's more, my colleagues don't have the vaguest idea of how I bring these two sides of my identity together, and tend to judge me either from one or from the other perspective. And so, I remain a mystery to them. Well, clearly, I can't afford to uphold that mystery for myself, given that the two sides are intrinsically related. Beyond the value of bringing these sides into relationship, I have been helped by thinking of the outer and inner roles as one embedded in the other. The significance of the inner role is reinforced by the fact that I can articulate it in very public circumstances, such as donations the bank makes to the community. The outer role actually builds a context in which I can become more self-aware regarding the inner role which craves integration. One is the environment in which the other is flourishing. And I guess I am looking for an even larger environment in which both the inner and outer role could be safely embedded, and I am not finding it in this company.

The second speaker has a rather interactive view of parts that happen to be roles he plays in his company, an inner and an outer role. Nobody, not even he, really understands how these two roles go together or come into balance with each other. Although the speaker has an understanding of the dialectics of the two roles – described by him in terms of mutually embedding environments – he remains focused on the two roles he is playing, trying to integrate them within himself. What the speaker is looking for is “an even larger environment” in which a bigger picture of the roles he is playing could be formed. But so far

he has been unsuccessful in trying to find such an environment in his company. As a consequence, he remains settled with two separate roles that are hard for him to bring into balance.

[3] I think that the “balanced scorecard” concept has helped us to hold a more holistic picture of this company, and link what we aim for financially to what is happening with our customers and the internal business process. We are still struggling to translate that into human capital requirements, given the fact that in the scorecard, human capital is a kind of afterthought. But while you can describe what the company does in structural terms by leaving out the human process, or minimizing its importance, a functional description of the company needs to refer to what maintains momentum, supports strategy, and complements financial arrangements. So, it’s the “balance” of the scorecard that is in question here, if by balance you really mean a kind of equilibrium, however fragile. Strategy maps are fine, but they are only hypotheses, and static causal ones at that. They do not truly describe what a company does, but only what it hopefully should do. I myself think that a better integration of human capital with company strategy is the ultimate issue, and it’s a most difficult and vexing one.

The third speaker addresses a commercial enterprise in terms of the balance between its human capital and financial and other resources. He feels that the so-called “balanced” scorecard when applied to human resources is an afterthought. The scorecard delineates separate functions that describe the enterprise but remains unbalanced from the vantage point of human capital. For this reason, the speaker finds it hard to accept that the scorecard actually defines a social system. There is a flavor of TF #17 (critique of unrelated discreet entities and of reductionism) in what the speaker says, but the neglect of common ground criticized is not made explicit by him.

Probing questions

- a. How would you describe the system as a whole in structural or compositional terms?
- c. Is there a discernable mechanism behind this jumble of events that would model what is going on?
- d. How do the elements/functions/strata you describe make up a whole?
- a. What makes the layers/functions/elements you describe function as an integrated structure?

TF 11

(Emphasis on the) hierarchical nature of structures and layers systems comprise

Grasping the nature of wholes. Description of the nature of hierarchy in systems, or lack thereof, relevance thereof. Emphasis on transcendence and inclusion of lower levels as implicit in higher ones.

This thought form continues the exploration of the nature of wholes. As shown above, hierarchical compositions have their own dialectic. They emerge as a whole seemingly incrementally, by accretion, but the layers they comprise are closely linked. They share a common ground from the start, and this makes them “layers.” However, in TF #11 these intrinsic relationships are not in focus as much as the cohesiveness of the layers that form a whole, and their dependence on each other for ascending the hierarchy and navigating the system as a whole.

There is a clear implication of a lowest and highest layer, and while they may be made of the same stuff, they are dissimilar in terms of their degree of complexity and integration. Thus, the big picture painted of any hierarchy is a static pre-figuration of a transformational system defined by shifts of balance and generative mechanisms driving what was previously located at a “lower” level toward a “higher” one. Levels may also disappear or become virtualized, causing regression or breakdown (Jaques, 1998).

[1] It is a fact that while companies today are more highly democratic, they inevitably are tied to a hierarchy of abilities and functions that together make up a whole. That’s just the nature of human nature. No amount of lip service to flat hierarchies can do away with that fact. While it may seem that distinctions between echelons have eased, they have only be virtualized and thus vanished from view, but in essence are still very much present and as effective as ever before.

The first speaker conveys that all talk about flat hierarchies is essentially ideological since companies could not function if they were not built on a natural hierarchy of levels of human capability and associated levels of work complexity. He sees through the veneer of flat structures supposedly defining contemporary organizations.

[2] In describing Stratum-V Role Complexity, E. Jaques says (1998, 69): “Here we move into one of the most interesting and important of all orders of [mental] complexity. It is the level at which human beings construct unified whole systems. It is the first level of operation where the full-scale business unit needs to be located. By unified whole system I mean a true system as assumed in systems theory, that is to say, a system intact and complete in itself and operating in an unbounded environment.”

The second speaker/writer clearly states that when accessing Stratum V, we not only go to another level but a new Order of Complexity. He makes a distinction between “level” (or Stratum) and “order,” implying that the first is a subdivision of the latter. (In Jaques’ thinking, as in this book, Strata I to IV belong to the Second Order of mental complexity, while Strata V to VIII belong to the Third Order.) Engaging one’s capability on this “most interesting and important of all orders of complexity” (Jaques, 1998, 69) presupposes the ability to construct unified whole systems, which is lacking on lower Strata. However, he does not explore the dynamics of this move from the lower to the higher order of complexity in any detail. He simply describes what moving up a Stratum entails in terms of cognitive development.

[3] People these days have a chip on their shoulder when it comes to thinking of organizations and public institutions in terms of a hierarchy of structures or functions. They are misled by the notion that hierarchy is “authoritarian.” But looking at levels of cognitive development, for instance, everybody can see for himself that not only are there definite differences between people’s thinking and grasp of reality, but there ought to be differences in the jobs that they do in terms of levels of accountability. For instance, a janitor does not need the kind of education that is imperative for an executive Vice President or CEO. Although we don’t really understand too well how one proceeds from one level of thinking to another, the “flavor” of a higher organizational echelon compared to a lower one is palpable. I think this has to do with the fact that there are different kinds of work requiring different ways of knowing. There ultimately is a clear sense of what separates one echelon from another, and one just can’t jump to a higher level by skipping another one as sometimes happens in school.

Like the first speaker, the third speaker is critical of the de-stratification of organizational systems. He points out that people tend to misunderstand the true nature of hierarchies by assuming that everybody is functioning on the same level of adult development. There is a hint of TF #26 regarding the coordination of systems, in this case of the capability and accountability architectures that structurally define a company, but this hint is not further developed. As a result, we are left with a rather static description of the hierarchy in question.

Probing questions

- a. In what way do these functions or strata pre-suppose each other?
- b. What is required to move from one stratum to another?
- c. What could happen if one jumped over one of the functions or partitions?
- d. Can one judge each of these strata by itself or only from viewing the entire system they form?

TF 12

Stability of system functioning

Grasping the nature of wholes. Describing or explaining the smooth functioning of a system with focus on its stability and on what makes it possible.

This thought form specifically focuses on understanding the nature of organized wholes other than intellectual systems, in particular the stability of functioning such wholes may achieve. Stability cannot be taken for granted since many processes occurring within a system work against stability, especially those processes that interfere with the functioning of parts of the system. This may ultimately destroy the balance which alone keeps the parts of the system functioning in association with each other, thus keeping the system stable.

The focus in TF #12 is thus on describing stability in terms of notions such as *harmony* and *disturbance* when articulating either the system's relationship to its parts or to other systems that form its context. Accordingly, one can view TF #12 as an emphatic realization of TF #9 which addresses balance or equilibrium under the notion of stability, thereby operationalizing the term *balance*.

"Stability" is a term inseparable from its opposite or antithesis, namely, "instability," which is in focus in TF #22. While instability is seen in the Table of Thought Forms as a systemic thought form, stability as articulated by TF #12 is not. Why? Because stability is a surface phenomenon that is more seeming than real. It is an abstraction from an organized whole that is unceasingly changing, and when "hypostatized" becomes a piece of ideology. This ideological veneer of stability can only be removed by spelling out what actually makes it what it seems to be.

In TF #12, then, we are focusing on a "good-weather" view of a system, keeping its internal dialectic in the sense of TF #22 under wraps. We are curtailing the dialectic to get a good view of the positive side of a system, and restrict the dynamics of dialectic to what brings about the stability the systems seems to have. This is one way of sizing up organized wholes, although a limited one. To do so is perfectly acceptable in dialectical thinking because without stability there is no instability either. The two are intertwined, and one or the other may prevail in a particular description.

[1] Coaches are typically expected to change people's behavior, as if that was a mere matter of "character traits." That's pretty naïve considering that traits are deposits of lifelong processes interacting with the environment. They have their own intrinsic logic. So what the coach is dealing with, really, is shifting clients' inner as well as outer equilibrium from one developmental state to another. And since developmental shifts occur over longer times than do behavioral changes, the focus in behavioral coaching is actually more on stability than change, despite all talk to the contrary. As a result, the nature of change is not really understood in depth. That's why most coaching is remedial, and only some coaching has any clear developmental direction, in my view. "Let there be smooth functioning leaving the status quo intact" is really the underlying idea.

The first speaker points to remedial interventions for the sake of stability rather than change as a major goal of coaching. She thinks that behavioral and developmental stability are different since they occur in different time domains, one momentary and transitory, the other longitudinal. She also thinks that coaches and those who buy coaching services have illusions regarding coaches' ability to change people. Behavioral traits have a long life and can only be smoothed based on developmental insight, but not essentially changed.

[2] When you think of what keeps a person together through all the ups and downs of a lifetime, it's really pretty miraculous. It seems to be predominantly a matter of balancing opposites, from "body" to "mind" to "inner" and "outer." And often what you would think could have been somebody's downfall emerges, in retrospect, as having mightily increased the equilibrium that

seemed at first destroyed. So, how can any science successfully explain the stability of such an integrated whole as a “person”? But stability is what we see, whether we can explain it or not.

The second speaker is in awe regarding the ability of a person to preserve his or her identity despite the changes that occur in a person over a lifespan. While there is a touch of TF #3 (composition by interpenetrating opposites) in her comments, the emphasis remains in the domain of Context. She points out also, with a reference to TF #2 (inclusion of antithesis), that the negativity of a downfall is often experienced as an extra challenge that propels a person to higher levels of equilibrium and mental growth. While the speaker is highly sensitive to Process, her emphasis remains within the domain of Context.

[3] We have seen a lot of effort made to persuade us that economies follow “the law of the market,” as if those laws could be set aside as the sole arbiter of capitalistic systems. It seems to me that what accounts for harmony or disturbance in markets can in no way be reduced to simple causal laws. The economy is an organized whole with many interweaving parts, not only nationally but globally. Therefore the smooth functioning of markets has become much more complex. Efforts to maintain stability in international markets now must take into account demographic shifts, cultural differences, and also how technological processes and inventions interact with purely commercial ones. Not to speak of national policy. So, stability is a very relative term.

The third speaker thinks of international markets as an organized whole whose stability is relative and difficult to fathom. Although there is a touch of TF #22 (limits of stability of systems) in her comments, she remains contextually focused on what it takes to maintain stability. Her emphasis is on the big picture of national markets, especially the need to understand how stability can be safeguarded.

Probing questions

- a. What accounts for the seeming stability of this situation?
- b. What makes these elements function together so harmoniously?
- c. Is the harmony of the situation pre-ordained? If not, what upholds it?
- d. Is this situation typical for the system when stable?

TF 13

Intellectual systems: frames of reference, traditions, ideologies

Grasping the nature of wholes. Describing the larger philosophical or ideological environment and context of assumptions, ideas, principles, paradigms.

TFs #13 and #14 share a common ground. Both apply the notion of an organized whole to ideas. They emphasize that ideas are always related to a context, thus to other ideas, thereby applying to them TFs #10-12. While this is true for things that are not “thought things,” contextual wholeness takes a special form when it comes to ideas. Thought things are historical, implying Process and Relationship in more obvious forms than inert things or even social situations. They shadow such situations but also have a life of their own independent of what brings them into being. See the history of philosophy or mythology. Typically, the emphasis in TF #13 is on a single frame of reference in relation to the historical or intellectual context that gives rise to it or explains it, not the multiplicity of frames of reference in existence. This thought form thus creates a demand to locate ideas, sets of assumptions, ideologies, theories, etc., in the context of a larger tradition, for the purpose of describing that tradition as an organized whole in structural, functional, and terms of equilibrium, and further as the appropriate unit of analysis for the single frame of reference foremost in view.

[1] [Adapted from BB, 1981, 71.] You can't talk about adequacy of a conception unless you have a frame of reference in which to talk about it. By linking yourself to an intellectual tradition, you can explore your conception further and can also justify it, at least to some degree. The position you wish to take has been taken before, and there is some continuity between your assumptions and those made previously. This allows you to build position and justify a point of view.

The first speaker asserts that conceiving of anything at all brings one into the orbit of intellectual traditions, whether one wants it or not. There is no way to justify or elaborate an intellectual conception without referring to some tradition. Doing so also allows one to “build a position” and benefit from the continuity of viewpoints over historical time.

[2] I don't think we can talk about strategy without referring to our competition. Strategy is not simply about what we want to do, but how what we want to do makes sense in a larger context, say, of approaches followed by our competition. So when we define strategy in this organization, we can't just look at the bottom line. Rather, we realize that strategies are hypotheses, that they define the perspective we have on what is shareholder value. To realize such a strategy, we have to build a position, a kind of structure that makes our position acceptable, consistent, and reasonable. Our strategy is no better than its critical ingredients regarding the larger frame of reference defined by our competition.

The second speaker focuses on the intellectual context that hypotheses called strategies derive from. Conceptions of organizational strategy are by definition contextualized in a frame of reference of competitors' strategies a company's internal consultants are eager to decipher (as if it were some static template one could simply adopt). The speaker emphasizes that to introduce and maintain a strategy, a company has to build a position, a “structure that makes your position acceptable.” A company cannot just adopt a view of shareholders but must realize that its conception of them, and strategy regarding them, is bound to a plurality of possible wholes, in this case, strategic positions adopted by other companies (BB, 1981, 71). In short, strategy is not a thing. It references a structural whole, that constituted by competitors' approaches.

[3] As we design an executive development program, we need to be clear about what we adopt as our conceptual framework. We can either adopt a behavioral position in terms of which learning is a quasi linear process where accumulation of experience leads to better performance, somehow. Or we can embrace the more ambitious and sophisticated vantage point saying that work capability is really a matter of mental growth as manifest in a person's thinking, feeling, and social relating. In the latter case, our program can actually complement the more behavioral educational approaches that abound, and achieve some kind of integration of both approaches in a larger whole.

The third speaker describes an organizational development program as requiring the integration of two complementary perspectives that can structure it. He is pointing to two different intellectual traditions, that of learning research and adult-developmental research, both of which affect notions of executive development. The speaker asserts that policies supporting executive development ought to be cognizant of both traditions, and if possible integrate them. Accordingly, his frame of reference is a dualistic one, and his goal is to overcome the initial dualism between two frames of reference by searching for their common ground. This common ground is, however, "only an idea," and thus Relationship is not in focus.

Probing questions

- a. What exploratory intellectual framework is appropriate for understanding this situation or event?
- b. How does this assumption derive from the conceptual framework you have referred to?
- c. What ideological framework does this assertion reinforce?
- d. Does the larger conceptual framework you mention guarantee the validity of this step?

TF 14

Multiplicity of contexts (nontransformational)

Simultaneous attention to a variety of contexts or dimensions in which events, situations, individuals are embedded [without stressing their relationship or transformation].

While TF #13 points to intellectual frameworks as the basis of specific ideas, theories, and assumptions, thinkers using TF #14 pay attention to more than a single intellectual context at one and the same time. They focus on the fact that ideas, theories, sets of hypotheses (such as strategies) are *relative to* more than a single intellectual context. While this is also a critical thought in the sense of TFs #6 and #7, it is foremost a constructive thought since it refers to intellectual artifacts as organized wholes. TF #14 *takes a spectator view of knowledge* (as people do in the Second Order of Mental Complexity), surveying ideological edifices and bringing them together in order to build and justify a position in a subtle rather than crude way.

[1] The coaching experience is different for every single person. You are dealing with personalities who are reacting and doing things in very different ways, and also have flaws and deficiencies that are quite unique. They are furthermore at different stages of development and are part of different corporate cultures. So there isn't just one perspective or set of criteria to understand and use in coaching. There are many perspectives, and they are relative to each other since they all share a common denominator, the coaching community.

The first speaker asserts that participants in coaching are a highly varied group. The organized whole called "coaching community" is differentiated in a number of ways. There is a multiplicity of contexts one has to consider in judging this community, e.g., by paying attention to the differing levels of adult development of coaches. The contexts referred to by the speaker are not individually named, however.

[2] The facts change, and sometimes the facts are not quite as hard as they may be in a scientific discipline where you enumerate and quantify. So that in general society, facts might be more subjective observations, where you might just witness an event and draw conclusions, but the event itself may be open to much different lines of interpretation. So, you need to be aware that an observation can have or can lead to more than one conclusion, depending on your frame of reference. So what we call "facts" are really interpretations that are inseparable from the frame of reference adopted.

The second speaker points to the multitude of interpretations that can be applied to facts. Facts are human artifacts that do not speak for themselves. One and the same fact and observation can lead to multiple conclusions because it is part of an organized whole comprising many facets. Again, no specific examples are given.

[3] I am entrusted with confidence to exercise judgment about where we should and shouldn't play a role, what role that should be, what risks are prudent to take, and where we should take a stand. There is a great deal of judgment and subtlety involved in that. It gives rise to conditional, situational authority. Unlike somebody who might run a business and is governed by a bottom line, there are many other stakeholders and points of accountability in the world that I dwell in. The authority I have is highly dependent upon trust, confidence, and it's a job that you earn every day. It's a tricky place to be. And I usually ask for forgiveness rather than permission.

The third speaker characterizes the position he holds as requiring a great deal of judgment and subtlety. There are many stakeholders and aspects of accountability in the world he works in. These contexts are relative to each other, forming part of an organized whole, namely, the organization he works for and, more broadly, the community in which it is embedded and to which he represents his organization.

Probing questions

- a. What are the different contexts that play a role in this event or situation?
- b. Is the context we are considering here perhaps too narrow to render a good explanation of what is going on?
- c. Can you describe what this action step would look like in another (cultural) context?
- d. What do these different contexts have in common?

TF 15 Limits of separation.

Focus on existence and value of relationship.

Assertion of the existence of relationship(s), pointing to common ground and the difficulty of separating things from each other beyond certain limits.

[1] We had a meeting of the Board two days ago on how to define this year's strategy. I was taken aback by the one-sidedness of the discussion which tended to be all about technology and company branding, with not too much attention paid to how effective is our internal business process and the contribution of the workforce. I openly lamented the one-sidedness, saying that there are limits to what you can separate out in a discussion of strategy. Obviously to me, you need to acknowledge the relative contribution of as many factors as you can muster. In particular, separating strategy from issues of human capital is a real mistake, since how the company plans ahead regarding the workforce should be an integral part of strategy. So, I was glad that I could rely on my HR Director to support me in this.

The first speaker laments the one-sidedness of discussions of strategy in which only a limited number of factors is ever considered, and then not truly in their relationship to each other. For him, "strategy" references a totality including all competitive approaches that come to be known.

[2] I have heard for a long time that coaching is coming out of the North American self-help movement, and that it is quite different, therefore, from psychology. Because psychology is based in empirical research, and coaching so far has not been. But recently there have been voices asking whether coaching does not need to develop further in the direction of using "evidence" rather than just intuition, or intuition disguised as "best practices." And I think that notion is well taken since coaching after all uses many of the processes and tools used by a psychologist, although in a much less developed and systematic way. And I think coaches could only benefit from paying more attention to this relationship and, what is more, learn more from psychology, both in theory and practice.

The second speaker is more emphatic when he points to an intrinsic relationship between coaching and psychology, two disciplines intrinsically related but not truly integrated at this time.

[3] I tend to have very quick, visceral reactions to things, and coaching has helped me to step back and have a look at what's before me, and not necessarily act so quickly. Because what happens when you react is that you lose track of connections, links, and relationships. Acting emotionally is like cutting the Gordian knot. So, I have become much more circumspect with things, more aware of what I am leaving out of consideration when just forging ahead. Rather than saying: "What you propose does not work for me," I now ask: "Why does somebody think this way?" What is this opinion or decision linked to, and what may be the politics behind it? In short, I am making an effort of bringing what has been said or seen into relationship with my own goals and values, and so I end up with a much richer picture of what is going on.

The third speaker exemplifies what it means to think in terms of Relationship. He points to the experiential and conceptual richness gained by taking relationships into account, thus indirectly asserting their value.

Probing questions

- a. Do we separate this fact, event, or situation from others at our peril?
- b. What new insights do we gain when we begin to link these seemingly separate situations, events, or theories?
- c. Is there a different side to this thought or situation that we have been failing to see?
- d. Are these events really as unrelated as they seem to be?

TF 16

Value of bringing into relationship

Assertion of the value of seeing a relationship between things or forms otherwise seen as separate and unrelated.

The emphasis in these two thought forms lies on the speaker's awareness that what exists is part of an encompassing totality and therefore is both separate and inseparable from what it co-exists with. In TF #15, this awareness is still vague, while in TF #16 the notion of totality, thus of Common Ground, is more emphatically asserted. In TF #16, the speaker also proceeds to demonstrating what is gained when making the totality of things appear. One can draw attention to relationships by asserting limits of separating two or more things or, alternatively, by asserting the value of bringing things into relationship. The difference between TF #15 and #16 is thus a slight one. **The first is reflective, the second demonstrative.**

[1] You asked me what has changed in my thinking compared to ten years ago. That's an interesting question. I could name many things but what stands out for me is that I am much more aware of the relationship in this company between its different work areas such as research, product development, marketing, human resources, and sales. The real issue is that you can't really develop one without the other, and to keep that in mind while you work on priorities is the real art of leading a company. I am now actively engaged in bringing about better thinking about how to strengthen the relationships between the silos in this company.

The first speaker points to the value of seeing relationships between divisions of his company, previously perceived as more or less separate.

[2] I have noticed in discussion with my peers that there is a link between seeing things holistically and seeing them as related. When you step out of your little shell and make an effort to gauge your own location in the larger context, you discover, above all, relationships. For instance, as Director of Marketing of a multinational company, how could I not be struck by the differences between managers' cultural background, and by the relationship of that background to how they see the company as a whole? And, increasingly, I am adopting a multicultural attitude in my quarterly meetings on different continents that has greatly helped me see where my colleagues are coming from, and why they think the way they do. I am also creating a communication vehicle for them to meet more often independently of our yearly meetings. It's clear that there is a lot of value in bringing different perspectives on company matters together.

The second speaker is emphatic about bringing relationship thinking to bear on how his company is managed, for instance, by way of more frequent meetings that enhance strategic thinking.

[3] When speaking about how to develop our staff, I am encountering a clash of opinions that all have to do with how different people look at what is a "human being." A few of my C-level colleagues seem to see people as nothing but skill sets, or bundles of competencies – let's say "input/output machines." Others are more aware that people have a potential waiting to be developed, although they may find that potential difficult to assess. What I see is that there is a clear relationship between skill sets and potential. I mean that, depending on somebody's potential, the person displays different skills and competences. And so, we need to do some research as to what is this relationship, so we can enhance skill sets by promoting potential as a trigger of making them manifest. But not many people here see the value in doing so.

The third speaker sees a close relationship between skill set and developmental potential without asserting the latter's constitutive power.

Probing questions

- a. How is what you are trying to do in these circumstances related to similar efforts in your environment?
- b. Would it be helpful to think about how this relates to X?
- c. What is the common ground between X and Y?
- d. Would this decision have an ever-greater impact if you were to relate it to decisions made in other parts of the organization?

TF 17

TF #17 critiques reductionism and de-totalization (negation of Common Ground) of any form.

Critique of reductionism and de-totalized, thus isolated, entities separated from their shared common ground

Critique of de-totalizing reality by neglecting relationships between opinions, assumptions, ideas, leading to a reduction of complexity, to overlooking underlying shared frameworks, thus common ground. Critique of absence of holistic thinking.

[1] Before the coaching began, I was ready to leave. I hated my job. I did not get along with the President. He wanted to keep me, but he was also very frustrated with me. Because I acted out, sometimes not totally inappropriately, but I was acting out in a way a managing partner shouldn't. I became territorial about things that were not important. I was not looking at the big picture, the corporate picture. I was looking at things from my perspective, as to what is good for me, for my team, as opposed to what's good for the organization. And once I understood that, I became much more effective. I understand now that my viewpoint was based on quite subjective interpretations and on setting my own standards nobody could share. My subjective perspective was running amok, and I lost sight of how it relates to others' perspective and the larger context I work in.

The first speaker asserts that subjective judgments based on unawareness of their relatedness to other judgments are unrealistic and ineffective. This is a critique of pluralism, the notion that evaluations are discrete entities unrelated to each other.

[2] There is this notion that everybody is entitled to his or her viewpoint, and that's taken to be a "democratic" principle. God help us! I think this notion neglects the fact that if we let go of the idea of the inter-subjective validity of opinions and their relationship, we are badly misconstruing the cultural commonalities we share. In our public discourse, we can't just replace that kind of validity as used in science with an aggregate of diverse opinions. Typically, there are a lot of common assumptions embedded in seemingly diverse opinions, and we need to ask what they are. We also need to become aware of the historical root of these silent agreements we are all making, but that's another point.

The second speaker is critical of misconstruing the notion of democracy on subjectivist grounds, such that the individual is taken to be the ultimate source of sound judgment, truth and legitimacy. He thereby critiques the basis of the pluralist position.

[3] I think we need a better perspective on what is an individual's right in a democracy. Our brand of democracy is just too individualistic to be exported elsewhere, or even to do much good in our own country. What on the surface is a different opinion, is often linked to opposing opinions grounded in the same deeply buried assumptions, only that it is interpreted differently in different cases. Take for instance the way we view criminal cases. We don't typically approach them seeing the link that binds crime to the environment in which it is carried out. I don't mean to take away the responsibility of the individual. However, if we hope to ever reduce the crime rate, we can't just follow this subjectivist notion of responsibility. We need to acknowledge, rather, the responsibility of the larger community for making certain abuses less than worthwhile. We need to think of crime in terms of community, not simply isolated individuals.

The third speaker not only critiques individualistic notions of crime but gives reasons for why responsibility for crime is a matter of the community, not of isolated individuals. For him, thinking about crime as brought about by isolated individuals is a flat denial of communal responsibility, thus of Common Ground.

Probing questions

- a. Is X really the isolated entity that you are treating it as being?
- b. Does not the multiplicity of different views point to a hidden commonality?
- c. Are we not here reducing the complexity of the situation too much, by isolating what really exists in relationship?
- d. What is the common denominator of all these seemingly different opinions (theories)?

TF 18

Relatedness of different value and judgment systems

Assertion of the relatedness of seemingly different, even opposed, values, judgments, ideas, principles, stressing cultural commonalities.

TF #18 points out that when Relationships is denied, inter-subjectively valid judgments – judgments that have validity beyond a single individual – cannot be made (BB, 1981, 77).

While TF #17 is critical of neglecting or denying the shared ground common to different evaluations, TF #18 positively points to the relatedness of evaluations of the social world in the form of judgments of its individual members. Speakers using this thought form:

- see commonalities between outwardly different value systems;
- point out that subjective beliefs cannot be “bottled up” in discrete individuals;
- see opinions in the context of pervasive judgment systems, pointing out patterns of evaluation; and
- link isolated opinions and judgments to a broader historical, cultural, or developmental context.

[1] In this age of relativism, you get the feeling that “everything goes” as far as individual behaviors are concerned. But really that amounts to denying that we are a community in which safeguarding everybody’s safety and dignity carries a high value. Just tolerating others’ differences is not enough. We need to acknowledge common denominators as guides for everybody’s behavior, and go beyond the notion of society as an aggregate of separate individuals. However different individuals’ opinions may be, they certainly share common values, and these should be more strongly seen and acknowledged than is typically the case.

The first speaker pleads for a stronger acknowledgement of the commonality embodied by different opinions. Respecting others’ opinions is not enough. One needs to focus on the judgment system they articulate as an organized whole shared by outwardly different opinions. These opinions are related to each other and make no sense when separated from each other. Opposition parties are possible only based on the common ground of a shared culture.

[2] I am quite critical of many of my peers whenever they come to decisions that I would call onesided or unilateral. I find that we typically all have a hard time taking multiple aspects of a topic into account, and seeing the relatedness of outwardly different opinions. Not only that, we are typically not very astute in seeing how exactly the different aspects, say of developing our company’s market, are related. When you only look for short-term fixes, these multiple aspects easily elude you, and you end up with a very one-sided strategy.

The second speaker emphasizes that topics of discussion and debate often seem “difficult” because they fail to do justice to the multiple aspects of a situation or issue. He thinks that this has much to do with the short-term, quick-fix perspective held by members of his organization.

[3] In our human resources meetings, I see the rush to surveys as if surveys could give an answer to the question of how we should proceed in our workforce development efforts. But surveys are really a very atomistic tool where you sum data points that are specific to potentially vastly different needs and capabilities of people. Two people may have the same opinion for

very different reasons, just as a particular piece of data can carry wildly different interpretations. So you can't just go "by the numbers," but must take the implicit qualitative differences between respondents into account. And that requires a different, more qualitative, kind of research than mere surveys typically lead to.

The third speaker critiques workforce surveys based on quantitative research. He sees greater value in qualitative approaches because they seem to be more suited to clarifying the qualitative differences between people's needs and capabilities. Since in contrast to quantitative studies they don't reduce individual opinions to a mere data point, qualitative studies give more ample insight into the development needs of a workforce as a whole.

Probing questions

- a. Are these value systems, opposing at first, really as different as they seem, given that they are part of the same social context?
- b. Are not the assumptions made in this opposing judgment very similar to your own?
- c. While these parties (points of view) seem different, even opposing, in the present historical context, is it not true that they were closely related in the past?
- d. What might be the common cultural denominator of these opinions or principles?

TF 19

Structural aspects of relationship

Focusing on what is the formal structure of a relationship (or relationships) in order to locate the essence of how things are related.

A speaker using TF #19:

- describes a specific relationship in detail;
- describes a system by pointing to relationships that make its continuing existence possible;
- points to relationships between figure and ground; and
- describes something as going “both ways.”

With the next two thought forms we move into describing relationships in greater detail, whether in structural terms (TF #19) or in terms of patterns of interaction characterizing relationships (TF #20). Both of them focus on the *interactive* aspect of relationship, describing the parties to a relationship as acting upon each other (without emphasizing Process). Clearly, this is similar to, but different from, TFs #3 and #4 since the latter deal with interaction from the point of view of *processes* involved. Thus, while TFs #19 and 20 focus on relationships, TFs #3-4 describe patterns of motion.

[1] I recently had a talk with my boss, in which he accused me of not always checking back with him on decisions I am making. This was upsetting to me, since I am very much taking into account my boss's agenda, seeing my own as correlative to it. I am very much influenced by the decisions my boss makes, even those that do not directly regard me and my group. I wish that he were equally open to seeing the influence I am exerting on his work. It also bothers me that my boss speaks of our working relationship as if were cast in stone. I guess he is implying that he should be in charge of it, and I should simply submit to his dictates. I see our relationship rather as evolving, and am always again perplexed to notice that he can't think that way.

The first speaker has a hard time understanding the relationship between her boss as a physical and an internalized other (as in Kegan stage S-4/3). She suggests that the structure of their relationship is one of correlation but not of reciprocity. While aware of ongoing processes between her and the boss in the sense of TFs #3, 4 and 6, the speaker remains focused on the structure of her relationship with the boss. She is expecting the boss to act differently from how he is presently acting, which is upsetting to her. What is especially upsetting for her is the fact that the boss sees their relationship in very rigid terms, instead of seeing it as evolving. (However, this evolution is not the focus of the speaker's attention.)

[2] I am now in charge of a team of seven individuals, all of whom have a very different understanding of what we need to achieve. The difficulty is that some of them seem to have an insufficient appreciation of the fact that our mandate is dependent on each person's insight into his own abilities in relation to those of others. However, rather than being highly aware of their own assumptions, values, and principles, they tend to have a rather “groupy” notion of who they are. Take them out of the team and they feel lost. So while they are dedicated, they often fail to think deeply enough about their interactions with each other, and the impact of these interactions on their relationship. They also relate somewhat naïvely to the team's mandate, proceeding on the belief that each team member's values and capabilities are more or less the same.

The second speaker (who social-emotionally may be at a similar developmental stage as the first) complains of the lack of understanding on the side of members of his team. They seem

to assume that everybody's values are more or less the same, and therefore act in a "groupy" way. They misconstrue the relationship that holds between the team's mandate and each member's specific interests and capabilities. Since team members cannot construe this relationship from a more self-authoring position, their understanding of how they relate to each other and the team's mandate remains undeveloped. The structure of these relationships is described as deriving from principles of adult development, however informally.

[3] In this competitive culture, people are typically much attuned to the interests and needs of others. That doesn't mean, however, that they are particularly good at understanding what these needs are and how they themselves are influenced by other peoples' interests. That takes some reflection on one's own behavior, which is not easy to practise. On the whole, people's relationship to each other in a capitalistic culture is dictated by principles of competition as well as service. They are hard to separate. I want to be of service to my clients, and I serve them working hard in order to eliminate my competition. So the interaction with my client(s) is structurally one of "I know what your needs are and can serve these needs better than anybody else." This is one of the principles of SPIN selling, and I have had very good experiences with practising it.

The third speaker is aware of a great number of relationships in the human services field. He chooses to focus on the relationship of competition to service, on one hand, and his actual relationship to his clients, on the other. For him, the competition and service ideologies of capitalistic work are closely linked, and almost reciprocal (the more competitive I am, the better I can serve my clients). The speaker relates to his clients putting "service first," whereas in his design of services he puts competition first. He is not very detached from the practice he follows but has enough of an understanding of it to have embraced a particular strategy of selling called SPIN (situation-problem-implication-need/playoff) selling.

Probing questions

- a. How might one describe the elements comprised by this relationship in structural terms (as components of a system)?
- b. What makes for the balance of the elements of this relationship?
- c. Does the fact that these elements are in opposition to each other enhance the persuasiveness of their relationship?
- d. Is this relationship one of figure and ground, and thus difficult to perceive?

TF 20

Patterns of interaction in relationships

Describing a pattern of interaction and influence in a relationship, emphasizing the pattern(s) of interaction between the elements that are in relationship.

While TF #19 helps focus attention on the *structure* of a relationship, in TF #20 the emphasis shifts to *patterns of interaction*. This is in contrast to TF #4 where patterns of interactions are seen as patterns of motion, not patterns created by (dynamic) relationships. The difference between TF #4 and TF #20 seem to be slight. The essential difference is the emphasis on Common Ground that is missing in TF #4.

Speakers using TF #20 thus have the capability to:

- describe how two parties or dynamic entities are acting upon each other in a specific relationship;
- describe the reciprocal influence one party or entity has on the other (without seeing their relationship primarily in terms of motion in the sense of TF #3);
- notice shifts in the patterns of interaction that occur over time; and
- highlight the relational over the motional aspect of an occurrence.

[1] It continues to amaze me how the two political parties in our society are piggy-backing issues off each other, rather than declaring true and fundamental differences, and standing up for them. The result is that almost no really fundamental issues ever get aired and discussed, although clear-thinking people should be able to see that such issues do exist, and honestly address them. This kind of interaction of political I really find disturbing. It makes them seem to be variants of a common creed with no substantial differences between them but even the creed does not get aired since it's all buried under issues of little relevance.

The first speaker's common ground is society at large, whose political climate is determined by two major parties. The speaker perceives the parties' give and take as lacking a true antithesis. They share a common creed with only superficial differences. This common creed is not very well articulated either, so everything stays in a muddle, and the interaction that gets created is more like a political game shifting according to circumstance.

[2] In my coaching over the last year, I have increasingly noticed the interdependency of the two parties. The coach cannot create a partner out of someone who has no idea of where he or she is going, doesn't believe in it, and doesn't feel it in their bones. There has to be a certain reciprocity where something that both share is played back and forth between them, out of which something entirely new emerges, which is more than each taken separately can produce. That is, I think, the real "return on investment" of coaching. It's not so much the end result that matters, though, than the quality of understanding and intimacy that ultimately emerges.

The second speaker's immediate common ground is the coaching relationship, embedded in the broader one of interaction with others in an organization. The speaker comments on new elements emerging from the parties' interaction in the sense of TFs #3-5. However, the speaker's emphasis is not on motion as much as on the quality of interactive relationship.

[3] I have found in my private life more than my professional work that a large part of my development takes place in interaction with closely related people. You begin to practise intimacy as a separate entity, but over the years input from the other party becomes increasingly important to your own self-image and well-being. This is what often fails to happen in one's first marriage, since the preconditions for true interaction and intimacy are not yet in place. Much of one's own life's richness is found in this trusting interaction with intimate others,

where trust and openness leads to patterns of mutuality in thinking and action. This mutuality is a dynamic one and can be highly fine-tuned. Our executive team would be better off if we mustered some of this interactivity from the vantage point of mutual support rather than competitiveness, even though we are not related in terms of intimacy, but at least of long acquaintance or shared expertises.

The third speaker considers intimacy as a model for professional interactions between peers. Her common ground is her marriage and her functioning as an intimate partner. She extols the dynamic of the intimacy that develops in a relationship over time and sees it as a result of adult development (an even more comprehensive common ground). The dynamic of mutuality in a relationship is seen as highly tunable. Her emphasis is not on the step-by-step process that occurs, but on the quality of patterns of interaction that results.

Probing questions

- a. Is the pattern of influence we see here of a reciprocal nature (each side indirectly supporting the other), or is it rather more oppositional?
- b. How could you influence the other party to be more in line with your goals without exerting direct control?
- c. How might your goals be influenced by others without a clear realization of this relationship on your part?
- d. What is the underlying interaction that occurs in the relationship between the components we are seeing?

TF 21

Constitutive/intrinsic relationship logically prior to what they relate
 Describing a relationship as “constitutive” or as making the parts it relates what they are. Emphasis on the logical and other priority of the relationship over the elements it relates.

It makes good sense to distinguish between two main kinds of relationships:

- interactive relationships, and
 - constitutive relationships,
- although conceivably a constitutive relationship may also be an interactive one. In interactive relationships, dealt with in TF #20, the focus of attention is on the give and take of the parties or agents in a relationship. By contrast, in constitutive relationships dealt with in TF #21, attention is focused on the fact that without the relationship that links two or more parties they would simply not be what they are. In other words, the relationship itself exists prior to the elements it relates.

[1] The stuff that has been covered in coaching has reminded me of the fact that work and life have to be integrated – there is more to life than work. Increasingly, through this coaching experience, I have been reminded that the two have always been related for me, and intrinsically so. It has always been important to me that the rest of my life was balanced with work, and that the skills, the things you learn in one are part of the other, carry over into the other. There is only one coherent existence, life, and that is it.

The first speaker addresses “life” as the overriding primary relationship within which other aspects of life, such as work, take place. Life is seen more as a form than a relationship that is constitutive of work. Nevertheless, it is thought of as being constitutive of work, making it what it is. Life has logical priority over work. In this case, the relationship is not between elements within the relationship but between the form (namely, life) in relationship to one of its contents, namely, work. (If the speaker had described life more emphatically as the bigger picture of work, one could have scored her utterances in terms of TF #8 for example, where “work” would be the part, and “life” the whole.)

[2] It’s fine to focus on relationships in this group of practitioners, but I don’t think it’s good enough. The reason is that the group as an entity, as a whole, very much influences what the members of the group are doing. To the point where you could rightfully say that the group mandate, if not the group spirit, is logically prior to what each individual member is thinking or doing. This is somewhat frightening to realize, because it’s almost like in a marriage. But ultimately that is what it takes to build an effective team, where the team is an entity in its own right, and people need to define themselves and their task in relationship to the team. Without the team, there would be nothing to do for them.

The second speaker addresses a group of people as a common ground (basis) for understanding what they are doing and plan to do. She considers the group to be logically prior to its members, in the sense that people need to be fully aligned with the group’s mandate to succeed in their roles. The mandate of the group is constitutive of each team member’s task and task focus in a particular role.

[3] I think what we have lost in this culture is the spirit of the ancient Greek republics where each person, as a citizen, knew they were defined by the relationship to the Republic. Outside of the

Republic they formed, these people thought of themselves almost as animals, defined only by their own needs and interests. Having by birth become an integral part of a city state, they acquired not only duties but a new self definition, namely that of citizens of the Republic. What happens if this knowledge of the relationship to the Republic as preceding oneself is lost became clearly visible after the fall of the Roman Republic, and is even more evident in our own, ego-centric culture. The notion of the "common good" is no longer very strong. But once upon a time, it defined the sanctity of the intrinsic relationship that binds people to their Republic, thus elevating them to a level beyond the animals.

The third speaker compares two systems, seeing one of them as a model of what the other could beneficially acknowledge. The ancient republics of Greece and Rome were based on the notion that only in association with each other can human beings move beyond the animal state. As members of a city state or republic, humans became a zoon politikon, a political being. The republic had logical priority over their lives as individuals in which they were at risk of behaving like animals, looking only to their own survival, but not the welfare of the larger whole. (In many ways, people in modern democracies in which consumption by isolated individuals or families has priority have regressed to the animal state, at least in the Greek sense of polis (Ahrendt, 1971).)

Probing questions

- a. What would you say is the overriding relationship that makes these elements what they are?
- b. Would these elements be what they are if their essence were not defined by their intrinsic relationship?
- c. Do these parties to this relationship have aspects that fall outside of the relationship they are in?
- d. Are we not mistaking the role these people play in the relationship as something intrinsic to them rather than seeing them as deriving from the nature of the relationship they are in?

TF 22

Probing questions

- a. What makes this system be so easily perturbed?
- b. What are the limits of stability of the system we are considering?
- c. What would be the best way to test the limits of this system's stability?
- d. Being aware of the limits of stability of systems, what assumptions are we making that are not cogent?

TF 23

Probing questions

- a. Before we get lost in the negative implications of the conflict we are facing, what are the positive aspects this conflict could be resolved toward?
- b. Might this conflict be an indication that there is a potential for development here?
- c. Is this a minor disturbance, or would we do better seeing this event as a conflict and working on resolving it?
- d. Shouldn't we focus on moving toward a more inclusive solution?

TF 24

Probing questions

- a. How can we gauge the potential indicated here?
- b. Taking the potential we are aware of seriously, how could we determine its parameters and manage its unfolding?
- c. Is there a potential for working out a higher level of integration of functions that are now separate?
- d. How can we keep the functionality of our operating process intact while we re-engineer it to link better to the evolving market?

TF 25

Probing questions

- a. Which of the two systems has the greater potential to contribute to a transformation of the situation we are presently in?
- b. How do the two organizations we are trying to merge enhance or weaken each other?
- c. In terms of the present crisis, what major institutions and their processes do we need to coordinate?
- d. Is there a *master form* [ideal type] we can consult to concretize our ideas of what this new system should look like?

TF 26

Probing questions

- a. What precisely does it mean to “coordinate” the two systems we are speaking about?
- b. Are the criteria of coordination we are considering optimal in this attempt to create a bigger and better system?
- c. Given the different contexts in which these two systems exist, what functionality should be centrally safeguarded in merging these systems?
- d. Of the two systems to be coordinated, which one can guarantee the immediate practicality we require?

TF 27

Probing questions

- a. What does the identity of the system consist of that we are attempting to preserve through these proposed changes?
- b. What inputs flow into the system, and how do they show up in the outputs? That is, what transformations are taking place?
- c. What strategic and tactical issues arise from the transformations this system seems to be undergoing?
- d. What are the risks of keeping the system open to external influences?

TF 28

Probing questions

- a. What is the most inclusive perspective we can take on this situation in order to include all stakeholders?
- b. What are some alternative viewpoints that better render the complexity of the situation?
- c. What are the data this perspective is based on, and what other data it excludes do we need to consider in order to understand what is really going on here?
- d. What alternative viewpoints exist that play into this topic (context)?