

- HOLISTIC FACILITATION & LEADERSHIP -

GESTALT INFORMED COACHING, TEAM-BUILDING

& ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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INTRODUCTION

*Competition stifles creativity, reduces the options and limits our thinking.
Worse still, in striving to be better than others we reduce life to a game.*

This work arose in response to several requests for me to say a little more about the facilitative model to which I work and my approach to facilitation. Having taught several Roffey Park (a premier UK management and organisational development institute) tutors over the years on my Gestalt in Action programmes and delivered numerous sessions upon its programmes, the time seemed ripe for me to put this synthesis in print.

The facilitative model reproduced here has been refined through doctorate study, refined and researched by change agents upon the MSc in Change at Surrey University, by scholars upon Practitioner Doctorates and group facilitators, coaches and consultants within numerous workshops I have facilitated over the past few years. In this way it has been refined through the practice of others as much as my own. The text itself has been synthesised from two publications by the Middlesex University Press: 'Becoming a Practitioner-Researcher – A Gestalt Approach to Holistic Research' (Barber 2006) and 'Facilitating Holistic Change – A Gestalt Approach to Healing People, Groups and Organisations' (Barber in press).

Being holistic, the model described in this text attempts to capture multiple levels of reality inclusive of body-mind-spiritual influences, via an approach which develops focus and sensitivity at the *physical level* to generate information and awaken bodily intelligence; boundary setting and culture-building at the *social level* to generate collaborate inquiry and social intelligence; coaching and counselling at the *emotional level* to help motivate and foster emotional intelligence; challenge and awareness raising at the *imagined (fantasised) level* to uncover hidden agendas and alert us to our creative intelligence; envisioning and valuing at the *intuitive level* to help expand inner vision and to illuminate our spiritual intelligence.

Although in reality the above levels run together, I tease them out in the text so that we might appreciate methods of working within a specific perspective or lamination.

Lastly, this account is written in the hope that we might better appreciate what Gestalt has to contribute to enlightenment in the workplace.

References: Barber, P. (2006) *Becoming a Practitioner-Researcher – A Gestalt Approach to Holistic Research*. Middlesex University Press, London & Barber, P. (in press) *Co-Creating Holistic Change – A Gestalt Approach to Coaching, Facilitating Groups and Developing Organisations*. Middlesex University Press, London.

Paul Barber – Redhill, Surrey (Winter 2006)

HOLISTIC FACILITATION – A GESTALT INFORMED MODEL

Paul Barber

The Origins of this Model – Mapping our Multiple Reality

The model of facilitation described here is a holistic one where the facilitator attunes to differing levels of reality – both within themselves and in others with a view to illuminating multiple levels of influence. It originally arose from doctoral study (Barber 1990) into group facilitation plus an examination of the lens through which various schools of therapy – especially Gestalt, Humanism, Therapeutic Community Practice, Transactional Analysis and Group Analysis – addressed the human condition.

Underpinning this model is an intention to ‘heal’, to make things whole. I believe it has much to offer not only organisational consultants and coaches, but teachers, trainers, social workers, therapists, managers and researchers and all people-facing professionals.

As I see change agency as a facilitative art that illuminates, gives expression to and enhances the human condition through an ever widening and deepening dialogue, if my interventions do not leave the client system a better home for the human spirit I deem myself to have failed. Essentially, the facilitative model employed in this text endeavours to fashion in facilitators and clients alike, alertness to:

- ***Physical/Sensory Reality*** as evidenced through our bodily engagements – gathering data & attending to cognitive & biological aspects of environment;
- ***Social/Culturally Reality*** as conventionally taught & intellectually constructed – engaging & analysing the cultural context, values & norms;
- ***Emotional/Transfereential Reality*** as felt in reference to earlier experience – charting motivational patterns & releasing emotional blocks;
- ***Imagined/Projective Reality*** as conjured up via projected images from the self – exploring metaphor & the effects of unconscious bias & meaning;
- ***Intuitive/Transpersonal Reality*** as intuitively & symbolically created – exploring unknown potentialities & surfacing spiritual values.

Each of these ‘phenomenological realities’ I suggest flow together to co-create our ‘life-space’, and when taken together describe the holistic nature of people, teams and organisations along with the complexity we meet within the client-system. What this means to a group facilitator or consultant can be gleaned from **Figure 1** where differing levels of engagement are seen to require very different ways of ‘being’ and ‘intervening’ i.e.

i) At the ***Physiological/Sensory level*** which concerns ‘*physical reality as perceived via our senses*’ a facilitator needs to attune to conscious manifestations of behaviour which individuals and groups co-create through a dialogue between the physical world and their sensory perceptions. Here we seek to create an environment conducive to continuing motivation and stimulation, attend to physical energy, bodily needs and functional health,

Figure 1

LEVELS OF EXPERIENTIAL REALITY

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(Physical/Sensory Reality as evidenced through our senses)

Here we explore our experience through the route of our senses, what we see, hear & touch, as we engage with our own physiological being & meet our various biological needs. Here we need to differentiate between observations & interpretation.
(Facilitative Activity: gathering data & attending to the sensory & physical environment)

(Social/Culturally Reality as conventionally taught & intellectually constructed)

Here we view experience as representative of the conventional social world & the norms culture enshrines, seek out leadership & purpose, structure time in task driven ways, & re-create our more usual roles & cultural engagements.
(Facilitative Activity: engaging & analysing the cultural context, values & norms)

(Emotional/Transfereential Reality as felt in reference to earlier experience)

Here we recreate & enact earlier relational patterns, transfer in prior learning & memories of the past to the present, & are thus re-stimulated into earlier emotional reactions &/or dramas as we act-out victim, persecutor &/or rescuer behaviour scripts.
(Facilitative Activity: charting motivational patterns & releasing emotional blocks)

(Imagined/Projective Reality as conjured up via projected images from the self)

Here we experience with reference to the fantasies & the imagined reality we project out & see reflected back in the world, includes the imaginary figures & archetypes we have internalised & unconsciously compare ourselves to & mould ourselves upon.
(Facilitative Activity; exploring metaphor & the effects of unconscious bias & meaning)

(Intuitive/Transpersonal Reality as intuitively & symbolically created)

Here our experience is informed by the collective unconscious & a meeting with the unknown & unknowable, as glimpsed through our tacit connection with the divine, mystical, symbolic & other transpersonal phenomena over & beyond the self.
(Facilitative Activity: exploring unknown potentialities & surfacing spiritual values)

while encouraging physical expression. Facilitation at this level may foster an appreciation of sensory feedback and the wider environmental field, employ body-work and share concrete observations or facilitate training to physical skills. Individuals and groups learn in an experiential trial-and-error way here as they strive to quench their physiological needs, experiment with the support available as they engage in everyday tasks to conquest ever more physical territory. Facilitators need to attune to their own physicality and sensate function to read the group energetically at this level.

ii) The ***Social/Cultural level*** which relates to *'reality as it is intellectually conceived and conventionally taught to be'* represents a conscious level of functioning informed by well defined cultural rules, intellectual theory and models. Here a facilitator is encouraged to build a relational container able to support a viable learning culture in which participants can voice their needs while experiencing social motivation, complete necessary tasks, explore problems and experiment with possible solutions. Training interventions designed to shape group culture or interventions seeking to clarify purpose or to maximise relational potential occur here, as do systemic, strategic and developmental approaches attentive to 'the community', organisational culture and social behaviour. At this level people learn in a communal and interactive way through social identification, imitation and by role modelling others. Socialisation and cultural induction happen here. What a facilitator role-models consciously and unconsciously and how they handle their authority has great power at this level.

iii) At the ***Emotionally/Transferential level*** where *'emotional and biographical aspects of reality'* surface for address, a facilitator may use more 'therapeutically' inclined interventions which wander into a semi-conscious zone just out of mindful sight. Interventions designed to manage, direct and release long pent-up emotions are focussed here, as are facilitative actions designed to raise awareness to the historical emotional patterns (transferences) that drive behaviour. Fostering alertness to the prior learning that underpins current activity and the games people and organisations play occurs at this level. Facilitators need to be emotionally fluent, to be able to access their own emotional octaves and to know their own relational baggage to be effective at this level.

iv) At the ***Imagined/Projective level*** and *'life as fantasised and imagined to be'* we experience a twilight existence which is largely unconscious but may be gradually brought into conscious awareness through pattern recognition. Here a facilitator might set about challenging collusion, thus illuminating the individual or the group shadow, or illustrate and bring to attention unconscious processes and dynamics in an effort to demonstrate how hidden agendas and imaginative projections are acted out individually and collectively. At this level people and groups often need others to draw attention to their blind-spots and raise attention to the archetypes, metaphors and myths that drive them. Facilitators here need to be aware of their own projections and innermost needs if they are to escape being trapped by projective identification or a seduction to feelings of omnipotence.

v) At the ***Intuitive/Transpersonal level*** and *'reality as spiritually guided'* which is generally the furthest from everyday awareness, are included interventions directed towards illuminating a person, group or community's ecological and tacit interdependence with tacit

influences over and above themselves. Here a facilitator might draw attention to a person, group or community's essential uniqueness, or work towards envisioning their greater purpose and the realisation of their latent potential. People at this level learn intuitively, as when an 'aha' experience suddenly makes clear something that has previously lain out of awareness. Inspiration and creativity may also be suggested to flower at this level, plus insight into an individual or group's unique purpose or Dharma. A facilitator here needs to serve what is authentic, to intuitively flow with the facilitative field and to surrender their ego so as to be guided by something other than themselves.

As the imagined-projective and the intuitive-transpersonal level are less accessible to our awareness than others, we will examine these in greater depth later in this account. But as 'Gestalt' is the fluid cement that holds the above model together, the nature and characteristics of a Gestalt approach to facilitation will next be described.

Holistic Facilitation = Gestalt Inquiry in Action?

'Gestalt' – a German word meaning pattern or constellation – is a whole field approach that works primarily with direct perception and what a person is sensing, feeling and projecting out upon the world, rather than what they are thinking or interpreting. To this end a Gestalt practitioner cultivates an authentic relationship and accompanying dialogue through which to explore how an individual or community's 'awareness' is being constellated in their immediate environment. Central to this process is the cultivation within the facilitator of a genuine, interested and non-judgemental presence.

At root, Gestalt is more concerned with '*being*' and '*becoming*' rather than '*doing*' and strives towards an appreciation of the whole energetic field of the facilitative relationship and everything that impacts upon awareness – now. Being 'phenomenological' in character it seeks to understand how people construct meaning from events while attempting to develop a 'felt sense' of experience. Being non-interpretive it focuses upon what is being co-created here-and-now rather than attempts to apply theory to practice or to seek out historical patterns. A bit like an intensive case study it tries to illuminate and raise awareness through an ever deepening description of events and an appreciation of the influences that shape reality. It also emphasises a dialogical approach to learning, coaching and consultancy, within a relationship which Yontef (1993) reminds us embodies four main characteristics:

1. **Inclusion.** Putting oneself fully 'into the experience of another' without judging, analyzing or interpreting, while simultaneously retaining a sense of one's own autonomous presence; this demonstrates the interpersonal application of a Gestalt practitioners trust in 'immediate experience' – which is sharpened to increase our client's self-awareness.
2. **Presence.** The Gestalt practitioner expresses themselves to their client 'regularly, judiciously and with discrimination' so that their client is continually informed as to the observations, preferences, feelings, personal experience and thoughts they are bringing to the relationship; in this way a practitioner role models phenomenological reporting which

builds trust while raising awareness to the usefulness of immediate experience; all this is performed to encourage the client to regulate themselves mindfully and autonomously.

3. ***Commitment to dialogue.*** Contact is more than something two people do to each other – it is something that happens between people, something that arises from the interaction between them; a Gestalt practitioner surrenders him or herself to the interpersonal process, thus allowing contact to happen naturally and authentically rather than by manipulating, forcing contact and controlling the outcome.

4. ***Dialogue is lived.*** Dialogue is embodied rather than ‘talked about’, emphasizes the excitement and immediacy of moment-to-moment action and may include movement, dancing, art-work, enactment, guided fantasy, words and song, experiential experimentation, indeed anything that gets the communicative juice and energy of relational expression moving between participants.

Strategically, within the above dialogical framework a facilitator is encouraged to work alongside their client on a mutually agreed contract and goals, within a relational container which is authentic, values empathy and openness while focusing upon the clarification of meaning and purpose. From this stance ‘intellectual knowing’ is secondary to ‘experiential wisdom’ – what you actually experience, and ‘awareness’ is the catalyst of change and a primary goal; but what the client does with that ‘awareness’ is for them to decide. This emergent approach stands in direct opposition to prescriptive coaching or consultancy which works towards a set outcome. A Gestalt coach or consultant therefore does not ‘prescribe change’ so much as ‘illuminate the current situation’. They invite you to be fully what you are within the present moment, for they believe a person's natural state as a single, ‘whole and un-fragmented being’ houses a natural organic state that embodies constant change.

Facilitating robust transactions between yourself and your environment, coaches in the Gestalt vein encourage you to contact your sub-personalities and diverse parts, to work through any alienated or desensitized fragments so that integration, connection and change may begin. Thus, it is reasoned, by opening ourselves to becoming ‘what we truly are’, paradoxically, devoid of our deflections we become something else. In this context a coach or consultant works to expand awareness and to extend choice.

In the above light, while viewing organisations as ‘living organismic systems’ or ‘fields’ comprised of interrelating individuals, Gestalt practitioners attempt to raise awareness to how clients might meet their physical, social, emotional, psychic and spiritual needs while all the time serving the wider needs of the organisation. In this way a Gestalt approach attempts to account for the foreground (what is in emergence) and the background (context) – the specific and systemic:

“... a field perspective acknowledges the indivisibility of the individual and the environment, and the constant interdependence of the two (Parlett 1991). When we recognise this fully, it brings a wholly different dimension to the process of giving and receiving feedback at work. Behaviour is no longer seen as exclusively ‘owned’ by individuals, but as co-created, simultaneously constituting a response to environmental conditions, and also having some effect on these conditions” (Coffey and Caicchia 2005, p. 20).

In the above sense a Gestalt informed coach or consultant is on the look-out for possibilities of co-creative adjustment between different aspects of the field within which their clients are embedded (Francis 2005). Essentially, as an approach to individual, group and organisational change, Gestalt integrates disparate parts of the organisational field to develop a clearer and lived appreciation of the whole ecological system – the individual as well as the community.

Personally, as a Gestalt practitioner myself, I would like to further emphasise the ‘quality of presence’ and ‘awareness’ that facilitators need to bring to facilitation, plus the ‘authenticity’ they must communicate if they are to seed a culture wherein clients can develop trust. Add to this ‘a spirit of curiosity’, ‘interest in the human condition’ and ‘a willingness to risk and to explore’ and we have what I deem to be essential ingredients for excellence in facilitative practice. Perhaps one last thing is worth mentioning, an ability to convey the attitude of ‘life as serious play’ so that whatever dramas unfold, individuals – as in situations of play – feel permitted to explore the whole of themselves without fear of judgement or failure. In this context our facilitative skills dictate our professional and investigative competence, while the humanity we convey supports our ability to intervene in an authentic, explorative, grounded and non-judgemental way.

Lastly, in regard to the quality of collaborative field-led inquiry a facilitator in Gestalt tradition supports, this incorporates a quality of looking out upon the world and in towards the self where a facilitator as a practitioner-researcher is encouraged to:

- Retain an eclectic multi-dimensional and fluid stance to facilitation;
- Bring into focus physical, social, emotional, imagined and spiritual aspects of existence;
- Show interest in the quality and subtlety of experience plus tacit ways of knowing;
- Generate knowledge through dialogue, self reflection and social involvement;
- Focus upon the dynamics and nature of ‘the whole’ of what is experienced/perceived;
- Look within the person for answers as well as out upon their behaviour and context;
- Champion the authority of what is actually experienced right now in the moment;
- Explore multiple levels of experience rather than search for a single irrefutable truth;
- Look to the inter-relatedness and interdependence of all influences and everything;
- Enquire within the frame of an authentic and intimate person-to-person relationship;
- Strive to ‘be’ co-inquirers alongside others rather than to ‘do inquiry’ upon others;
- Expand awareness and consciousness through respectful questioning and dialogue.
- Emphasise the authority of the person and their phenomenological experience;
- Endeavour to educate and learn from and develop all involved;
- Retain a flexibility of inquiry/focus that allows new avenues of exploration to emerge;
- Take an interest in the ‘how’ much more than the ‘what’ of whatever happens;
- Attend to what is unique as well as what is general in the facilitative field.

This essentially, is the relational cement I employ as a facilitator in order to raise awareness and explore the aforementioned experiential levels of reality.

Holistic Facilitation = Humanistic Values in Action

Humanism represents an attitude emphasizing the dignity and worth of the individual; it supports the premise that people are rational beings who possess within themselves the capacity for both truth and goodness. Its anti-institutional and gently anarchic influence encourages us to anchor ourselves within our common humanity and to remain transparent, vulnerable and robustly human. Humanism advocates that the human condition is a unique potentiality of intrinsic meaning, and thus enshrines all that we believe is best placed at the spiritual and philosophical core of facilitation. Gestalt-like it reminds us that our *'being'* – that inner light of consciousness through which we illuminate meaning is our primary reality, and that all else is derivative (Bates & Barber 2004). In this way it invites us to consider ourselves and the human condition as worthy, valuable and housing the potential to be divine. Living life as a sacred journey while recognising and respecting others are on the same path encapsulates this message. In this light every road we travel is seen to be a sacred one and every person and experience we meet is seen as presenting us with a lesson worthy of respect.

Facilitation of this nature has a developmental feel; it educates 'the person' of 'the professional' from the inside – rather than through a mere provision of fresh skills. It also goes some way to supporting the notion that facilitators should empower and enrich all they engage – people, groups, communities and systems, and is based on four primary principles, namely *holism, autonomy, experiential inquiry* and *democracy*, i.e.

Holism suggests that a person's mental, physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual qualities are integral to *'everything they do'* and *'all they are'*. Consequently, an individual is best approached as a whole mind-body-spiritual being rather than reduced to one or more of their parts. As every thing is multi-faceted and multi-influenced we are cautioned that there are no easy answers or simple solutions to human problems. *As a facilitator, holism encourages me to approach groups and organisations as organic entities, which, though composed of conscious and unconscious elements of the individuals within them, nevertheless express a life of their own. Attending to the whole I endeavour to foster a dialogue between "the group" and the "individuals within", which illuminates the inter-lay of all that emerges, inclusive of humankind's physical, social, emotional, imaginal and spiritual natures.*

Autonomy supports the notion that given the opportunity and resources, individuals are best placed to diagnose and resolve their own problems, for they know more about themselves than I or anyone else will ever do. *As a facilitator alert to autonomy I watch and listen very carefully to what the group and its participants present. Guided by the group's own wisdom and energetic currents I follow what emerges, sharing my observations while inquiring into its dynamics. In this way I attempt to act as a flexible resource who works alongside others on a journey towards autonomy and self-empowerment.*

Experiential inquiry, in service of personal development suggests it is important to meet life in an open and inquiring way, to attend to the unique nature of our present relationships and to experiment with becoming the whole of ourselves. *As a facilitator I encourage people to take nothing for granted, but rather to question everything. Through a focus upon 'what is unique' coupled with ongoing inquiry into our perceptions, beliefs and relationships with others, I seek to illuminate through experiential group inquiry insight born from experience.*

Democracy supports the notion that we are interdependent rather than independent, and suggests that reason and negotiation should inform all we do. As we are social beings who share much in common, to further the common good democratic process should underpin all decision-making and debate. Sharing and transparency rather than authoritative imposition and covert agendas should therefore inform a group or a community's norms. *As a facilitator I work to negotiate a client-centred menu where everyone may be involved in forming the 'how' and the 'what' of the group experience on offer. Democracy also keeps me alert to the need for healthy "I-Thou" relationships, and causes me to be watchful of communication that slides towards an ego-centric "I-I" or a reductionist "I-It" stance to life, the self or others (Barber 2002).*

Humanistic values expressed in the above way, nourish facilitation's heart while keeping it finely attuned to the human condition. Humanism, in this way, for me provides an ethical base for our facilitation, it also suggests how we might holistically set about educating and developing teams and organisations as a whole.

As to what humanism, Gestalt and holistic inquiry may contribute within the frame of our emerging model, the following section illuminates an holistic curriculum which is designed to address the development of body-mind-spiritual intelligence.

Holistic Facilitation = Accounting for the Influence of a Multiple Reality?

So how does facilitation informed by Gestalt and humanistic values of the kind described above actually appear in practice? I share a few ideas 'from the driver's seat' below:

The *physical/sensory level* is where I perceive myself as contacting and physiologically engaging the present – here I attend to what I see and hear and to what actually happens while listening and giving information, being present and engaging with subjects and the wider organisational field within which inquiry occurs, as I look-out and explore:

- *How the physical environment, space and organisational territory is organised;*
- *The degree of energy and synergy individuals co-create and receive from one another;*
- *How aware of sensory evidence, what they see and hear, people appear to be.*

The *social/cultural level* is where I clarify tasks and build relationships – here I socially engage, strive to understand the research field's various rules and roles, form a research

contract, define the research purpose and negotiate relevant strategies and interventions to achieve formally stated objectives, as I engage with the research field to inquire:

- *How are people and events organised and managed here?*
- *What is the nature of the fluid cement that holds them together?*
- *Who are the formal and informal power holders and who maintains the rules?*

The ***emotional/transferential level*** is where I acknowledge feelings and manage emotional expression – here I raise energy, generate awareness to the historical and emotional patterns that drive both individuals and a group's inquiry, while endeavouring to unpack emotional and familial/organisational scripts present through a consideration of the:

- *Established family patterns and power struggles people strive to re-enact;*
- *Emotional dramas and roles individuals and the group have a tendency to act-out;*
- *Emotional re-stimulation that colours the current group dynamic.*

The ***projective/imaginal level*** is where I work to raise awareness to the hidden agenda and group unconscious – here resides the heart of a group's relational shadow, the heroic and mythical archetypes that drive us, personal bias and unconscious beliefs that fuel our individual, community and organisational blind-spots. At this level I also perform my own shadow consultancy and supervision, asking such questions of myself and others as:

- *What are we possibly blind to or excluding at this time?*
- *What fantasies or ego defences colour our vision and performance in this situation?*
- *Which part of ourselves is being expressed and who do we imagine our audience to be?*

The ***transpersonal/symbolic level*** is where valuing of the human condition and spiritual aspirations reside – here I invite people to reflect on their core values and meanings, encouraging them to creatively envision their own and their community's higher purpose. At this level my questioning has a tendency to become abstract and poetic:

- *What is in the process of becoming?*
- *What might your soul have come here to learn from this situation?*
- *What images or visions arise for you at this time?*

At the transpersonal level, mirroring, a process akin to active witnessing, provides an example of a non-invasive means of raising awareness and gathering data:

*"When we mirror someone, we don't DO anything. We listen, we hear, but we don't DO. Mirroring that way creates a feedback loop that can facilitate awareness ... Developing the capacity to mirror as **not doing** is extremely demanding. You must learn to forego all intention, including the intention to help. You have to trust a larger process (Beaumont 1998 p 82).*

Mirroring, like meditation, requires the cessation of sensory, social, emotional and imaginal activity. It requires a surrendering of the ego-driven self and an awakening to intuitive guidance and grace. Meditating upon the person or group before you, suspending judgement

while entering fully into experience, can sometimes catch the unexpected to evoke exploration of things transpersonal.

Below, I offer an account of how the above model unfolded during a two hour collaborative inquiry into “stress in group settings” in a conference setting. Hopefully, this more practical example will illuminate the effects of the aforementioned levels upon the researcher and within the research field.

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An Example of the influence of Experiential Levels in a Group Inquiry:

The following case study explores the propensity of a group to mirror personal and interpersonal processes at the physical-sensory, social-cultural, emotional-transferential, imaginal-projective and transpersonal-symbolic levels. I initially describe each level of influence before sharing an example of how these levels unfolded within the setting of a workshop within a conference setting.

The Group as a Mirror of the Senses: *At this level of group territory I attend to the sensory data I am met with within a group. This includes: the number of participants; environmental features; the temperature of the room; the postures of participants; the level of verbal exchange; the dress code. I also attend here to the way I am physically supporting myself, reflect on my own breathing and posture, and position myself where I can view the whole community. I especially attend to this level when attempting to assess an individual or group’s ability: to be self-supporting; to handle environmental stimuli; to see and be seen; plus the quality of person to person contact within the present.*

Engagement of this level in the workshop: *Before the workshop began I acclimatised myself to the room, choosing a comfortable position from which to view the group. I noted the closeness of the room, the heat of mid-day, opened windows and as the room filled and participants gathered became aware of my own and others physical discomfort plus the resistance of some to engage with their senses and to truly see and hear others.*

Fleetingly, as the group formed, I thought I saw on people’s faces, expressions suggesting they were a little fearful of being overwhelmed by what might await them. I was also aware of the physical sensations I felt — bodily, I was alert without being over-stimulated and energised without undue physical discomfort or anxiety. When we experimented with forming small groups I was struck by the increased energy during verbal exchange, while in the large group we seemed to slow down and to find it difficult to speak and communicate. Some participants noted they felt more relaxed in the smaller group, others in the larger group. Some also observed that they felt more in tune with themselves in the large group, and more competitive for air time in the smaller group.

By the close of the group communication seemed freer, attention and listening high, bodily energy and physical movement more free-flowing. I reasoned from this that contact with sensory reality was gradually enhanced during the group’s life span.

The Group as a Mirror of Society: *The social level I perceive as attached to – and stimulated by — the objective `task' or social purpose of the group. Interestingly, it appears that at this level people re-enact the psychodynamics of socialisation — and the infant's commitment to the social world — all over again. At this level the facilitator is seen as a conventional social entity, that is to say, as representative of leadership and social authority.*

Engagement of this level in the workshop: *As the group formed there appeared to be a good deal of dependence on formal leadership, as I was seemingly expected to `start things off' and to `make things happen'. It was largely left to me, as “leader”, to `form a conventional contract' and members seemed to expect that I would `take responsibility for everything that happened or was about to happen'. They also seemed to anticipate that I would `stay remote' and separate from them. Although a flip-chart and black-board proclaimed the workshop aim, namely: `To experientially inquire into stressors in groups and to open a dialogue between outer reality (sensory/intellectual constructs) and inner reality (emotional/imaginative perception)', this was generally ignored in favour of checking things out directly with me.*

At one stage I drew participants' attention to `What was it like to wait for the workshop to begin?' And `What expectations do people have of this workshop?' Some said that they `hoped for something different', some were `...irritated and hot with rushing from place to place in this conference and `wanted a time to relax and reflect'. Some attempted to get into their more usual roles and to ignore all else.

As late members turned up there was concern about including them, especially as we were becoming short of chairs. At one point we decided to suspend the group to allow a search for chairs in nearby rooms. Inclusion and exclusion seemed to the fore at this stage, and I felt I was being checked-out as to whether I was prepared to be as collaborative as I said I would be. There also appeared to be a search at this time for `the rules'.

Periodically, following light-hearted comment a burst of what I took to be embarrassed laughter rippled around the room. One participant saw this as `hysterical', another as a `nervous release of energy'.

As the group progressed there was more challenge and checking-out of what was really happening, as we started to enquire into `how it felt to be confronted by a large and loosely constructed group'. It seemed to help people settle when I gave permission `to stay with uncertainty', or shared rationale such as `if non-structure and uncertainty are what cause us stress, maybe staying with this might be productive?' Comfort was also afforded by my giving hand-outs which brought a recognisable `social' structure and purpose to our inquiry. By the end of the workshop dependence on this level seemed much reduced, with participants taking the initiative.

The Group as a Mirror of the Past: *This level of the group is present for me whenever a participant's past is re-kindled by current group events, or when earlier life scripts are re-stimulated. Participants at this level often view me in the stance of an earlier leader or authority from their past, sometimes assigning to me a parent-like role.*

Where the level of the 'group as a mirror of society' solicits role-play, the 'group as a mirror of the past' strikes a deeper layer more akin to psycho-drama; the leadership style a facilitator adopts does much to influence a group's transference quality. An empathic and nurturing facilitator is, I suggest, more likely to affect positive transference and to solicit a creative group. Conversely, a remote, critical facilitator invites negative parental transference and reaps destructive group processes.

Engagement of this level within the workshop: *This level was hard for me to verify in the short two hour time-span of the workshop, but one exercise where we brought back a memory of childhood, gave this memory a title and examined how this related to where we are now, brought up for myself the person I was paired with memories of infant school. This memory, we realised, represented the first large group of our lives, plus feelings of expectancy and uncertainty which related directly to where we were, now. The title I gave to this memory was 'how to be in a community'. Material of this level also intruded when I found myself thinking of an earlier conference where I had facilitated another open undirected group. As to the past patterns of others — I can only speculate, but I was intrigued by one participant who towards the end of the workshop told me: 'I came to scoff, yet find myself bowing my head before the altar'. I wondered about the negative experiences he had endured in earlier experiential groups before that day?*

I received feedback, post-workshop, from a participant who had some years previous worked with a former director of the Human Potential Research Group, the post I now held, and wondered if I was being compared or inviting memories of those times for her? By the close of the workshop this level seemed to exert less active an influence.

The Group as a Mirror of the Self: *Because phenomenon of this level lie at a deeper strata of group-life than those earlier described, they are less affected by — or amenable to — intellectual rationalisation. A facilitator cannot hurry along insight here, but must wait for a group's readiness. At this level a consultant or facilitator functions as a screen upon which clients project imagined and fantasised meaning. In this way, a group leader may come to incarnate 'projective meanings' for the group, become a fantasy figure who is given reality via the 'projective energy' of a group; a symbolic representative of power released from imagination. How I as a facilitator tolerate and feedback projected idealisations such as this, I suggest, determines how well an individual or group can accept and work through their own projections. I believe it is a truism that we perceive that which we first conceive.*

Engagement of this level within the workshop: *I believe there were several incidents where participants projected qualities of their own, onto and into me. This was noticeable in language, especially where statements started with: 'You want us to...'; 'One always does...'; 'You are saying that because...'; 'People tend to...', when and where they spoke from a rich vein of assumption. Some astute members challenged others to check-out their beliefs rather than thrust these out upon them. For example, after a participant described another as uncomfortable, yet seemed to more readily display this quality herself, she was challenged to own her own discomfort.*

At the beginning of the group when there appeared to be a good deal of emotional discomfort, the group seemed to projectively ascribe this merely to the physical environment; the lack of air in the room; the sun's heat etc. In terms of acting out projected energies, the drive at various times to open windows, to do something active and to make late comers comfortable, all seemed to emanate from a store of internal and personalised dis-at-ease. It was also noted, by one participant, that the reticence of himself and others was understandable, for in this peer group of fellow professionals — wherein researchers and therapists were experientially engaging the subject of stress — the sense of vulnerability was acute. I guessed from this that competence was being projected onto others, with the consequence that a residual trace of inadequacy remained within the self. By the end of the workshop imaginative projections appeared to have been checked-out to the degree that factual and/or sensory data now balanced out projective reality.

The Group as a Mirror of the Universe: *This level relates to what is largely subconscious and held within the 'collective unconscious' of the group. At this level thinking and feeling are secondary to spontaneous insight. When working at this level I have found intuitive, subtle, non-directed interventions most fitting. The use of metaphor here reaches where cold reason and logic fail. When memories of the past and concerns of the ego begin to fade, a peaceful stillness can come upon us, wherein we meet with a deeper level of being where the unspoken is better perceived. Where at the ego generated imaginal-projective level the individual asks 'What's in it for me?', at the transpersonal-symbolic level an individual asks 'How can I add value and give of myself here?'*

Engagement of this level in the workshop: *This level was lightly addressed when we shared intuitions relating to the symbolic animal the group brought to mind, where symbols arose of 'a large slow lumbering animal like an elephant'; 'a large woolly fluffy sheep'; 'a turtle in a round hard shell'. A participant who drew attention to an imagined 'large hole' in the centre of the group — drew from me the image of water, which was in turn seen by some as 'still and clear', and others as 'choppy', but noticeably without sharks or other dangerous creatures in its depths. Reflections upon the experience of being in a group illuminated insights for some participants of 'what might be their life's purpose'; there were also two periods of silence when participants seemed particularly attentive and self absorbed in a meditative fashion upon the quality of our being together. By the close of the workshop participants appeared more open to the unknown and unknowable and more able to work in peaceful silence and at the level of metaphor (Barber 1994).*

In reviewing the above study, I feel that evidence generated from the transpersonal level of the group was heavily contaminated by the imaginal level, and that 'The Group as a Mirror of the Universe' was the least attended or pursued. Then again, this was an academic setting in a centre of learning, with psychologists and professional others — so what more could we really expect?

In the above account another feature other than experiential levels is discernable, for instance, we see the facilitative relationship journeying through the following developmental phases:

Orientation (*laying the groundwork for communication*): warming-up to the presence of another and establishing/re-establishing social contact; providing space to spontaneously share what is foremost to mind; placing attention upon ‘what is being said’ and ‘how it is being said’; building trust in the relationship.

Identification (*surfacing and focusing your own and the client's awareness*): focusing upon mutual interests/needs while identifying a unifying theme; balancing consensus with challenge so as to further a deepening of trust and an appreciation of difference; illuminating the interactive territory available in the unfolding relational container.

Exploration (*locating and meeting with the client's energy and interest*): widening personal and social awareness through active exploration of the presenting issues; engaging with emotional energy to engage an activity of mutual interest; focusing upon an arising purpose and fulfilling specific needs.

Resolution (*debriefing for insight and completion*): raising awareness to the new knowledge, options and choices that have been surfaced; deciding how best to proceed further with what has been begun; celebrating and/or mourning the ending; forming a strategy for the next and future relational cycle (Barber 2006).

Bear in mind that the above developmental phases – in the manner of inquiry cycles – may occur within a minute, an hour, a month, or yet describe the whole life of a facilitative event as in the above workshop; all can also co-exist simultaneously.

As to how the above developmental phases pan out in relation to experiential levels, I attempt a synthesis of both levels and phases in **Figure 2**. Indeed, over the years, I have observed how differing levels of reality tend to kick-in and come to the forefront of awareness within various phases of a research study or consultancy. For instance, before I enter a new facilitative or research venture, in the pre-contact phase, I often notice that emotions and memories associated with similar events of my past crowd-in. During this time I find that “*emotional/transferential*” and “*projective/imaginal*” energies well up within me. It is as if I am using my past as a reference, purging the emotions and anxieties associated with a new challenge and creating imaginative scenarios to facilitate my entry into new territory – a sort of psychic flight-or-fight response. These projections, fuelled by an imagination that is working over-time are thrown out to fill gaps of knowledge and experience. When I actually meet with the field and those involved, I am aware of becoming more attuned to my senses and to “*sensory/physical*” influences; my pre-contact

Figure 2

CYCLIC PHASES OF FACILITATIVE INQUIRY

Pre – Contact: (Envisioning) An imaginative impression starts to form as a facilitator and group or coach and their prospective client speculate upon the future and what it may bring (*Here the **idealised (transferential & projective) level** of a hoped for relationship is imaginatively mapped as individuals seek to address the question — “So what might happen?”*)

O r i e n t a t i o n : (Acclimatising) A potential relationship & partnership are explored as client and facilitator actually meet, compare the imagined relationship to the actual one that begins to unfold, orientate to the reality and world view of each other and assess the potential for empathy and trust (*Here the **authentic (transpersonal) and contractual (sensory & social) level** of relationship is explored as individuals seek to answer the question — “So can we work together?”*)

I d e n t i f i c a t i o n : (Planning) Tasks are defined and a contract is created as strategies are co-created and accepted, rapport is established and rules of engagement are negotiated, problems and tasks are identified, working hypotheses are posed and approaches are suggested and agreed upon.

(*Here the **contractual level (sensory & social)** of relationship is engaged as individuals seek to answer the question - “How might we work together?”*)

E x p l o r a t i o n : (Acting & Observing) Experience is engaged and experiments are performed, boundaries are laid and tested and a safe environment is created, awareness is raised towards a developing theme and practical experiments are undertaken, support is mobilised, fantasies are checked out and awareness of the moment is heightened (*Here the **idealised (transferential & projective) level** is tested out, the **contractual level (sensory & social)** engaged and the **authentic (transpersonal) level** is further illuminated as individuals seek to answer the question — “What needs to happen now?”*).

R e s o l u t i o n : (Debriefing & Evaluating) Findings and results are evaluated, earlier working hypotheses are appraised, a debriefing of earlier events and their prospective meaning is performed, mapping of the facilitative inquiry to date is made and future routes are considered (*Here the **authentic (transpersonal) level** of the relationship is strengthened and the **contractual (sensory & social) level** of relationship is evaluated and completed as individuals seek to answer the question — “What have been the gains and costs of this relationship?”*).

Post – Contact: (Reflecting & Remembering) Out of contact again the imagination continues to shape the relationship (*Here within the **idealised (transferential & projective) level** subsequent reflection further explores the remembered relationship as individuals seek to answer the question - “So what did this experience really mean to me?”*)

anxiety now recedes. When I actually engage with the job at hand and begin to facilitate, the “*socio-cultural*” world comes alive. In the resolution phase, when I begin to withdraw my emotional involvement and am more able to dis-identify with the field, I am more likely to witness events in an “*intuitive/transpersonal*” way, and when I finally walk away to reflect upon and/or write-up what has happened, creativity and insights flower, as imaginative and intuitive influences combine to stimulate a glimpse of a greater more integrated whole.

Practitioner-researchers in the guise of leaders, organisational consultants, change agents, counsellors and group facilitators upon various programmes have for many years tested and refined the above multi-layered model through their own facilitative and research practice. Many reported using it as an aid to enable them to stay open and receptive. As a support system it offers sufficient structure for a facilitator to stand in the experiential vortex, to endure chaos and to maintain a healthy boundary between self and others. In short, it prevents them from becoming overwhelmed by the vast array of data that bombards them and clamours for attention within group and organisational settings.

Mining a little deeper into the experience of engaging with the above experiential levels in facilitation, I’m aware that when I’m in the facilitative driving seat, that:

... at the **physical/sensory level** I perceive myself as contacting and physiologically engaging the present – here I describe: what I am seeing and hearing and report to the group what is actually happening and what is to the fore of my current awareness. At this level I also give voice to: how the physical environment appears to be managed; how space and organisational territory are allocated; the degree of energy and synergy individuals create and receive from one another; how aware of sensory evidence participants appear to be. (*My awareness of ‘sensory reality’ I find is best served by precise – almost scientific reporting of what we are seeing and hearing right now through the cultivation of a climate of active listening and self-disclosure where participants feel encouraged to share what they are perceiving and experiencing now*);

... at the **social/cultural level** I clarify our learning tasks and build relationships – here I socially engage, strive to understand first hand a community’s rules and roles, say something of the fluid cement that holds us all together and suggest who appear to be the formal and informal power holders who maintain ‘the rules’. (*My understanding of ‘taught and intellectually construed reality’ I think is enhanced through role and cultural analysis, by encouraging a sharing of cultural and social expectations, the negotiation of community ground-rules and democratic decision making; here therapeutic community principles which empower the group mostly inform my facilitation*);

... at the **emotional-transferential level** I endeavour to acknowledge feelings, to elicit and manage emotional expression – here I solicit energy, generate awareness to the historical and emotional patterns that drive us while endeavouring to unpack such old emotional scripts as ‘victim’, ‘persecutor’ and ‘rescuer’. At this level I consider the family patterns and power struggles we re-enact plus the emotional dramas we act-out; emotional re-stimulation here often characterises the prevailing dynamic. (*Illumination of ‘reality as felt’ is to me best served by analysis of emotional messages, a sharing of family histories, the enactment of psychodrama, the illumination of reoccurring themes plus the acting-into and verbalising of emotional messages*);

... at the **imagined-projective level** I gently raise awareness to our hidden agendas and the heroic and mythical fantasies and personal bias that seem to fuel our individual and

organisational blind-spots. At this level I perform my own shadow consultancy and supervision, asking of myself and others ‘What are we possibly missing or excluding from our awareness at this time?’, ‘What fantasies and defences colour our vision and performance in this situation?’ and ‘What archetypes (saviour/hero/magician) inform us here?’ (*My appreciation of ‘projective reality’ is enhanced by observation and questioning which focuses upon how individuals are co-constructing their reality, by group sculpting and the sharing of metaphors or stories and myths associated with the group and its current themes*);

... at the **transpersonal/intuitive level** I set about valuing the human condition while raising to group-mind our spiritual aspirations – here I invite participants to reflect on their core values and meanings while encouraging them to creatively envision their own and their community's higher purpose. At this level my questioning has a tendency to be abstract and poetic as I inquire into ‘What is in the process of naturally and organically emerging’, ‘What might our soul have come here to learn’ or ‘What images or intuitions inform us here?’ (*At the level of ‘reality as intuitively created’ I use free association, dream analysis, guided fantasy and meditative approaches to illuminate intuition and symbolism that gently illuminates and captures what is out of awareness, unknown and potentially unknowable*)

In summary, by a quality of presence which embodies nurture, acceptance, curiosity and a thirst for inquiry, a facilitator endeavours to embody a way of being which enacts humanistic values along with a permission to experientially explore, to experiment and learn in an holistic fashion which entertains complexity while accounting for the influence of a complex multiple reality. Cementing the whole is Gestalt, which emphasises ‘being’ and ‘becoming’, an appreciation of the energetic field and commitment to an authentic lived dialogue in which facilitator and client meet as fellow travellers.

Hopefully you are beginning to get a taste for holistic facilitation rooted in the authentic presence and ‘being’ of the facilitator, one that reaches out towards qualitative inquiry and holism, is fertilised by Gestalt and Humanism and which seeks to develop a democratic culture informed by transparency.

At the last, when you facilitate or function as a ‘facilitative leader’ stand with humility before life, for everything before you is a miracle. You do not need to get everything ‘right’, you do not have to control events so that they work out perfectly, just share the range of your awareness at any time – what you ‘see and hear’ and what you ‘feel and imagine’. Be aware of your limitations and do not judge yourself too severely for not finding the right answer – for there is rarely if ever one to find.

Holistic Facilitation = Awakening Intelligence within People and Organisations

As we embark upon the beginning of the 21st Century we need only look to current trends within the business community for a glimpse of a future yet to come. A new paradigm is dawning and companies, teams, private and public sectors will need to adapt accordingly. Facilitators, change agents and coaches will similarly need to undergo substantial development and renewal, for as Waitley suggests:

*“Yesterday natural resources defined power. Today knowledge is power.
Yesterday hierarchy was the model. Today synergy is the mandate.
Yesterday leaders commanded and controlled. Today leaders empower and coach.
Yesterday leaders were warriors. Today leaders are facilitators.
Yesterday leaders demanded respect. Today leaders encourage self-respect.
Yesterday shareholders came first. Today customers come first.
Yesterday managers directed. Today managers delegate.
Yesterday supervisors flourished. Today supervisors vanish.
Yesterday employees took orders. Today teams make decisions.
Yesterday seniority signified status. Today creativity drives process.
Yesterday production determined availability. Today quality determines demand.
Yesterday value was extra. Today value is everything.
Yesterday everyone was a competitor. Today everyone is a customer.
Yesterday profits were earned through expediency. Today profits are earned with integrity”*
(adapted from Waitley 1995 quoted in Barber 2000 p. 24).

The desire for maximum short-term return on investment for shareholders is no longer a viable commercial incentive when consumers have begun to demand an ecologically friendly perspective that adds value to the community (RSA 1996). Values of the transpersonal level must now also be considered as power shifts from capital to human resources, shareholders to customers and from expediency to ethical business (Ibid) if we are to progress from the ideal to actual. In this context organisations must now make ‘change’ their friend – not their ruler and learn from their mistakes without falling into the trap of fossilizing around their transient successes. Facilitators, as leaders and coaches will need to do likewise if they are to promote expertise without falling into the mode of thinking or acting like an expert, or if they are to enable clients to surrender their assumptions and to create new traditions. They will also need to educate institutions to an understanding of their drivers, namely: the physical energies that cause stress and stimulus over-load; the social pressures that alienate employers from employees and undermine community; the emotional habits that are re-stimulated and relic power-plays that keep them stuck in the past; the projections and ego-defences they stimulate for those who work within them; the visions that guide them towards the realisation of full potential and their possible destiny.

Working communities in the 21st Century will need to develop a new holistic philosophy that actively values and develops people. Modern day group facilitators, consultants and coaches must similarly rise to this challenge. Conventional management training that primarily builds sensory and social intelligence is inadequate here, for an appreciation and a development of emotional, self and intuitive intelligence needs to also take place. A new approach to education and training is necessary for this, and indeed has already been devised as this text testifies (see **Figure 3**). I am not alone in my belief that ‘whole systems learning’ is necessary for real change (Attwood et al 2003), and with this in mind, I suggest at the very least individuals, teams and organisations now need to incorporate an approach to development where the following characteristics feature:

Figure 3

Facilitative Skills in the Multi-Dimensional Organisational Field

Engaging the Physical-Sensory Environment

(Generating Sensory Information & Health, Engaging & Interpreting Physical Behaviour)

Attuning to where individuals, the group or organisation are right now; setting the scene and identifying an appropriate economic and human resource foundation for future development; gathering feedback and engaging the current physiological field; observing and listening; contacting and relating to what is happening here and now – cultivating & using sensory intelligence.

Responding to the Social-Cultural Environment

(Forming a Social Contract, building Culture & Trust, Negotiating Boundaries & Rules)

Forming a relationship through which to explore a person, group or organisation's boundaries and rules; devising strategies to achieve personal, team and organisational objectives; building relationships and communications; being authentic and socially sensitive to others; suggesting alternative social models and negotiating fresh relational strategies – cultivating & using social intelligence.

Acknowledging the Emotional-Transferential (Biographical) Climate

(Motivating and Healing, fostering Motivation & employing Coaching & Counselling)

Raising, expressing, managing, motivating and directing emotional energy; raising awareness to the historical and emotional patterns that drive an individual, group or organisation; diagnosing and identifying personal and organisational scripts and emotional energisers; working within and shaping the emotional field – cultivating & using emotional intelligence.

Surfacing the Projective/Imagined Shadow

(Surfacing Hidden Agendas, employing Challenging & Processing Skills)

Raising hidden agendas and challenging collusion; illustrating and raising attention to unconscious processes and dynamics; illuminating how hidden forces, managerial and personal beliefs impact behaviours at work; sharing strategies for working with and redressing unconscious processes; surfacing fantasy and resolving unconscious conflicts – cultivating & using 'self' intelligence.

Locating Transpersonal/Intuitive-Spiritual Qualities of the Soul

(Expanding Intuitive Awareness, Envisioning, Valuing the Human Condition)

Surfacing core personal, group and organisational values; illuminating the wider purpose; distilling unique essence and skill; envisioning the future; opening appreciation to the unknown; facing chaos; exploring core/soul purposes; celebrating and valuing growth; encouraging development beyond the usual boundaries; looking to influences over and beyond the self – cultivating & using spiritual intelligence.

- At the **sensory level** they will need to pay attention to where they are now and to respond quickly to fluctuations in their physical environment. For this to happen, leaders and managers will need to have sound observational, action research and data processing skills and should be able to interpret physical phenomena. *Remember, knowledge is power and synergy is the mandate.*

- At the **social level** they will need to have boundaries akin to a skin which give and grow to accommodate change. Leaders and managers and coaches will need to be expert at building and maintaining relationships and to be skilful facilitators. *Remember, leaders empower and coaches and teams make decisions.*

- At the **emotional level** they will need to encourage expression and raise awareness to the energetic field they co-create. Here managers and leaders will need to with-stand, work with and direct emotional energy and be able to identify the historical patterns that hinder or enhance the working climate. *Remember, supervisors vanish and managers will need to delegate.*

- At the **projective level** they will need to rise to awareness and work with the shadow, their collisions and all else they would rather deny. Managers and leaders will need to acquire consciousness raising abilities and consultancy skills for this. *Remember, creativity drives process, quality determines demand and value is everything.*

- At the **transpersonal level** they will need to consider their higher purpose, how they can add value to employees and the larger community they serve. Managers and leaders will need to be visionary here. *Remember, profits must be earned with integrity, everyone is a customer and managers need to encourage self-respect (Barber 2002a).*

But all too often people in organizations are trapped in one or other reality and oblivious to the effects of others. In **Figure 4** we see something of the organizational realities we may co-construct in our lives, traps we are socialised and en-cultured into. And as for the questions I might ask to raise my own awareness and that of my clients, well, a few examples of these are arrayed below:

At the **physical/sensory level** I ask...

- *What physiological needs remain unmet in this relationship?*
- *What influences of the present explain current behaviour?*
- *What is to the fore-front of attention and what is in the back-ground of awareness?*
- *How would an outsider describe this organism's current behaviour right now?*
- *How well does the organism draw support from its physical surroundings?*
- *Where in their bodies are people most alive and where are they de-energised and dead?*

At the **social/cultural level** I ask...

- *What rules and roles are well established? (power-politics/norms & rules)*
- *Who is the key power holder and how are events dynamically organised?*
- *What is the nature of the fluid cement that holds this organism together?*
- *What mutual social needs are met and which are ignored by this organism?*
- *What roles do individuals expect or of each other and themselves?*
- *How does this organism relate to others & the wider community? (the cultural location)*

Figure 4

The Many Realities of Life & Work

Work has the potential to be a mundane pursuit for survival, a social addiction, a drama of our own making, a self-actualising and spiritually up-lifting experience – all this depends on the level of reality we engage:

- When we anchor ourselves in a **physical-sensory reality**, life and work is seen as developing manual skills, exercising body and mind, expressing and meeting our behavioural and physical needs. Here we may negatively lose ourselves in our survival instincts and impulses, or positively heighten our awareness and contact through sensory engagement with the moment.
- When we attune to a **social-cultural reality**, life and work is conventional, intellectually mapped out and maintained by rules and roles and shaped by our social scripts. Here we may negatively become like ghosts trapped in a machine, or positively experience through quality communication a sense of community and self enrichment through relationship with others.
- When we encounter **emotional-transferential reality**, life and work re-stimulates our earlier emotional history and prior learning, personal and family dramas. Here we may negatively remain unaware and continue to blindly act-out our earlier conflicts and past hurts, or positively raise to awareness the patterns that drive us, accept these and move beyond them.
- When we engage **projective-imaginal reality**, life and work can become a mirror of ourselves, an activity driven by our desires and personal fantasy. Here we may negatively become lost in a self-generated ego-trip where we create and enact our own movie, or positively through mindful observation transcend our desires to meet with a more authentic sense of being.
- When we open up to **transpersonal-intuitive reality**, life and work becomes an exercise for the development of “mindfulness”, an illuminator of your life’s curriculum and learning. Here we may negatively become submerged or overwhelmed by the unknown that surrounds us, or positively be intuitively guided along a spiritual journey which expresses our true destiny.

Considering the above in relation to yourself and the organisation you work within:

- *What physical and sensory information impacts your senses? (physical-sensory)*
- *What tasks and intellectual beliefs shape your social role? (social-cultural)*
- *What emotions arise and which memories return to you? (emotional-transferential)*
- *What personal dreams or desires surface within you? (projective-imaginal)*
- *What higher purpose might you serve? (transpersonal-spiritual)*

At the *emotional/transferential level* I ask...

- *What emotional dramas or past politics (rescuer-persecutor-victim-rebel) proliferate?*
- *How are earlier family/parent-child dynamics re-enacted? (transferential dynamics)*
- *Which emotions are in evidence and which seem repressed?*
- *What emotional memories are re-stimulated and acted out by this organism?*
- *How is this organism like other organisms and who or what is it modelled upon?*
- *What sort of relational dance am I being invited to join in? (counter-transference)*

At the *projective/imaginal level* I ask...

- *What fantasies does this organism enact and which projections does it act upon?*
- *What does this organism blind itself to or hold in check? (the shadow relationship)*
- *Which angels guide them or demons drive them? (idealizations and ego defences)*
- *Which symbols and metaphors haunt/exert influence? (the couple's dreams or mission)*
- *How in touch or rejecting of the deeper currents of relationship are this couple?*
- *What interests and desires bond us together? (motivational values/meanings)*

At the *transpersonal/spiritual level* I ask...

- *What higher lessons and illuminations are available within this experience?*
- *What might be this organism's higher and greater purpose? (its spiritual destiny)*
- *What is of intrinsic value and worth celebrating within this organism?*
- *Which ethical values and/or spiritual beliefs seem to shape this organism?*
- *What is in the process of being created and what is unique to this organism?*
- *How does this organism contribute to the community and humankind?*

Whole-field and qualitative approaches to facilitation, such as this, which attends to the experiential unfolding nature of individuals and the energetic life of a client-system, in my experience essentially leads a facilitator towards an inquiring perspective which encourages them take interest in the quality and subtlety of experience plus tacit ways of knowing; generates knowledge through dialogue, self reflection and social involvement; focuses upon the dynamics and nature of 'the whole' of what is experienced and perceived; looks within the person for answers as well as out upon their behaviour and context; champions the authority of what is actually experienced right now in the moment; explores multiple levels of experience rather than searches for a single irrefutable truth; looks to the inter-relatedness and interdependence of all influences and everything within view; enquires within the frame of an authentic and intimate person-to-person relationship; strives to co-inquire alongside others rather than to 'do inquiry' upon them; expands awareness and consciousness through respectful questioning and dialogue; emphasises the authority of the person and their phenomenological experience; endeavours to educate and learn from and develop all involved. Facilitation of this nature has a developmental feel; it educates 'the person' of 'the professional' from the inside – rather than through a mere provision of fresh skills.

Holistic Facilitation = Inquiring into Moment-to-Moment Experience — “Now”?

Whether as group facilitator, leader, consultant or researcher, staying with my confusion while being led by what is emergent in the field always gets me somewhere in the end! It is

often arrogance, our need to think well of ourselves that leads us to believe we must do something more, take centre stage or make things happen, be in control or take command. Such habits as these de-power people rather than facilitate them. At the last, all the resource we need is arrayed before us – we just have to wake-up to where we are – now!

When we place the aforementioned experiential influences into a chronological frame an interesting multi-layered orientation to reality results – see **Figure 5**. Note how *'reality as felt'* and *'reality as sensed'* stands nearest to the immediacy of what is currently happening – *'now'*, and *how 'reality as intellectually constructed'* – schooled via socialisation and tradition stands closest to the *'past'*. By contrast, *'reality as imagined and intuited'* looks to the *'future'*, imaginatively “feeling the way” ahead, for what we dream today informs our reality tomorrow. Ideally, standing within the balanced position of the middle-ground, a practitioner-researcher retains their ‘sense of being’ while relaxing into a state of alerted flexibility. So placed, they are better able to acknowledge everything within and before them. In this connected and balanced state a researcher contacts and contemplates their experience while the phenomenological wave – of Figure 5 – washes over and through them as they stand firmly in the present. Here we glimpse the poetry of holistic Gestalt inquiry, the muse from whence its art flows.

Holistic Facilitation = Knowing our own Projections?

In **Figure 6** an analogy is given of the group or community as a mirror, a screen on which imaginative projections are reflected back to a facilitator of their own sensate, social, emotional, fantasised and spiritual world views. Note the hypothesis in evidence here, namely, that ‘what we bring is what we get’, for it is implied that a facilitator's disowned issues are likely to be projected out and picked up by the client system, covertly smouldered upon and eventually reflected back to them at all levels of group-life! Using Figure 6 as a mirror of a group facilitator's own inner world, an interesting vision of what the facilitator meets in terms of their own projective processes is proposed:

* At a sensory level a facilitator meets their own phenomenological construction of the physical world, i.e. if they are more kinaesthetic than visual, that is what they in turn pick-up; the nature of the world they conjure up is a consequence of their perceptive style, simply, the sense we bring with us dictates the nature of the sense we make.

* Socially a group facilitator meets their own inner attitudes in the responses of others; everything they have been culturally taught and intellectually believe fuels what they expect and informs the social contract they set out to co-create with their clients.

* Transferentially group facilitators, especially when striving to speak from an authoritative position, are caused to re-stimulate earlier emotional patterns characteristic of their biographical history; at this level they may find themselves trying to play out earlier consultancy roles as they inadvertently compare their present client to earlier ones, or otherwise attempt to parent over-dependent clients they have inadvertently regressed.

Figure 5

**THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL WAVE WITHIN
HOLISTIC/GESTALT INQUIRY**

THE PAST

(Historical & remembered influences)

Reality as Intellectually & Socially Constructed

(What I think is happening now in the
light of earlier knowledge, experience
& learning acquired from the research field)

Reality as Felt

(My experience of emotional energies &
meanings that arise from within me)

NOW

(Unfolding influences of the moment)

Reality as Sensed

(What I see, hear & touch in the sensate
and physical world I exist & function within)

Reality as Imagined & Intuited

(Metaphors & intuitive imagery that
provides symbolic/spiritual meaning)

THE FUTURE

(Influences forming or yet to form)

Figure 6

Know your Projections – The Group as a Facilitative Mirror

The group as a mirror of the physical world — Domain of sensory/physiological input

Facilitator/Leader as representative of a physical container and pack-leadership:- The group as representative to the facilitator of a primordial energiser, re-stimulating of primitive and instinctual reactions. At this level a facilitator needs to be physically anchored and grounded, centred within their own physicality, perceptively attuned and alert to physiological needs and the necessity of building physical support.

The group as a mirror of society — Domain of cognitive learning & socialisation

Facilitator/Leader as representative of conventional authority and task leader:- The group as representative to the facilitator of a social milieu demanding of a task and conventional leadership, re-stimulating of issues of inclusion and exclusion. At this level a facilitator needs to resist being enrolled as a leader rather than as a resource, clear regarding their social contract, the culture they carry and the role-models and role-sets they operate within.

The group as a mirror of our past — Domain of past & historical influences

Facilitator/Leader as representative of a parent and of authority figures of the past:- The group as representative to the facilitator of their family of origin and inviting of a parental response, re-stimulating of earlier family reactions and history. At this level the facilitator needs to avoid being seduced into a transference role, becoming intimate or confluent, collusive, feeling over responsible or parent-like.

The group as a mirror of the self — Domain of the ego & projective identification

Facilitator/Leader as representative and recipient of imaginative meanings/projections:- The group as representative to the facilitator of their unconscious self or personal shadow and re-stimulating of their need to enact, to flee from or to control their inner imaginative world. At this level the facilitator needs a clear sense of self and of objective reality, to receive supervision or shadow consultancy so that they might withstand the projected energies that swirl around them.

The group as a mirror of the cosmos — Domain of the collective unconscious/mysticism

Facilitator/Leader as representative of symbolic meanings and higher states:- The group as representative to the facilitator of the unknown, the fertile void or the unfathomable mysterious universe, re-stimulating of their sense of insignificance in face of the cosmos. At this level a facilitator needs to be alert to symbolism and able to tolerate confusion without being overwhelmed by a meeting with the unknowable.

* Projectively, as everything is to some degree a projection from the self, the facilitator meets their own inner psychic world, myths, emotional energies and unconscious process/blind-spots; as we imagine so we construct our world, inclusive of our fears.

* Transpersonally group facilitator's meet their own shadow, unformed notions, beliefs and speculations about life, death and the wider picture beyond the human condition; their sense of connectedness to the universe – their soul's cosmic home or their ego's greatest threat!

From the above we learn that the entanglements and confusions we experience in a group – are like as not merely convolutions of our own inner life.

Robin Shohet (2005) reminds us that the 'logic of objectivism' is that if we cause ourselves to be distanced from something, indeed anything, it becomes an object, a lifeless thing without energy to impact or transform us. In this way feelings end-up being seen as sentimental, imagination is perceived as chaotic and intuition is derided as irrational, and a facilitator ends up alienating themselves from the richest of tools – the totality of their facilitative presence. Taking up this cudgel Joan Wilmot (2005) records how her partner and her self were suddenly overcome in a training group with a sense of utter powerlessness. They had used all their tried and tested facilitative tools to no avail and nothing they seemed to do shifted either the group or their feelings of powerlessness. During the break the facilitators conferred together, and as powerlessness was not common to their facilitative experience they speculated as to whether they were picking up some of the group's distress. On return they shared with the group how they were feeling and asked in return how they themselves felt at work. The group shared they often felt useless and until the facilitators had shared their recent insight they had seen them as pretty incompetent also!

Recognising, seeing through and over their own projections, holding and reflecting back the projections of others while attempting to resolve what is projected upon them is the singular most important multi-task a facilitator must address to foster relational health.

Simply, by and large, facilitators are in constant danger of getting from the group what they give as well as what they withhold.

Holistic Facilitation = Integrating Soma & Soul?

Over the years, having trawled widely through the various mystical and spiritual co-creations reported in the literature – especially Taoist and Hindu sources, with a view to exploring how the same might integrate to the facilitative map supported by this text, led me towards the synthesis suggested in **Figure 7**, in which are arranged three devises:

- The **Causal Body** which symbolises the eternal portion of ourselves which is said to exist beyond time and space and to house *spirit energy* – pure un-manifested potential, plus *soul energy* – the source of our Higher self and *mind energy* – emotional feelings and desires; influence of energy from this level may be suggested to fuel the archetypes of mystic, saint, guru and master.

- The **Subtle Body** which is taken to have existence in time but not in space, that houses our *ego* – mental and intellectual awareness, plus our *intellect* – ideas, beliefs and concepts; mental energies of this level may be suggested to influence the archetypes of magician, teacher, shaman and artist.

Figure 7

E X P E R I E N T I A L L E V E L S O F R E A L I T Y

CAUSAL BODY
(SPIRIT & SOUL)

TRANSPERSONAL/INTUITIVE — Reality as intuitively guided (Listening to the Void/Nourishing Soul?)

Intuitive and symbolic influences which relate us to the universe and help us to hear its message; altered states of consciousness; near-death experiences; visions and divine guidance.

- *What greater purpose do I serve here?*
 - *What am I here to learn?*
-

SUBTLE BODY
(EGO & INTELLECT & MIND)

PROJECTIVE/IMAGINATIVE — Reality as imagined/projected (Integrating the Shadow/Unconscious?)

Internal meanings and images we thrust out upon the world; life as a mirror or reflection of the self; our unconscious at work upon and within us; artistic and poetic creations.

- *Which part of me is engaged or disengaged right now (intellect/heart/image/role)?*
 - *What part of me am I denying right now (my relationship to my shadow)?*
-

EMOTIONAL/TRANSFERENTIAL — Reality as emotionally enacted (Recreating an Emotional Past?)

Emotional patterns and prior learning carried into the present; family dynamics and memories binding us to the past; when memories use us and take us over.

- *What past dramas are impinging upon the present (transference)?*
 - *What relational dance am I being drawn into here (counter-transference)?*
-

SOCIAL/CULTURAL — Reality as intellectually constructed (Attachment to the World as Taught?)

Negotiating a self in relation to others; acquiring a role in the intellectually taught world maintained by language, culture, social norms and beliefs.

- *What are the social rules or professional values I work to here?*
 - *What community or group shapes my behaviour right now (profession/culture)?*
-

PHYSICAL BODY
(ENERGY & MATTER)

PHYSICAL/SENSORY — Reality as physically sensed (Physically supporting ourselves?)

Experiencing ourselves as a sensory being living in a physical world; life as a series of sexual and survival instincts, the animal within us; impulses and needs; body as self.

- *What information am I gathering from my senses right now?*
- *What do I need to better ground myself in my physical being?*

- The *Physical Body* that is seen as existing in both time and space which we experience as housing our *energetic field* – electro-magnetic energy, plus our *material field* – cellular structure and sensory perception; earthly influence from this level may be suggested to fuel the archetypes of warrior, scientist and pragmatist.

While at the level of imagination we shoot off portions from the personalised self to impose our own creations onto the world, at the transpersonal level we struggle to get to grips with external and internal unknowns – the universe’s raw potential along with our own. In this context the above map is not so much a working hypothesis as a facilitative guide to what is hypothesised to be spiritual influence said to be at play in the human condition. It is neither a truth nor a falsehood, merely a phenomenological interpretation to help us shape what is essentially unknowable; I am thus attempting here to use a metaphor to catch a metaphor.

It is always hard to read terms such as *heaven* and *soul* without being re-stimulated into attitudes of mind seeded by the church, religion or our earliest conditioning, but what I’m hoping to convey is something of the unknown and unknowable quality of existence; the mystery and complexity of the whole universe we act and function within. A universe which even the most scientific amongst us seem to agree has no beginning nor end and seems to be expanding in all directions into never-ending space! In this context, our ‘causal’ and ‘subtle’ bodies plus notions of spirit may be seen at one level as poetic devices, expressions of states of experience that are nigh indescribable and impossible to define or to convey in conventional terms, yet, which nevertheless represent subtle influences an holistic facilitator must still entertain if not account for.

For example, there are times when facilitating a group that I find myself in a heightened state of awareness, in a zone where everything seems to interrelate with everything else, wherein as a part, I seem able to flow in tune to with a reality where my interventions intuitively hit the target and I ‘intuitively know’ what needs to happen next. It’s as if I’m in touch with a finer energetic connection than usual – I’m in the zone! At such times, physically, I am often aware of warm currents of energy flowing down the side and back of my neck and experience a sensation that feels as if a warm viscous fluid is being poured into me at the back of my head. I don’t label this experience in any way but rather just let myself stay with the arising phenomena without allowing my imagination to blow it out of proportion or my intellect to locate it in ‘the known’.

So, staying with phenomena, witnessing it, letting experience inform us rather than trying to solve such manifestations like a cryptic cross-word puzzle that demands witnessing and completion, this is the art of transpersonal facilitation. Just staying with the experience, witnessing and being informed, remaining non-judgemental and open – this seems to be the thing. And what makes me believe an experience is a transpersonal rather than a fantasised, imagined or transferential one? Well, I can never be sure, but there seem to be some distinctive and qualitative differences.

For instance, transferential material tends to evoke earlier emotional energy along with memories of times long past, while fantasy-driven material from the imagination seems to project visual material – movie-like – upon the mind. Transpersonal experience, conversely, my experience suggests is far less emotionally and imaginatively arousing; though nevertheless inspiring it feels more like ‘being guided from without’ rather than ‘motivated or stimulated from within’. Indeed, I would also go so far as to suggest that

transpersonal experiences seem also to encapsulate aspects of ‘love’ and a sense of being at one with the world!

Love in Juddu Krishnamurti’s view is less an emotion born of man than *a core condition of the universal field*; something that remains when you take away all the other interruptions to authentic contact glimpsed ‘through the mirror of relationship’ (Holroyd 1991). Though there are similarities here with the ‘I-Thou’ relationship of Buber – where the transpersonal is accessible through a respectful loving relationship (Buber 1951), in Krishnamurti’s view true love doesn’t come into being through a realisation of the self but with a surrender or ‘death of the self’, when there is no barrier between the observer and the observed and love can pour in (Holroyd 1991).

All this has interesting ramifications for facilitation, for if we are to invite love into our facilitative relationship we will need to step out of the way. In this context, adopting an objective professionally informed role may prevent facilitative endeavours from being loving ones. This is not to say we need to lose ourselves or flow into our clients in a confluent way, but that we need to set up relational spaces – periods of silences perhaps – and ego-less conditions that allow love to naturally arise.

In transpersonal terms, if I was to choose one key idea to stand as a symbol for Gestalt’s loving approach to facilitation, it would be ‘the quest for authenticity’. Thin-skinned and sensitised to themselves and their clients, a Gestalt facilitator in the unforgiving light of authenticity realises they cannot facilitate what they haven’t experienced or do not know, for the dialogical approach of Gestalt’s forever interpersonally deepening nature shows up such flaws. But ‘tough-love’ rather than ‘sentimentalised love’ is the quality sought here, a love which warrior-like – or Zen-like if you prefer – invites you to face your pain and to learn from it, to risk intimate engagement with your fears so you might know them better, to experiment with daring to be fully and authentically you.

As to how far you should go, listen to your client, it is a rare and somewhat disturbed client – in my experience – who goes counter-intuitive to the extent of allowing a facilitator to take them further than the facilitator has been themselves, as most of us have our own internal crap detector which whizzes wildly when a bogus inauthentic facilitator enters the scene.

At the last, authenticity is a product of a lifetime’s learning, it stems from a deep commitment to ‘what is’ and is born of ego surrender and dissolution of any need to impress or gain ascendancy over others. Indeed, Gestalt has been suggested to work to the same ends as the mindful meditative practises of Theravadan Buddhism (Kolodny 2004). What Buddhists term ‘hindrances’ to enlightenment have been seen to have their counterparts in the Gestalt notion of ‘resistances’, mechanisms of mind that take us away from the present moment. Both Buddhism and Gestalt teach us recognize hindrances when they arise and show us a way to return to present-time awareness.

Translating the Buddhist lesson into Gestalt terms, when our awareness is full and steady and our habitual resistances do not interrupt our moment-to-moment contact we are said to be able to appreciate ourselves and our lives more clearly. In this way, available to ‘what is’, “both in the immediate sense of what is true in the given moment, as well as in the larger sense of ‘the truth of things’”(Kolodny 2004 p96) we develop a skilful means “for noticing and ‘dwelling in’ our actual experience before labelling and meaning-making set in” (ibid p96). Buddhist and Gestalt traditions alike rely on insight

and intuitive knowing rather than the kind of analysis that accompanies attempting to figure things out. And the nature of self-insight and awareness that arises of itself from out this process of opening ourselves to the moment, well, this I have personally found to be penetrating and deeply cleansing, and all we have to do to invite it in.

“A clear and powerful observation emitted from one’s loving heart is magnetic, compelling, difficult to brush aside, and beautiful to behold” (Zinker 1994/98 p.4).

EPILOGUE

In the last analysis this work invites you through the cultivation of ‘mindfulness’ and ‘active experimentation’ to facilitate yourself before you begin to facilitate others – as your degree of self-awareness and ‘the human condition’ you enshrine lies at the core of your facilitative skill. Coupled with sensitivity to the human condition, to produce facilitation of excellence we need to welcome change, to risk authenticity, listen to our uncertainty and to be guided by the wisdom of the facilitative field that opens before us.

So set about engaging your own explorations, develop your own sensitivities, collect your own experiential data and allow model within this work to lead you into new facilitative territory and levels of personal competence; to this end perhaps rate yourself on the self assessment profile provided in **Figure 8** (for the more accountancy minded you might rate yourself periodically on a scale of 1-10 in each category so as to chart your progress through time).

In facilitation, as with life, it is the quality of journey rather than the end product that determines the gains. Again, remember in your facilitative role to be guided by the inner intuitive voice of what is at heart facilitating you.

The only thing that makes life bearable is the ever present uncertainty of not knowing what comes next, the joy of a future that remains thankfully unknown. Just imagine how it would be to know every outcome, to be able to predict with with certainty the result of every strategy – what a living Hell. Yet this is what the business community all too often expects its facilitators and consultants to do!

Figure 8

YOUR FACILITATIVE PROFILE ?

In terms of being holistic & focused upon field-led inquiry how do you rate yourself re:

- Retaining an eclectic & fluid stance?
- Showing interest in tacit ways of knowing & in generating knowledge by dialogue?
- Focusing on the whole of experience inclusive of internal & external influences?
- Championing the authority of what is experienced moment-to-moment?
- Exploring the inter-relatedness & interdependence of phenomena?
- Enquiring within the frame of an authentic & intimate relationship?
- Honouring “being” rather than “doing”?
- Emphasizing the authority of the person and their phenomenological experience?
- Endeavouring to educate & to develop all involved?
- Retaining flexibility so that new avenues of exploration may emerge?
- Taking an interest in the “how” much more than the “what” of emerging material?
- Attending to what is unique as well as what is general in the facilitative field.

In relation to nurturing a climate for growth & learning how effective are you re:

- Taking responsible for setting the initial culture & trust for exploration;
- Helping to elicit & clarify purpose in a democratic person-sensitive way;
- Acting as a flexible and transparent resource;
- Responding to intellectual content & emotional expression;
- Endeavouring to give to each individual the attention they warranted;
- Taking the initiative to share your thoughts & feelings;
- Raising awareness to the options in a take it or leave it way;
- Accepting & acknowledging your limitations;
- Negotiating the focus a& content;
- Performing collaborative & holistic inquiry;
- Endeavouring to cultivate & embody a genuine presence.

In terms of multiple levels of experience how effectively a facilitator are you in:

- Engaging the physical-sensory environment & illuminating sensory intelligence?
- Responding to the social-cultural environment & illuminating social intelligence?
- Holding the emotional-transferential climate & illuminating emotional Intelligence?
- Surfacing the imagined-projective (‘shadow’) & attending to self intelligence?
- Locating intuitive-transpersonal qualities & attending to spiritual intelligence?

Regards the client-facilitator relationship how do you handle the following phases:

- Orientation: laying the groundwork for communication
- Identification: focusing upon mutual interests & needs while identifying a unifying theme?
- Exploration: engaging with the client's energy & interest & exploring their issues?
- Resolution: debriefing for insight and completion & raising awareness to the outcomes?

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Appendix 1 *Experiential Levels — Suggested Interventions*

Facilitating at the Sensory/Physical Level [Raising awareness to physical & sensory influences; observing, listening & attending to the environment; focusing on bodily sensations & internal stimuli; reporting your perceptions; contacting & sharpening-up your senses].

Interventions – So, right now, what are you especially aware of in the physical world? What captures your eye? Whose voice especially alerts you? How does this room impact your senses? How does your body react to this information? Are you hearing my words at a head, heart or gut level? If you keep in eye contact with me what if anything changes? What physical evidence – if any – supports your viewpoint? I notice you appear to stop breathing when I challenge you – how might it be to remember to keep breathing? I saw your facial colour change just then. I’m especially aware of your gaze. Your body appears expectant – are you wanting something from me? Close your eyes and listen to your body – what sensations arise? Which part of this scene stands out for you? I’m feeling hot and without air – would you mind if we opened a window? Can we move our chairs nearer to make this large group more intimate. I want a toilet break and a chance to stretch – how about you? I’m in danger of losing focus as I’m feeling over-informed by information. I’m feeling tired and bored – how are you? If you say ‘no’ again, but this time push against me – how does your experience differ. What’s it like when you sit back in the chair and allow it to support you? Bring to mind your past biographical history, walk a line from your birth to where you are now – stopping to relate meaningful and critical events from your life. Scan back through your life and see which stands out for you – what has this memory got in common with what’s happening now in your life? Draw a picture of your body – try to feel each part of your body as you draw. Scan through your body and tell me where you feel most alive and least connected. When you walked across the room just then – your limbs seemed to frail around as if didn’t belong to you! I notice that when you say ‘no’ you set your jaw. When you speak I notice your eyes drop and you avoid visual connection. How is it when you remain in eye contact and we continue to dialogue? How might you better support yourself physically through this difficult period? What does your body need right now? Are you willing to shake your shoulders and stretch – before we attempt this again? Try repeating that last phase again, but this time note where in your body it resonates. Scan your body and say ‘right now I am aware of ...’. Bring a memory of a time when you were sad – see what if any physical reactions emerge. To explore your moment-to-moment awareness just describe whatever you are hearing, seeing, or sensing in your body now. How differently does it feel when you allow yourself to say what you are saying softly? I notice you sighing a lot – would you like to experiment with taking some really deep breaths and prolonging your out-breath. You say you ‘feel all a tremble’ – can I invite you to stand up and let your body shake out its tension. So when I say ‘stop’ – where in your body does this impact you? When you follow the journey of your breath through your body – where does it end up? I notice you stroke your throat when speaking – could you exaggerate this more and see what results. I wonder what might happen if you stopped talking, stood up, and let your body communicate its own message right now. Look around and describe in detail everything you are seeing and hearing and sensing now. Try walking towards me to discover where’re most comfortable.

Facilitating at the Social/Cultural Level [Raising awareness to socio-cultural phenomenon; co-creating & negotiating rules; raising awareness to purpose & task; co-creating a safe social structure; fostering research-mindedness; exploring & meeting relational needs]

***Interventions** — So what ground rules do you want to operate by? What do you expect of me? What role do you want to play here? What needs to happen right now to meet your professional objectives? What quality of relationship do you see on offer here? So what do you really want from me? Having identified that you are lonely – what strategies might you employ to seek out company? Who do you feel in relationship with and out of relationship with in this group? Who do you feel closest to and further away from? You look detached from the group – are you? How might we develop a better sense of community here? Have we formed sufficiently clear rules and boundaries for you to feel safe? What do you think is permitted here and what do you see as forbidden? Is there something I'm doing that's holding us back? What do you distrust most about me as a facilitator? I'm feeling unsure about the best way ahead – what would you do now? It feels to me like we've come through one cycle of inquiry, where might we go next? What task or purpose do we need to attend to right now? How is this community similar and different to others you belong to? Who or what maintains the boundaries here? Who are the culture carriers in this team? Consider those social messages and cultural scripts that inform you – which are really relevant now? Who past and present, living or dead were the main influencers on your life? Bring your school-days to mind – what lessons are with you still. What's the first thought that comes to mind? If you were to re-write your social scripts – what might these be? So tell me what you appreciate most about yourself and your professional and personal achievements? To counter-balance your negative social image – are you willing to experiment with a little bragging? What might you need to say to X next time you meet to complete this issue? Would it be useful to write yourself a reference stating your positive qualities and listing your skills? Try completing ten sentences starting off 'I really like the way I ...' Is there a statement behind your question? Could I suggest you try to analyse less and look outwards more. So what's your action plan to step beyond where you are? When you next meet X – how can you meet them from an empowered rather than inferior position? What's your rational choice regarding this issue? Is there a specific issue you'd like to work upon today? If I were X – what might you say to me to move this situation on? What do you need from this group to help you meet your learning needs and objectives? What social demands are you experiencing right now? So how might we capture what is taking place in this group/community? What politics are being enacted here? What 'isms' seem to flavour our dialogue? If you were to profile my facilitative style, how do you believe it would pan out? What are the guiding principles and rules of engagement we are putting into practice here? What is the nature of the status quo we are co-creating? What if we are merely playing a 'word-game'? If this was a rite of passage – what sort might it be? How real are the relationships we are co-creating here? Is this a contractual rather than authentic community? What are you learning as a professional? What is the difference between 'the professional' and 'personal' you? What are you willing to give up in your life to release more energy and space for this relationship? How come you find it harder to hear praise than to face criticism? What criticisms of me – if any – are you aware of at this moment? In which areas might we fall out? If you were my coach – what would you suggest I work on?*

Facilitating at the Emotional/Transference Level [Raising awareness to past emotional patterns; learning about emotional responses & patterns; understanding & expressing feelings; releasing emotional energy; raising awareness to behavioural patterns and family script]

Interventions – What emotions are informing and motivating you right now? How did you feel when I said my piece? What words especially trigger emotions in you? So if this group were a family — what emotional lessons would you be learning? If I were your parent — how would you react towards me? Can you describe this situation again, put yourself fully in it, and describe the emotions you met at the time. Who from your past might I remind you of? I find myself feeling like a critical parent though I don't perceive myself as critical towards you — why might this be? I'm feeling emotionally drained. I don't like the aggression I experience in this setting. What emotional dramas might we be playing out here? If you were to exaggerate your feelings and speak louder, I wonder what effect this might have — why not try this now. As an experiment are you willing to say that again with a smile — note any difference? Just take a brush, dip it in paint and explore the brush-strokes and movements that best express your emotional state. Are you willing to put yourself into a posture that best expresses your emotional world? If you made a sound to accompany your foot-tapping — I wonder what it might be. What's like to say 'won't' in place of 'can't'? Exaggerate your posture and see what feelings — if any — arise for you. What do these objects remind you of? Tell your dream again — but now see if you can tell it really slowly and feel the emotions involved. Is there anyone in this group who reminds you of your parents? Do I remind you of anyone past and present in your life? So if I were your mother — what unexpressed feelings might you share with me? Can I invite you to experiment with acting into your feelings and releasing them? Although you are talking softly I suspect you are angry — are you willing to continue, to make a fist and shake it to make your point. As you express your anger at X — perhaps squeeze this cushion and see if this helps let it out. What's your emotional choice in this issue? How might you confront your fears in real life? What joyful and celebratory experiences might you introduce in your life? So what earlier situations in your life are comparable to this one? Where in your body do you experience your joy, sadness and anger? How do you stop your self from expressing anger? Are you more parent or child in this community family? If you weren't laughing — how else might you express your feelings right now? What does your laughter say to you? It's fine to cry here — the North American Indians say we only cry when our hearts are full. If you want to feel free — express your feelings. Use this cushion as a symbol of X, see what emotions your body wants to express. As you pound this cushion — try making a noise to accompany your movements. So if your feelings could speak to you — what might they say? Our emotions never grow up — we just learn to contain and express them more appropriately. So what colour is your boredom, your joy, your envy, anger and contentment — and where did you learn these connections. What words and colours might you use to describe your family? What emotions linger with you from childhood? Try to exaggerate this feeling, find a posture that best represents it and let it take you over — so what does this experiment suggest to you? How might you give more expression to the 'emotional you' over the next week? Imagine yourself five years old, waking up in your bedroom — what do you see? If there is one emotion that sums up your life — what is it? When you are not fully here, where do you drift off to? What's it like when you change 'I have to' to 'I choose to'?

Facilitating at the Imagined/Projective Level [Raising awareness to the shadow & imagination; exploring personal bias & imagined meanings; examining self; identifying sub-personalities; illuminating inner motives & ego defences; unpacking how imagination informs facts; getting to know our persona & projections; raising the shadow]

***Interventions** – Are you willing to take this collection of stones and arrange them in a way which represents your family? So what might we all be blind to at this moment? If this group continues in this way where might it finally arrive? If this were a play what parts are we playing – and who are the stars and bit players in this drama? Would you like to tell your life history as a short story – first as a comedy and next as a tragedy? How are you different here to other settings – and why is this? If I was to let you down – what form might this take? I like my challenging nature which I see reflected in you. So what’s on top in your emotional world at this time? I dislike my grumpiness which I see in you. So what words spontaneously come to mind when you look at me? If I was a figure from fiction – who might I be? I just caught an image in my mind’s eye of real autocrat when you spoke – and I wonder how controlling you can be? If this group were a road – what condition would it be in and where might we be travelling? Take this lump of clay in your hands and see what emerges. If this chair had a persecutor from your past sitting in it – what might you say? If you imagine yourself to have had previous lives – where and who were you? If you step out of your chair and leave ‘the current you’ behind – what observations and comments would you make of yourself? If you sat opposite yourself at the age of ten and asked them to advise you – what do you imagine they might say? So repeat the dream you have just shared and let yourself imaginatively complete it in a different way. In your wildest dreams – what do you want to be? Imaging diving down to the bottom of the deepest ocean and finding a chest with a message inside for you – what does this message say? Are you willing to talk loud and fast without censure to see what arises. When you remember your parents – what words come to mind? Are you willing to take the part of your father – so I might question him about his relationship with you? If you were to enrol me as a character in a play – who might it be? So if I were you and you were my coach – what might you say to me? This time when you describe your dream – close your eyes and speak like its happening now. Take yourself out of your dream and let it just go on – running itself – while you witness what unfolds. Close your eyes and let yourself experience a conscious dream about this coaching session – tell me moment to moment what you are imagining. If you were to write an epitaph on your gravestone – what might it be? If your life were a stream – how would the water flow at this time? Bring an image of yourself to mind – now let it change spontaneously and see what results. So now visualise yourself doing all those things you have planned – what else are you aware of now? What creative risks might you take in your life? So if you take this issue and examine it in turn from a perspective of ‘life as taught’, ‘life as found’ and ‘life as felt’ – what stands out for you? What historical or mythical figures inspire you – and why? If this group were a meal – what type of meal would it be? How might a Martian describe what is happening right now? How might you confront this fear in real life? Just relax back and describe to me whatever ideas and images come to mind. Say you won a million pounds – how might you spend it? When you sit opposite me and gaze into my eyes what floats into mind to interfere with our meeting? What do you imagine would happen if you broke this rule?*

Facilitating at the Transpersonal/Spiritual Level [Attending to the unknown & to intuition; surfacing unrealised potential; valuing ourselves & the human condition; being authentic; developing holistic vision; exploring your core values; illuminating our life's purpose]

***Interventions** – So what do I need to know about you to fully appreciate who you are at core? What do you least-like and most-like about me? I value and respect your honesty. How are you going to express more of the real you over the next week? If you sit quietly just paying attention to the parts of you that feels sad, glad or scared – what results? What comes to you when you repeat to yourself – who am I? What life events have led you to this moment? Think of a question you would like answering, ask yourself this question – then let the answer come quietly from inside. If as Zen suggests life is four times down and five times up – where are you now? If you were tune into the real authentic you, the one beyond the various roles and masks you wear – what do you find? If we play with the notion of having a soul or essence – what might our soul have come here to learn? If you had opportunity to choose your life prior to birth – why did you choose this one? In your quietist moments – what speaks to you? Sit quietly for a few minutes and ask for a vision to inform you – see what results? If you scan over your life – what crucial lessons come to mind? When and where do you feel most loving and at one with the world? As a facilitator I'm feeling lost right now, so I will attempt to let energy in the field guide me. Imagine yourself as floating in water, slowing sinking and diluting and dissolving – what remains. When you envision yourself as filled with loving energy – what happens? If you close your eyes and drift inwards – what comes to you? If you attune to this image – where does it lead you? Gaze on the distant horizon and look at the point where the sky and land meet – open this line and enter into it. If you lie back and close your eyes and just follow your breathing in and breathing out – what gradually emerges? Quantum physics says we are more 'space' than matter, that vibrations give substance, that the universe has been here for ever, is expanding in all directions and will never end – how does this impact you? Take a moment to be silent – listen to your self. If you picture yourself as light – what results? In your mind's eye witness your own funeral and ask – so what's my life been about? So let's just stop here – sit with what's happening and allow it to inform us. See if you can go through life today without being led by your thoughts or feelings. Maybe experiment with saying, feeling and identifying with one of the following affirmations: 'the universe is on my side'; 'I am transformed by love'; 'I am one with all things'; 'I am beyond time and space'; 'everything is here now'. If you consider the universe as your friend and as holding you gently in its power – what difference might this make to your life? A man once asked Buddha how long it takes to be enlightened, he answered imagine a bird's wing gently brushing against the top of a five mile high mountain top every five hundred years and when the mountain is no more – you will be enlightened. How do you meet and befriend this group's silence? If we allow ourselves to become one with everything around us, to freeze our thoughts – where are we? What was the shape of your face before you were born? When you let go of your thinking, your desires, need to be liked and accepted – what remains? So imagine you've died and are asked to review your life – so what's it been about? If you knew that tomorrow you'd die – what would you miss? If you had a spirit teacher guiding you – what might they advise right now? If you were a learned sage – what advice would you give me? When you dissociate from your personality and yourself – what supports you? Be here — now!*

THE AUTHOR ASKS . . .

- What might be the gains and/or costs of mapping 'the field' in this way?
- Does this model with developmental relational phases and multiple levels of reality ring true for you?
- Is this model a viable training cum awareness raising tool?
- What is particularly Gestalt and what is less so for you in this article?
- Is there value in knitting 'Humanism' and 'the Transpersonal' to a Gestalt frame?
- What most impacted you and what least interested you in my account?
- Does the repeating of the models in differing forms help to build a picture or confuse?
- If you changed something in this article what would it be?

TO RESPOND TO THE AUTHOR BY E-MAIL OR TO RESPOND OR DISCUSS THE ARTICLE ON THE FORUMS OF THE GESTALT THERAPY NETWORK GO TO:

<p>To contact the author by e-mail:</p> <p>CONTACT PAUL BARBER</p> <p>Webpage: www.gestaltinaction.com</p>	<p>To respond to the author, discuss his questions with him or other Gestalt practitioners or to write about or respond to this article or subject on The Gestalt Therapy Network, go to The Writer's Page:</p> <p>Neighborhood Forum</p> <p>Theory and Practice Forum</p>
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About the author: Paul Barber (PhD; MSc; BA; RNT; SRN; RMN; RNMS)

Paul is a Gestalt psychotherapist and consultant who commenced his career in the 1970's initiating therapeutic communities in acute mental health settings. In the 1980's within the Royal College of Nursing he co-designed with the Association of Therapeutic Communities the first Certificate and Diploma courses in Therapeutic Community Practice, and in the 1990's as Director of the Human Potential Research Group (University of Surrey) co-designed an MSc in Change Agent Skills and

Strategies – a programme he subsequently ran off-campus as a vehicle for organisational renewal. He is a Fellow of the Roffey Park Institute and a visiting Professor in Work-Based Learning at Middlesex University. Paul is director of Gestalt in Action and Renewal.

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About Gestalt in Action ~ Renewal

Gestalt in Action offers Gestalt informed workshops on group facilitation, coaching, conflict resolution, spirituality, consultation and qualitative inquiry on campus at Surrey University, Guildford, plus external consultation and team development. *Renewal* is a sister branch which offers therapeutic interventions to people and groups via a series of ongoing fortnightly groups (www.gestaltinaction.co.uk). Our approach though primarily Gestalt, is informed by group analysis, therapeutic community practice, existential therapy and humanism. We are affiliated to the European Association for Gestalt in Leadership and Organisational Development (EAGLOD) and the Institute for the Development of Human Potential (IDHP).