

**"Re-visioning organizations
by
developing female values"**

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In R Boot, J Lawrence and J Morris (eds),
Managing the Unknown: By creating new futures,
London: McGraw Hill, 1994, 165-183.

In this chapter I suggest that there are human qualities, which I shall call female values, which Western societies have selectively neglected. I believe that these qualities are now re-emerging in the lives of individual women and men, in organizations and in society generally. Below I shall explore this trend and seek to help it on its way. Female values and women are closely linked concerns, but not synonymous. I shall not also attend to issues of women's equality here. I do, however, assume throughout that the profound challenges Western societies face will be better addressed if men and women work together in equal partnership, honouring their potential differences as well as their many similarities.

I offer the ideas below as possibilities I invite you to entertain. They are not an absolute truth, there is no such thing. They are open to revision as our experiences and understandings change. The next section provides a conceptual base for the rest of the chapter - which is more applied. In order to be brief, the ideas are expressed succinctly, possibly tersely in places, with references for those interested in further exploration. Some readers may prefer to skim ahead to 'Times of Change'.

Background Framework

As a lens for looking at organizations, I find it helpful to make a broad distinction between male and female values. I see these as archetypes or principles of being, akin to yang and yin in Taoist philosophy (Bakan, 1966; Colegrave, 1979; Marshall, 1984). The principles are summarised in Figure 1. For easy reference I have listed them, but they are essentially complementary, and so best imagined as being in dynamic relationship.

Figure 1: Complementary human values

Male values	Female values
self assertion	affiliation
separation	attachment
control	receptivity/merging
	acceptance
competition	cooperation
focused perception	awareness of patterns,
clarity	wholes, contexts
rationality	intuition
analysis	emotional tone
discrimination	synthesis
activity	being
reaching out	grounding/holding
thrusting	containing

Underlying themes are:

independence

focus

control of the external world

questing outward

interdependence

openness

cycles of change and renewal

looking within

Both men and women have access to both sets of qualities. Through biological and physical makeup, socialization and social role women are more likely to resonate with the female principle and men with the male principle (Marshall, 1984). (Although this may well be contradicted or unclear for women who have been successful in formal education; Perera, 1981). Individual development means integrating the two principles in one's psyche.

Both female and male principles can take either adaptive or degenerative forms. For example, control can be appropriate structure or can become narrow-minded, tightly held, destructive; vulnerable to forces it has not accounted for. Similarly, openness to different influences can lead to creative synthesis or mean becoming flooded by other people's viewpoints and losing one's own ground.

Although the male and female principles are potentially equal and complementary, patriarchal societies have emphasised male values, and these have shaped their organizations, cultural norms, languages and so on (Spender, 1980; Marshall, 1989). For example, most organizational cultures assume rationality, individualism, competition, clear boundaries and control as valuable characteristics. In contrast, female qualities have been devalued, suppressed and muted, making them largely inaccessible to women and men alike. The male principle has been distorted by being set alone, unbalanced. Its degenerative potentials have been insufficiently contained. Initially the accentuation of male values was probably a leap of human development (Colegrave, 1979), but it has now run its course. Any strength over-done becomes a weakness. Both women and men experience stress and are constrained by the current polarised situation (Keen, 1992; Marshall, 1993).

By way of illustration

I know that I have been in an environment in which I have been living mainly by male values partly by the quality of tiredness I experience at the end of the working day. Physically, my shoulders, neck and head are likely to feel strained, my breathing to be shallow. But the rest of my body is typically sluggish, unwilling to take the exercise I think might be good for me. Intellectually, I am likely to feel overloaded, 'busy', full of half-digested impressions I must now sift or suppress. I will probably have been doing something all the time, with no pauses (even at possible meal breaks) to wind down, collect my energy. I will have been discussing issues mainly in a rational, detached way, not feeling free to draw on intuition or personal experience except in disguised form. I will therefore have been weighing my contributions in advance, translating them into

culturally acceptable language, guarding them - and myself - against misunderstanding. I will probably have experimented with being freer in my thinking and expression, but have been ignored, rebuffed, disparaged - reminded of the implicit ground-rules. Emotionally I may well feel slightly bruised. I will have been on guard in conversations which were more like covert competitions or battles, and felt that the people I dealt with were masked, in role, closed off.

You may be thinking that this is a normal working day. But I know that there are other possibilities, other qualities of tiredness which mean I have been more thoroughly engaged, more effective, and am left with less debris. I suggest that the above description is only 'normal' if we have learnt it from organizational cultures unbalanced in their basic qualities, and so unproductive in many respects. Later sections of this chapter suggest ways to achieve a more health-ful, creative and effective basic pattern.

To return to the framework

As we try to achieve a more equal balance of values, we should not glorify or devalue either female or male. Some women writers have been so euphoric to find that the values with which women are often stereotyped are not by definition deficient that they have seen only their positive aspects. Some men too are 'discovering' the feminine as if it is the uncomplicated answer to all social problems. Such thinking glosses over potential complexities. For example, the female principle is associated with devouring and death. These are necessary aspects of life cycles, facilitating cleansing and renewal, but they are potentially raw and violent nonetheless.

There are disadvantages in polarising female and male values as I do here. They may appear fixed and clearcut, which they are not. The framework risks perpetuating stereotypes of women and men we might be outgrowing. It also misses some complications about what happens when a socially dominant group, in this case some men, judge others from their, selective viewpoint. The devalued, 'female', characteristics above have been attributed to various social groups who appear 'different' (and to nature), not just to women. In discussion, Eden Charles suggested that a similar polarised list of qualities could be relabelled 'white' and 'black' styles of management, for example. So the values I have labelled 'male' are perhaps better seen as the ideals of a dominant group, which help them distinguish themselves from others and maintain their own power (Eisler, 1990).

Despite these complications I shall use the framework here. It provides a valuable map of possible human characteristics, against which we can assess what may be missing in a situation. It reminds us that these qualities have become closely linked with male and female sex role stereotypes, and so serve as powerful reference points as people create their identities. Also, distinguishing female and male values has recently been helpful as a vehicle for giving shape to the socially muted female principle.

To summarise: There are qualities to which our culture has limited access, because they have been systematically suppressed. Early Equal Opportunities initiatives did little to change this relative valuing because they urged equality for the ways women are the same as men. Now some women and men are realising that our suppressed heritage is still

largely untapped, and that public world values are often distorted as they are male values pursued in isolation.

Times of change

Western societies have, then, developed certain kinds of intelligence - rational, analytic and separated. They have created organizations as places of apparent order, where control seems possible. Selectively excluding certain qualities of people, such as their emotions and their other life roles, seems almost a defense against the messy, chaotic aspects of life. But the limits of this illusion were always experienced under the surface, and are now becoming more apparent as there are more challenges organizations seem unable to meet. Both women and men are voicing disillusion and seeking alternatives.

The agendas authors pursue in this volume are almost all, in some way, addressing problems generated by the over-development of the masculine principle. (The development of either principle alone would have had degenerative consequences.) I believe we are now experiencing the re-emergence of female values in various ways as a core aspect of wider social change (Capra, 1982). We now need to reclaim our lost heritage, to re-vision the half of our human intelligence and being we have suppressed. There are signs that this is happening. Gender related issues are at the heart of change, because of what we have discounted - especially women, mutual responsibility, emotions, nature and social groups who are racially different from those with the power to define culture. I believe we therefore need to engage deliberately in three kinds of development:

- 1) Facilitating the development of female values in women's and men's lives.
- 2) Ensuring equality for women, and other marginalised groups, as prime carriers of these alternative views in society.
- 3) Reclaiming the male principle from its largely degenerative position.

All three developments are underway. The latter is the more recent. It is being pursued, amidst much controversy, by men like Bly (1990), Keen (1992) and Simmons (1986), who point to the wounding men experience from living with traditional stereotypes of masculinity, and explore, in different ways, more positive possibilities for the male principle.

Work on these three change agenda is simultaneously wholehearted and yet provisional. It is produced from its time, reacting to current restricted visions, trying to voice appreciations which are difficult to capture. We need to accept this as an evolving process, seeking to articulate qualities which have been repressed and muted - which may anyway require new forms of expression. Finding appropriate ways to work with this material, and so with change, challenges us. Often 'new views' seem too emotional, passionate, a-rational, or critical of others. People react with defense. We need, instead, to find ways to inquire together, learning - above all - to listen with respect to others, especially when they seem different to us, allowing the tentative to be tentative, the passion to be expressed, learning to sit with what emerges and not hold on too tightly as we let our appreciations of the world change. This is not easy. These are management skills for the future (Torbert, 1991).

I do not believe we can, or should, avoid the developments which are currently in process. We have generated formidable powers for destruction. The sense of alienation experienced by many individuals is a significant impetus for change. Of even more importance are the world inequities of which we are now starkly aware, and which we should not condone. Eden Charles and James Robertson voice these issues. We must address the ecological damage we are causing. We need to understand how to work cooperatively as a world, how to achieve ecologically sustainable economies and much more (Starhawk, 1989). So-called female values may help us do so, by recognising our essential interdependence, although this is no cosy path.

It does not surprise me, in this world context, with the uncertainties thrown back to individuals, that several of the chapters in this book have anxiety as a theme. By suppressing our emotional intelligence and favouring detachment over connection and containment, we have de-skilled ourselves to handle such challenges. We now need to learn new strategies of living. It seems that much of the anxiety being expressed is associated with discovering the multiple and shifting nature of 'individual' identity (see Philip Boxer's chapter for a related exploration). These discoveries will especially be threatening to those who have been taught to expect to achieve an independent, coherent, stable sense of self. This has been much more men's heritage than women's. Women as a social group face different issues. From their bodily and life experiences they are more likely to have multiple and cyclic or evolving images of self. Many are now concerned with finding voices for their diverse experiences (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, 1986), especially when these differ from dominant social codes.

In time I think we shall appreciate the benefits of developing our social and personal diversity, of being able to take many perspectives. I have always found Ashby's law of requisite variety appealing. In essence it says that a person or system cannot see in the external world more variety than it encompasses in its internal world (Ashby, 1965). As we need to deal with increasingly complex outer worlds, we need to preserve and develop our own internal diversity. We might do this, for example, by realising that when we attribute negative qualities or emotions to other people these are often aspects of ourselves we are unable to acknowledge. Owning them instead expands rather than diminishes our awareness. Our sense of personal difference does not have to be a burden, it is our ground for being fully ourselves, and so fully engaged with others.

In the following sections I suggest next steps for working actively with the re-integration of values which is now happening. Two fundamental reappraisals of Western thinking are involved. One is the focus of this chapter - achieving a more appropriate and vibrant synergy between generative forms of female and male values (I do not see this as a lacklustre equal mixture). Perhaps we can only start doing this productively now that they have been through a significant phase of separate development (Colegrave, 1979). The other is closely associated, that of taking the wider human and natural environment, and our spiritual connection to it, as a more prominent feature of any human organization. In these aims I think I have similar intents to Roger Harrison as he seeks to develop higher levels of consciousness in organizations. His analyses seem to incorporate a sound appreciation of female values.

I shall first look at some contributions female values make to organizational life if taken more to the heart of practice. I shall necessarily accentuate the female in doing so, but favour ideally both principles in combination. I shall then suggest processes for helping achieve these developments. All of the proposals come from practices I have experienced

in some organizations, some times. They are the future emerging in the present. When they happen well they change the nature of the world. However, as they are different from the dominant culture and its long-established habits they are difficult to formulate. They seem particularly elusive to capture in writing as they are qualities of being, more suited to being recognised experientially than communicated in abstract terms. They risk sounding like platitudes or naive, given the so-called 'realities' of life. As yet, they are at the margins of most people's range of expectations. But in changing times one of our most powerful resources is our imaginations (Harman, 1988). I believe we create 'fields of possibility' in which certain kinds of behaviour are likely to arise and others less likely. We do so through what we expect, notice and encourage, usually guided by unconscious assumptions. We thus set the culture, and also limit it. We can, therefore, bring new realities into existence by acting 'as if' they are true.

The sections below invite you to explore your worldview and that of your organization, and to entertain alternative possibilities about organizational life. They assume the value of the female principle and its equality with the male principle. Specific exercises for you to try are offered, printed in italics. These suggestions are only a beginning. If we adopt an open attitude and engage fully with what emerges, changes will occur.

I: Potential contributions of female values to organizational life

This section looks at how organizations are different when female values become core aspects of their functioning. I am assuming that generative forms of male values are also equally present, but will not elaborate on this.

Many of the proposals are about ways of noticing the world rather than acting on it. It is often inappropriate to swing into action (that may give too much primacy to the male value of activity). Instead I suggest some 'inaction planning'. This means noticing the patterns of activities in which you are engaged, and what you do to keep them the same, and allowing any actions to arise, or not, as the case may be. It is not invasive as an approach, until you know more about the situation and how it is sustained. It can prompt spontaneous changes. Simply interrupting habitual behaviour can have profound effects. You can combine this noticing with questioning the nature of assumed 'reality' and creating alternative images (perhaps using the values framework above). This approach to change - based more in yin than yang energy - involves achieving the future through quality attention to the present, and holding open any expectations.

I.a) Re-uniting split polarities

We can re-integrate qualities which have become separated in male-dominated cultures by adopt an approach of 'both....and....' rather than 'either....or....'. Three polarities seem particularly important to heal: professional-personal, intellectual-emotional and public-private. Our current demarcation of these boundaries splits us as people, cutting off important aspects of our knowing and separating person from community.

We can, for example, develop our emotional intelligence and use this in combination with our intellects. Most organizations are highly-charged emotional environments, especially with anxiety and anger. But their rhetoric is that of rationality. This controls some

volatility, but also restricts vision, limits what issues can be addressed, and suppresses other sources of knowing about the world, perhaps including ethical senses. Dealing openly and productively with emotions is the exception in organizations. To achieve this more we need environments which offer support as well as challenge, to reduce the vulnerability of openness. (Splitting emotions off obviously has protective functions.) People are now developing their emotional and self-reflective skills in a wide variety of personal and professional training activities. I meet increasing numbers of people who are both emotionally and intellectually competent, and have the skills to move between these senses. What is particularly exciting and reassuring is that many are in their early twenties, suggesting this is not a combination that comes only with age.

We can also question the boundary we maintain between our role in employment and life as a whole, and the priority often given the former. The separation itself creates polarised spheres - the public-professional (more male) and the private-personal (more female) - with different codes of ethics and being. I can appreciate the benefits of these boundaries as I leave hassles with the children or builder behind and drive to 'work'. But more of the generative qualities of the 'personal' can be introduced into employment, especially if organizations are to become more responsible and caring in the broadest senses of these terms. Also the individual consequences of building one's life around organizational identity can be degenerative and damaging, especially if that identity eventually fails. I return to these issues in sections I:d and I:f below.

Notice what signals are given about other life roles and commitments in your organization. How is this material interpreted?

If people mention their other life roles does this erode their professional image? Does their dedication or competence come into doubt? Is it better to belong to the golf club or to have children? Do people react differently to women and men as parents?

What conventions govern answering: 'How are you?' Are people expected to signal rationality, being in control, and having their mind 'on the job'? How do people react to expressions of emotion, anxiety, having other preoccupations? How do these judgements affect your assessments of individuals, your stereotypes of the social or ethnic groups they come from?

I am not suggesting that we can always combine all possibilities by a synthesizing approach. Sometimes the re-uniting appropriate is more a free interplay between different elements. For example, I may be aware of my several life roles and move between them, rather than become locked into one or always give one primacy. In this sense, and many others, I think we need to play more with possibilities in the future - in organizations and the rest of our lives.

1.b) Respecting diversity

Because they step outside the dominant viewpoint, initiatives which welcome the feminine are, by definition, more diversity-respecting than uniformity-seeking. I have argued above that encompassing diversity is beneficial within the individual and in any social group. But this is no easy path. Organizational cultures need some coherence to survive. Many, however, demand too much conformity from their members. We can develop practices which help people with different viewpoints and ideas live alongside each other in respect

rather than aggressive rivalry. We can contain differences, loosely but firmly. This is more likely to happen when views can be expressed freely, when people feel heard, when the person is respected even though their contributions are challenged, and when criteria for decision-making are public and openly debated.

But such practices are not in themselves enough. Working in pluralistic environments, with assumptions open to question, is challenging. Living creatively with differences requires dedication, courage and a continual willingness to learn from discomfort.

I.c) Exploring participation

Several authors identify an increased appreciation of interdependence and attitude of participation as themes of current times (Capra, 1981). They are expressing the re-emergence of a core female value. Participation is used in various ways. To some it means consultative working practices. More fundamentally it means appreciating our essential connection with any world - human and non-human - we are involved in, and taking this awareness into senses of empathy, identification and responsibility (Skolimowski, 1992).

Much as this appreciation of involvement in a seamless web of being is needed to address planetary problems (Devall and Sessions, 1985), it is difficult to achieve in everyday practice. We can draw on glimpses of its meanings, for example from experiences of feeling 'at one' in some natural environment. We also have to overcome cultural stereotypes that interdependence and affiliation are negative, causing loss of identity and necessarily placing someone in a dependent position. How radical a sense of participation can be envisaged and then realised in practice are core questions for our times. One way to work with these issues initially is to explore and loosen current perceptions and assumptions about interdependence.

Use the following questions to reflect on your and your organization's values:

Do you feel you should always do things alone, proving your independent achievement?

How do you view people who work collaboratively?

Do you notice and reward subordinates for contributions to the working community?

When you see interdependence work well do you view this as skilled performance, unremarkable or accidental?

We must, however, beware of idealising participation. Vital as it is, it cannot be pursued without appropriate attention to its opposite. We need both attachment and separation, both to value relational identity and individual integrity. Participation too has its degenerative potential, as women are perhaps especially aware having hitherto typically lived more connected lives than men. Maintaining some boundaries is important, as long as this can be done 'loosely'.

I.d) Creating organizations from human images

Rather than assume that organizations have an external logic to which we must adapt, we can create them with human images in mind, so that people can life healthfully within

them. We need social processes to honour our humanity. Below are some of the practices which seem to meet these conditions:

- i) Organizing through flexible forms, incorporating small units with which people can identify (if they wish), to achieve wider coordination and connection.
- ii) Appreciating diversity rather than demanding conformity as a price of membership.
- iii) Maintaining less a stance of control, more one of open, contingent, responsiveness.
- iv) Accepting cycles of ebb and flow, death as well as growth. Allowing space for grieving in times of loss (see Roger Harrison's chapter).
- v) Drawing on varied notions of time. Western cultures favour structured, linear, mono-chronic (doing one thing at a time) formats, maximising speed and productivity. In this world overload is respectable, almost obligatory. But hurry sickness and stress are common. Time can also be opened up, treated as elastic, appreciated as often cyclic. We can dwell with projects letting them emerge, we can 'loaf around'. Such practices seem hardly legitimate these days, yet they often create spaces in which creativity develops. We can also respect the skills inherent in doing more than one thing at a time - polychronicity (Bluedorn, Kaufman and Lane, 1992).
- vi) Giving quality of being equal importance to quality of action.
- vii) Managing personal and systemic stress as part of everyday practice. Helping people maintain their emotional health.
- viii) Accommodating physical needs for comfort, exercise and relaxation.
- ix) Responding flexibly to people's changing life patterns and aspirations.
- x) Containing and facilitating people's self-development, including transformations of identity.
- xi) Supporting people to care for others, internally and externally, without exhausting themselves.
- xii) Having open boundaries, with spaces for children and the elderly.

These notions may seem idealistic given current financial pressures and some major organizations' moves to make recruitment and career pathing even more systematic and prescriptive. But alongside these large company developments there are also more people charting their own life courses in line with different values. They are encouraged by futurists who predict more organic forms of organization and employment (Handy, 1990).

The traditional practices of employment seem increasingly at odds with the lives many people are willing and able to lead. But key assumptions hold them in place. Ones which particularly need questioning are the necessity of working continuously full-time to be taken 'seriously' in career terms, and the need to prove commitment (rather than effectiveness), often by surrogate indicators such as extended working hours and giving organizational demands priority over other life roles. Unless we can think beyond these

requirements, and find more direct ways of addressing the needs they stand for, employment practices will remain largely unchanged.

I recently encountered the force of these supposed necessities again at a seminar promoting good company practice towards women. At the end of the day a panel discussed participants' questions. Despite the earlier rhetoric of equality, they rejected part-time working as a viable strategy for women. They felt that women have to prove themselves within 'the professional culture' (which they did not critique at all), and would not be taken seriously if working 'part-time'. This is a common assumption, expressed even more vociferously when applied to men.

You can experiment by identifying what is unthinkable in your organization, perhaps using the check-list of organizational health above and noting which items are 'impossible', 'far too idealistic' - and then wondering why.

I.e) Fostering heterarchy and mutual containing

We have become used to maintaining order through hierarchies, they particularly contain uncertainty and anxiety. In organizations they give rank and power. We know who to look to for leadership and when we are in charge. We often feel let down by our leaders, but at least we know who to blame. In their lives generally people also tend to attribute priorities, often giving employment dominance over other facets.

But hierarchies have limitations. They become inflexible. They can create impossible expectations of designated 'leaders' and unproductive dynamics of dependency and abdication of individual responsibility. As we appreciate these problems and seek to honour people's diversity in skills and viewpoints we need alternative models. Recognising everyone's equal humanity is an important step, but this can create over-cosy norms of equal needs, skills, rights and power in all situations. This too is limited, denying potentially significant differences. In the notion of heterarchy (Schwartz and Ogilvy, 1980) I see more potential. A heterarchy has no one person or principle in command. Rather, temporary pyramids of authority form as and when appropriate in a system of mutual constraints and influences. The children's game of paper, stone and scissors provides a simple illustration: paper wraps stone, stone blunts scissors, scissors cut paper. There is no fixed hierarchy, but each is effective and recognized in its own realm.

This theoretical model helps me explain the processes of 'mutual containing' I have experienced in some situations when a group are jointly responsible for their own management, including paying attention to emotional processes. Individuals take on different roles as appropriate. There is no need for a strong, separate leader, but someone can take this role explicitly, with consent, if necessary. This proves a more flexible way of working, giving more space for individual's own processes and needs, and yet provides a robust containing space, as long as openly negotiated.

Notice how often in a day you assume that there is a hierarchy and rely on it to bring order.

Notice when you sit back waiting to be organized or cared for. What are your intellectual and emotional responses to this?

What purposes do hierarchic assumptions serve in your organization?

Are you involved in situations where people take joint responsibility to manage and contain? How do you react to this? Do you feel undermined, secure, anxious or?

I.f) Questioning the primacy we give organizations

I join James Robertson in questioning why we have placed organizations above households or communities as important units of management and analysis. Perhaps we do so because they are relatively controlled and bounded environments compared with the conditional and shifting nature of life outside. But I am concerned about this prioritizing, especially as meaning seems to be attracted out of people's lives and their experiences of relationships and community into the artificial conventions of employment. Also, those without paid work are disenfranchised. Even giving organizations more human form will not redress this distortion. The entry of more women into management may even accentuate the pattern.

Organizations provide the main social templates for assessing people - job categories, organizational ranks, size of company cars, salary bands and so on. But by using organizational characteristics to judge individual lives we invade the latter with external, socially-ascribed meanings of worth. People become more vulnerable if social identities are threatened, as they are with the increasing insecurities of employment. The resulting anxiety feeds back into society, into our perceptions of threat, risk and instability.

During the next week notice what life interests influence your decisions, feelings of self-worth, stress levels, flow of ideas. If any one area of your life is dominant, reflect on why this is and what is happening to the rest.

II: Processes for working in changing organizational contexts

In this section I suggest ways that you can help to articulate female values more positively in your organization, and make space for them to develop. My emphasis is, again, on inviting you to notice and question.

II.a) Noticing values and assumptions

We often cannot imagine change because we see through deeply ingrained assumptions. Only when we can catch ourselves in the act of seeing do we have a chance to explore our assumptions and remodel them if we choose.

You can notice the balance of male and female values in your thinking and decision-making, and deliberately see the world from the other position if one has become muted. In meetings, how do issues become defined, what assumptions are made, what values implied, what possibilities neglected? Initially it will probably be most necessary to expand your abilities to work with female values - to see interdependence, or set issues in context perhaps - as these are socially less developed qualities. You can also begin to

question the automatic invocation of male values where it occurs. Is detachment really of benefit here? Are these problems best addressed in isolation?

Once you become used to dominant patterns of assumptions in your organization, you can develop a personal check-list of dimensions which are often neglected, in order to scan these regularly and broaden your view.

Such strategies help you to see over the horizons of habitual assumptions, and create fuller perspectives from which to approach decision-making. This shifts appreciations from being within-frame, shaped by habitual patterns of which we are unaware, towards awareness of the framing used, and an ability to re-visit this as appropriate. It involves a higher level of learning, and makes available a wider range of strategies.

You can promote this kind of awareness more widely by continually asking questions, personally and publicly, especially about purposes and assumptions.

For example: My institution is reviewing its aims for the next few years. A working party have circulated a draft document, called 'A Broad Agenda for the University', for consultation. It is concerned mainly with what activities to pursue and how to go about this. On first reading, it was easy to respond within the frameworks set by the authors. But stepping back I realised that the draft had implications for what kind of institution we want to be, which were much more implicit. This led me into a very different set of questions, responses and suggestions, more central to the University's identity.

It is worth reviewing your techniques for 'stepping back' to achieve a wider view, and adding to them if appropriate. How you do this is probably a very individual matter. I find that insights beyond the immediate scope of presented frameworks occur, for example: when I look again at something; when I walk off to another part of the building; when I notice that the ideas initially felt strange to me; when I leave something overnight to 'mull'; when I explain my reactions to someone else; and when I'm driving.

What preoccupations are repeated in your organization's public documents and private conversations? Are these consistent? What values do they reflect?

II.b) Using process awareness to open spaces to the female principle

Appreciating which values are assumed important and have the power to define issues involves a developed awareness of process. This is an increasingly necessary management skill. In this section I suggest only a few of the ways that this is relevant to developing female values. In broad terms, process awareness can be used both to encourage the expression, development and protection of female values, and to question the habitual dominance of male values.

Process awareness can, for example, help you notice whether diverse views are being welcomed or uniformity pursued. This is a key tension to manage in any group situation. Variety and coherence are both necessary to organizational life, their appropriate balancing will vary according to circumstances. This can be done awarely, with due attention to purposes, and with open acknowledgement of the choice being made, or it can be done covertly or unconsciously.

It helps to be aware of the defense patterns of the male and female principles, and able to draw attention to these. For example, under threat someone acting mainly from the male principle is likely to engage in separation, intellectualisation, projection and attack. Someone expressing the female principle is more likely to become confused, be unclear about boundaries and withdraw. These patterns can greatly influence organizational interactions. I have been in meetings where such dynamics have been noted and acknowledged.

This questioning has prompted a deeper appreciation of the issues involved. Sometimes it has been possible for us to comment playfully on stereotyped behaviour, including our own, and thus experience fun rather than fight.

Attention can also be paid to whose voices are shaping agendas, and whose are silenced or muted. An awareness of how gender and power can interact is valuable here.

Is high value assigned to activities men traditionally perform, and lower value to those associated with women? Where do organization-maintaining behaviours such as supporting, caring and working co-operatively fit in the value matrix? Do arguments based on clear, rationalised, quantitative data seem more influential than those which are grounded in intuition, complexity and qualitative data? Are the uses of gender-based power in interpersonal, social and organizational exchanges recognised and questioned?

These issues are as relevant to writing about the future as to other social activities. As I have already noted, many of the current theories of changing times invoke the re-emergence of female values, often implicitly. When I read this material I gain more from authors who appreciate that the themes they address could be gender-related in some way. For example, they may refer to women's as well as men's contributions to theory, or may address gender explicitly in developing their own frameworks. At the moment, few theories about human society can claim to be gender-neutral, because we still live with many legacies of patriarchal forms. This does not mean that all theories should be dominated by gender analyses; rather, we need to explore in what ways these are relevant for any topic studied.

When I saw the first drafts of other contributors to this book I was disappointed that several did not mention or imply any awareness of gender issues. I was concerned that the future was being defined from a traditional, and therefore predominantly male, point of view, thus replicating historical cultural priorities and patterns. In some ways, then, this chapter is offered as a potential companion to the rest of the book. I believe those by Eden Charles and James Robertson have similar statuses. The three of us are seeking to speak for groups or issues muted or marginalised by the mainstream orthodoxy which prevails today. We aim to help to change both the processes and the agenda of mainstream debate. We realise that, until change gathers pace, we risk being seen as irrelevant or affronting people in our attempts to speak clearly.

II.c) Recognising processes of resilience

This section looks at a special application of process awareness.

Changing organizations significantly is extremely difficult. So much change, even with the most radical of intents, is within the idiom of what exists. Action cultures beget action strategies for change, and so on. Attempted change thus too often becomes 'more of the

same', even paradoxically reinforcing the current culture. I believe this has happened with many of the solutions to incorporating more women into management. Providing childcare facilities, for example, is valuable in many ways. But it can reinforce the assumption that full-time, continuous, working is 'natural', and that caring is a less important human activity than employment. Such strategies can, then, condone over-working for women and men. We can notice when solutions or initiatives are within-frame in this way. Taking female values more seriously might, for example, mean finding multiple ways, equally valued, to judge people, and designing employment contracts tailored to individuals' life situations.

Another way in which cultural resilience is often expressed is by co-opting alternative values into dominant frameworks, thus diluting their effects. I see some of this happening as female values strengthen. Key notions - such as caring, interdependence, intuition and complex thinking - become incorporated into traditional, male, forms. This does not reconstruct the core of theory, placing male and female values on equal terms. Again, we need to be alert to this possibility and able to question.

II.d) Deliberately creating new forms

Attempts to transform cultures will only succeed if they re-vise the form, style and pattern of something as well as its content. Especially when dealing with values, the medium is the main 'message'. For example, as I believe that all knowledge is created from a perspective, that there is no one truth, I write in the first person, incorporate information on my viewpoint and use illustrations from my experience. Writing in the third person would contradict, and therefore undermine, my espoused position. Introducing new ideas in established forms maintains the dominant culture.

Male forms still dominate most organizations, they tend to be linear, hierarchic, time constrained, focused and bounded; the arrow is a key symbol. Female form is more cyclic, about creating spaces, egalitarian and open; the circle is a key symbol. I increasingly come across female-resonating forms in business settings. They seem to encourage equal participation, expression of different modes of knowing, mutual support and the achievement of high quality decision-making. In my experience they are not especially cosy, more 'searching' in the deeply scrutinising sense. At their best they have offered me individual feedback and insights as well as participation in productive group achievement.

Many organizational practices which honour the feminine are based on circles. For example in decision-making everyone in a group can be invited to voice their positions and be heard. This does not force conformity, but allows the full range of views to be expressed. Sometimes potential agreement becomes apparent through this process. Sometimes it becomes obvious that no coherence of view is possible. Sometimes other creative solutions emerge.

A similar approach can be used to collect energies together at the start of a meeting. People may be invited briefly to give a piece each of personal and professional news, or mention something which is on their mind. Rather than obstructing 'business' with personal issues this process usually seems to respect but not inflame the latter. I have often had the experience of starting meetings in this way only to find that work on the official agenda went particularly smoothly, and quickly. But this technique should not be used as an empty ritual, when people are not fully heard.

Paying attention to cycles and allowing them to take their course is also, for me, a more female process. This involves, for example, judging the appropriateness of acting and ceasing to act, working with people's energy patterns rather than over-riding them, recognising the value of 'time off' and incorporating preparatory and relaxing phases as part of a more cyclic view of action. The results can often be surprising. For example, low motivation is not necessarily 'laziness', but may hold messages about the task which if surfaced could transform its nature. Respecting energy patterns must, of course, be balanced with an appropriate measure of persistence and reaching out derived more from the male principle as a companion skill.

Do people respect energy phases and work with them? How do people react when energy drops? Do they try to sustain it artificially or can they follow it down, learning its lessons? Do people know when to persist and when to yield?

New ways of operating need much repetition to become established. They must be introduced consciously initially, only later becoming habitual.

II.e) Developing management skills which facilitate working with female values

The skills of noticing and questioning, and abilities to reframe the habitual world, proposed in this chapter require a developing awareness of your own internal balance of female and male values, and a willingness to experiment with this. Such exploration makes easier an attitude of respect for the diversity of other people. Many forms of awareness and personal skills training open up these dimensions productively. There are certain characteristics I find often in people able to create or participate in environments in which female and male values are in productive dialogue. These are:

- i) High quality listening skills and a propensity to adopt this approach to most situations.
- ii) An attitude of accepting things as they appear as an initial base for being and action.
- iii) An attitude of inquiry and questioning used to raise other people's awareness. (When formal leaders - who have choices and pressures to be more directive - adopt this stance it has particularly significant effects.)
- iv) Emotional competence: awareness of their own feelings and boundaries, and an ability to express these alongside other forms of knowing.
- v) Attention skills which allow them to look inside themselves and out at the world simultaneously.

A case example

To close these explorations I offer an example from an organization in which some of the suggestions do happen, sometimes.

The organization is Wrekin District Council in the UK; it has a workforce of about 1500 people. It is not a paragon of all virtue, but is open, flexible and responsive in ways which make its culture quite unusual. I have been involved with the Wrekin since the mid 1980s. I am now occasional consultant to an in-house team who work on issues of organizational culture, undertaking projects and reporting back to the Chief Executive and Directors. (This in itself is distinctive, a learning culture in action.) Initially we had charted a cultural 'portrait' together (Marshall and McLean, 1988). A key theme had been 'people-oriented': for example, fostering employees' autonomy and respecting their other life roles.

I was working with the team one day as they planned their next presentation to the Directors, which they wanted me to attend. I said that I could not do so because the meeting was on the second day of the school summer holiday; I did not want to be away from my children as the next day they would leave to visit grandparents. The team's immediate response was 'Bring them with you', and they offered to book the children into their local Play Scheme. I accepted their offer.

On our arrival we were taken to the Play Scheme and introduced to the staff, who were well briefed on our situation. I stayed to see my children settled and was then taken on to the meeting. The presentation ended late morning and I joined the Chief Executive, Personnel Manager and Culture Team for lunch. Later the Chief Executive invited me to meet with him individually to continue discussions. In doing so he made it clear that he knew I had my children with me, and we planned how I would meet up with them and catch the train we needed. These plans worked well. At no time did I feel devalued because I was a mother, or that I should not have been charging my usual fee for my services, or that my commitment, competence or concentration were in doubt. I felt accepted as all of me.

This example struck me forcefully as different in its mundane assumptions about people, parenting and competence. People, especially women, are often surprised when I recount it, it is somehow difficult to believe as a possibility.....for the moment.

In reflection

As I close this chapter I am left with my own noticings and questions. I have not intended to glorify female values or devalue male values, but my balance of concentration may suggest that I do. I have become uncomfortable at repeating the lumpy phrase 'female values'. This seemed necessary to frame the issues and provide some clarity, but the repetition has made me more aware of how simplified this - also very useful - notion is. I have become more aware of how provisional and fragile expressions of an alternative way of seeing must necessarily seem, and how naive and trivial they may appear if the full search-light of dominant culture critique is directed at them.

I have sometimes lost faith with writing this chapter, concerned that what I, and others, experience as exciting alternative possibilities risked sounding like platitudes. But I have a sense that the changes involved are both profound and minimal, that living from an alternative worldview is both a major step and only a shift of the light away, like seeing through a different facet of a crystal. I do believe that there is gathering readiness for the transformations involved.

I wonder, though, about whose future it is, who can theorise about it. I fear that there will be a competition for defining the future, and am concerned about whether female values, and other marginal voices including that of the planet, will be robust enough to sustain themselves in an attacking arena. They need protection and some deliberate sponsorship at the moment. But I also believe that they are core aspects of human experiencing - related to the inner sense of meaning we sometimes reach when we slow down, breath more deeply and look with more compassion on our fellow people and the rest of the world around us. This inner voice wavers, opens itself to questions, grows and changes, but it is strong in its way, its acceptance of its vulnerability is one of its main strengths.

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