

Facilitating Three Kinds of Groups and Promoting Leaderfulness

The following essay harvests the lessons coming from various sets of experiences. It intends to offer an overview with access to practical tools. It also intends to invite a wider conversation with what others have experienced in similar situations. At the heart of this exploration lies the strengthening of group experiences and the key aspiration toward a shared leadership within them. The intention expressed with “shared leadership” has little to nothing to do with an equalitarian political striving. Rather it embodies the yearning to collectively make room for and receive the inspiration of the group soul, the hierarchic being that wants to embody in and inspire the particular group. We can rail against the established position of a leader in a group from an equalitarian perspective. The focus on the negative side of the limitations of individual leadership is not the goal of this article. Groups led by individuals continue to have their place and function.

What I call “leaderfulness” intentionally avoids the trap of “leader or no leader.” Leadership is a natural skill possible and desirable for all of us, and leaderfulness is, simply put, the art of recognizing and encouraging leadership in all individuals. What I’m proposing is a vibrant collaboration bringing out the leader in everyone of us. In my opinion leaderfulness helps us create a sense of community in the midst of a growing sense of meaninglessness and isolation. It offers us a unique experience that we can transfer to other areas of our life. We can learn to let go of the investment in our persona, become team players and take more initiatives together.

The seeds of what I’m exploring were planted in reading the work of Bernard C. Lievegoed, who recognized three kinds of groups: the study group, the encounter group and the working group. In these he saw three different aims. That of the study group is to augment the power of our thinking by bringing together the different perspectives of group members to enrich the understanding, typically in the work of Rudolf Steiner or other anthroposophical authors. Everything that is done under this perspective serves to encourage the individual’s thinking faculties, and the understanding of the topic. The social dimension of the group is primarily supported by thinking itself. Other aspects can support it, though they are secondary and subjugated to the main goal.

The social group’s aim lies purely in the middle sphere of heart, feelings, relationships. This group has a dimension of exploration and support, the

latter of which it shares with the action group. Study and/or art can be part of it. An encounter group to which Lievegoed refers used Goethean observation as a shared activity, but not as its main focus, rather as an additional way to get to know each other.

Finally, the action group is oriented toward initiative and outcomes, be it a planning group for a new Waldorf School, a working group in an existing organization, a group planning a single event, etc. In the action group we are moving a step deeper into the will. This is no longer about deepening objective understanding of a world of ideas, rather about incarnating them into daily life. Naturally, the aspect of relationships is important and therefore it bleeds into this group. But the main focus is to carry something out of the common experience into the will.

In reflecting upon past experience Lievegoed's insights about three types of groups have shaped my exploration and have a bearing on everything I will discuss. I first encountered his thinking some thirty years ago and started asking myself questions, while at the same time experimenting to bring forward different kinds of groups. Study groups became part of my life soon after I was introduced to anthroposophy in the mid-eighties. Encounter/support groups became important alongside study groups, starting from the late eighties and continuing since. Action groups or generally speaking what I call here "will-oriented groups" have come strongly into my life in the experience of cohousing, as concerns the collective aspect, through the work on Destiny Learning (Coen van Houten), Nonviolent Communication or in working in groups with Steiner's "karma exercises." These groups add to the social aspect of knowing each other, that of wanting to have another quality of presence and impact in the world through our words and deeds. I separate on one hand those which affect purely individual action and those which lead to corporate/collective action. This is why I can also group them under the heading of "will oriented groups." Action groups are, most likely, the larger subset.

This article will look closely at three sets of experiences. The first is that of anthroposophical study groups. The second one is a meditation group in which members support each other in deepening both their understanding of something objective—the meditations at hand—and something personal—the relationship to a meditative practice. In the third group I will look primarily at groups working with Steiner's "karmic exercises" and, as a complement, to the experience of volunteer groups working on community issues.

Study Groups

Study groups have been the avenues for many of us into anthroposophy. They can be started relatively easily and we can fall back on other people's experiences or on the leadership of one of us more steeped into anthroposophy and the matter at hand. Studying presents the least difficulty in relation to the three kinds of groups. Still, we all may have experienced challenges of one kind or another in this field. I list a few randomly: the group being dominated by one or two individuals; possible antagonism between a couple of individuals; great rift between those who speak and those who don't; possible lengthy off-topic digressions that may frustrate one or more participants; little in-depth penetration of the topic at hand. Obviously, the list is not exhausted with these few possibilities.

With very simple hygienic precautions the frustrations can be offset by fruitful and rewarding conversations provided we take very simple steps. I will go through a very simple format from study groups in which I was a member, or groups that I helped to facilitate and give shape to.

The first step lies in reconstructing not the whole topic, but just the main themes, its bullet points if you will. The task can be assigned to one or more individuals (e.g., taking up parts of the lecture or chapter) or be performed collectively. The designated person, persons, or the group, rebuild the list of topics, ideally within five or no more than ten minutes. The process is completed when we are in agreement of having covered all bases. A second step I found useful is to ask from the group what elicits most interest, but most importantly what causes the greatest difficulty in understanding. It wouldn't hurt to take down the questions, though in general it is not felt necessary. With this in mind the facilitator of the day, or any other individual who feels moved, may ask a leading question to start the exploration (e.g., the sub-topic that elicited the greatest interest) and the conversation will begin. Nothing else is needed after this.

When everybody has contributed to the shaping of the topic, it is noticeable that there is a constructive desire to offer understanding and address the questions of those who may be puzzled about one aspect or another. The aspect of common participation can also be strengthened in various ways, with any of the following, non-exhaustive list:

- a 10' to 20' social time previous to the beginning of the group with possible refreshments when the group meets in person or social time on Zoom or other platforms
- reading of a verse, followed by quiet time

- an optional check-in. This is tricky and works better when facilitated. First of all it should be short—absolutely less than a minute but possibly a little more in a small group. The purpose of the check-in is to connect to how people are feeling, not to hear a laundry list of what they have been doing during their week. Two questions may guide, if not the exact sharing, at least the tenor of it: “What brings joy into your life? and “What has caused you difficulties?.” The check-in is really there to provide a heart connection between participants. It should not be a time for cross-talk, nor for questions or shows of support. Listening is the overall aim and passing on one’s turn should be an obvious option. A talking stick may be helpful. If you feel unsure skip this step.

Just as consciously starting the group is very important, so is finishing. In this realm another, or the same, closing verse can be very helpful. Last, but not least, a time of review is imperative. I say this even though a study group hardly requires much attention to process. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the establishment of a group or at moments of change (e.g., slight changes in format, or changes in group membership), the established practice may drift or be altered ever so little without people noticing or feeling they have a voice in the matter.

The process of review is the best safeguard for and strengthening of the goal of shared leadership. Leaderfulness is not as much hampered by an individual wanting to prevail over the rest, as by the passivity of the whole—which is the product of what society at large has conditioned as collective behavior up to the present. This engrained societal behavior needs to be actively challenged.

Being leaderful means becoming collectively responsible for the integrity of the process. It would be good to designate one, better two individuals with the task of asking the question of whether anybody wants to bring forth a matter of process and how to address it at the end of the meeting (allow time for it obviously). Always ask the question, even when 90% or more of the time no concerns arise. You want to shake off complacency and want to make sure you catch concerns as quickly as they arise!

The above are just some of the possibilities; obviously many variations may be experimented with. So what have been the advantages of working in this way? I’ll share what I have noticed. First of all there is something foundational in encouraging the social element consciously; camaraderie offers great support to the study. Building the topic together encourages participation, so does the asking of questions.

With these simple premises in place, I have observed more restraint on the part of those who would speak at great length and more participation from the “quiet ones.” The conversation goes into little or no digressions, and practically always avoids enflamed controversies. Moreover, it is often so organic that it “magically” ends in time with a shared feeling of satisfaction. Finally, the growing level of leaderfulness is often palpable; more people step up to the plate. This should be the yardstick through which everything is measured.

On the negative side, habits of passivity or dominance are our worse enemies and an active, participatory process of review is the only way to help us preserve the format. I would say that this is one of the most important, and difficult parts of a leaderful culture: the responsibility of expressing ourselves, and the encouragement of the expression of one and all. We should be able to speak with ease, even when we may feel we are the only contrary voice. Leaderfulness is in fact the promotion of that very important voice! This challenge is all the more important in the two following kinds of groups.

I want to bring in a personal experience that indicated the importance of shared leadership, and this belongs to a time of crisis. During the Covid epidemic our local Vermont group faced the twin challenges of separation/remoteness (Zoom platform) and polarization. It was impossible to ignore the elephant in the room of the Covid tension and the discomfort of Zoom meetings. Fortunately, the social aspect of the group had acquired strength and we all paid attention to it. The check-ins were lengthy. Little did it matter that they shortened study time, because the added connection was highly needed. So was more conscious facilitation to avoid the dangers of raw feelings and strong opinions around the Covid issue. We could say that the group morphed into a study/support group.

In the study group, facilitation and process play a minimal part; they are merely safeguards against worst-case scenarios. As we move to social groups, facilitation and process acquire more importance. This is even more so in an action or will-oriented group, partly to overcome the natural anti-social impulses of our time, but also because of inherent challenges of working with the will.

Social Groups

The groups I will talk about are those working together on the Calendar of the Soul, which Rudolf Steiner qualifies as “potential path to self-knowledge through feeling.” The aims of this group can be seen in relation to the

challenges of the topic. The Calendar of the Soul is one of those rare phenomena, which can feel both close and remote. Many people are used to hear the verses often on a weekly basis. Very few have a feeling for the Calendar as a whole, though this work has been already undertaken by the time of Karl König and has been picked up of late with strength by Richard Steele and others.

Herein lies then the first difficulty: seeing the Calendar as a whole and therefore truly relating to it. The group can help strengthen this relationship by pointing to external sources, such as writings on the matter, which can be referenced outside of the group. The group itself should work in a purely phenomenological way on the weekly verse. The world of the Calendar is a wonderfully self-contained and self-referencing whole. What appears as a mystery in one verse can find a lead to an answer in a neighboring, complementary, or otherwise related verse, but much will emerge just simply from fully understanding the single verse. This is then the first part of the exploration: making sense of the verse through the various translations. We wrestle with the sentences and even with single words, while avoiding associative thinking, dwelling purely on the matter at hand.

In keeping with Steiner's encouragement of the artistic aspect of the Calendar, we can then turn to artistic renderings of the verses. Very often this has been provided by the drawings by Karl König, but other work is available as well.¹ The artistic immersion offers a complement to the analytical experience and deepens the feeling relationship to the verses. I have witnessed many times in which my own experience and that of the participants was deepened by new insights through the drawings; indeed, even times in which a whole line of discovery and insight came solely from the artistic renderings.

Finally, the heart of the experience lies in working each on our own on the meditative aspect of the verse for some 10-12 minutes, followed by a short, individual sharing of what has arisen from the experience. I call this the heart of the experience because it is the part that most helps us to dive into the practice. The last part slowly brings the group to a closing.

While the above are the main elements of the format, other ones can be added, especially at beginning and end. At the beginning a social time of 10 to 20' can help warm up the common space, especially since much of this work is presently done remotely. Finally at the end, a time of review is

¹ Karl König, *An Inner Journey Through the Year: Soul Images and The Calendar of the Soul*; Anne Stockton, *The Illustrated Calendar of the Soul: Meditations for the Yearly Cycle*.

essential since this process is one step more involved than that of a study group. Protecting the common space and guiding it through growth and possible changes, including format changes, is essential to the creation of a leaderful space.

A word about facilitation is important here. Although the format is simple enough, the facilitator's role serves in creating a sense of inclusion and participation. It also helps focus the group to remain into a phenomenological perspective and avoiding changes that are not the result of the common will, but often just an imperceptible, additive drifting away. The more the group shares the facilitation role and other supporting roles (preparation of the weekly material or handling of the remote platform and its logistics) the more it will ensure growing leaderfulness.

Having more than one facilitator offers immediate advantages. It helps people see different leadership styles and encourages them to take risks and consider stepping into the role. It also prevents the problem of having to cancel the group if the only facilitator is incapacitated. A workbook has evolved from these experiences that aims at rendering the experience user-friendly for anyone who would like to embark on it.²

My experience of the group shows that such a format does help people familiarize themselves with and befriend the Calendar. Especially if the group meets on Sundays (the first day one typically works with the new verse) or shortly after, the common work serves as an incentive to become committed to the personal meditation. It is easier to cement resolve coming out of a "high."

No matter how experienced with and committed to the Calendar one may be, it is surprising to see how he will come out inspired with new thoughts or questions at the end of the session. The contrast analytical/artistic accentuates this enrichment, since we often have different levels of personal affinity with one or the other, and therefore we benefit from other people's strengths. And this leads to the next aspect. Although this has not been the explicit goal of the group in my experience, the format encourages common spiritual research. This has provided me with threads of research in which I feel I partly gather the benefit of our common endeavor and realize once more the obvious truth that ideas have no ownership. The "new group soul" comes to the inspiration of all of us when we work together in harmony.

² For details about the format of a Calendar of the Soul group and how to help facilitate it see <https://millenniumculmination.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Starting-Your-Own-Calendar-of-the-Soul-Group.pdf>

I want to add another note about a different kind of social group. Social groups can be the place of choice to explore difficult issues that do not need intellectual discernment, nor a practical resolution or decision-making, rather just a place of deep listening. Such has been the experience of a group of twelve discussing how we felt about and were affected by the Covid 19 epidemic. It was conducted on one session. The deliberate goal of the group had a negative and a positive aspect. On the negative side, resolving objectively the complex matter of Covid *was not the goal*; on the positive end we were seeking to better understand each other, confront what had been the elephant in the room for more than a year, and understand everyone's perspective on the matter. Listening to the feeling and impulses of will was paramount, rather than the way each one of us saw the matter.

The conversation was carefully formatted to present as much time to listen as possible. There was in fact little to no crosstalk or time for debate for most of the session, just deep reflection and validation. The session went as expected, without arguments or emotions. At the end of the 2-hour session we noticed, however, that there was no "happy ending": just an objectively painful acknowledgment of the state of unrest, but more than compensated by a feeling of deep connection to each other. I considered it highly positive in as much as it put us in touch with the very raw emotions that the Covid crisis generated. Feeling deeply this pain was in effect the antidote to the knee-jerk reactions of anger and finger-pointing, plus the vitriolic debates that often met us at the time. With the benefit of hindsight I would now plan for two sessions.

Action / Will-Oriented Groups

What I will bring forth here comes from the experience of a definite kind of biographical support group. The difference with the above Calendar of the Soul group lies in the fact that there is no objective content other than what can emerge from our personal biographies. The element of mutual support is still present, but the orientation is more will-oriented, in line with the goal of the group. The participants want to capitalize on their acquired knowledge to carry out deeds and meet their life tasks and issues more fully and confidently.

Especially in the last six to seven years of his life Rudolf Steiner legated us exercises that open the door to a better understanding of our biography. Among these are the basic practice of the rückschau, specific ways of looking at people we are close to, at times in our lives, at single events, at

important karmic obstacles, etc. They all are in the realm of pure Goethean phenomenology and involve a deeper penetration of what comes to us from the senses in everyday life. We draw insight from looking at the content of our lives rather than the objective content of a lecture or a meditation.

Here we encounter additional layers to the ones we have already mentioned. This derives from the fact that the single meeting has a general unfolding and format, and to this are added the exercises that people will try out during the session. These have their own format/template as well. Let us look at either one in succession. We will find elements with which we have already been familiarized and new ones.

To start with the exploration of our lives needs to be undertaken under some minimal agreements and commitments, among which the holding of confidentiality, the commitment to be present week to week upon which others will depend, and to carry out exercises during the course of the week, among which some basic, recurrent ones and some specific ones that vary from week to week.

As concerns the format of the meeting we can only give some general guidelines since here we will encounter more latitude of choice, dictated by the material we explore. However, some elements will carry through from week to week.

Warming the space is important and this can be done in many ways: social time, check-in, verse are some examples. There would be no reason not to have a song instead of a verse or eurythmy, spacial dynamics or another common activity. Connection with each other is paramount to building a sense of safety and mutual encouragement.

In general, the exercise of the week will be introduced by some pertinent concepts derived from spiritual science and applied to the matter at hand with a practical angle. After a short Q & A session about the matter offered, we can move to a demonstration of the exercise offered by the facilitator and most often just one volunteer. This serves people to familiarize themselves with the exercise, have a deeper understanding and connection with it, with the feeling that it is accessible and comfortable to carry out. To this then follows the break-out work in dyads leading to a deeper familiarizing with the exercise which should be carried out for the rest of the week.

The exercise part closes with a debriefing and sharing of take-aways, insights, questions, etc. The meeting would not be complete without a short review of the whole session itself. Most of the time there may be nothing to say, but the option should always be there just in case some discomfort

arises which could hinder future common work. A verse, same or different from the beginning, may bring the group to a close. The format of the group and the templates for the exercises have been gathered online.³

This is what can be said about the format. Something more generic can be said about the exercises with an example general enough to point to the commonalities with other ones. We shall look at an emblematic exercise, one that forms a turning point among the others, the so-called "lesser karma exercise." Through this exercise Steiner helps us see how dramatic, often unwanted events in our karma take place through the wise agency of the "second human being in us", a being that stands for our higher Self. If we can recognize that there is a higher wisdom at play in practically all events of our lives, we can start to acknowledge the wise guidance of the hierarchies and take fuller responsibility for our lives.

An abridged version of the template in the handbook will ask the following questions):

- Describe the time shortly before the event itself
- Describe the setting around the event with all your senses
- Describe the event itself
- Describe your reactions immediately after the event
- How did you feel (before, in the moment and afterwards)?
- What were your intentions?
- What were your needs based on these intentions?
- If this were an event designed to maximize your growth, what do you see it serving?
- How is it leading you to your better self?
- What could you learn in the short term?
- What do you feel called to do now?⁴

Obviously there can be many ways to get to the same goal, and the above list is only one possible example! We can now mention some additional dimensions to the working of such a group. Unlike the previous groups this one requires additional preconditions. The facilitator must add to basic facilitation familiarity with all the exercises in the handbook. She must be a subject expert. She must also have some basic skill in handling minor conflicts. Although conflict hasn't arisen in my experiences it remains something I would continue to consider seriously. Finally, although the

³ See <https://millenniumculmination.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/spirit-recollection-journey.pdf>

⁴ For the full template see <https://millenniumculmination.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/spirit-recollection-journey.pdf>, pp. 54-55.

format is general and wide enough, it will most likely not work with people affected by serious conditions, such as trauma.

My personal experience with this kind of work indicates that Steiner's exercises, deceptively simple as they may look, have an archetypal depth. They go straight to what matters most. They allow deep discernment and surface insights. And this is just their effect at the personal level.

At the collective level I can compare these exercises with what I have experienced in Destiny Learning (Coen van Houten) or what I have learned in leading trainings in Nonviolent Communication. To my surprise the karmic exercises created a deep sense of connection and a concrete depth of community building, even when practiced remotely. Even people at their first exposure with this kind of work were able to open themselves to the group and be vulnerable. They took away something that can change their lives if they commit to continue.

We have looked at a limit situation of the action group—one dedicated to working with the individual. However, similar conclusions would be reached if we looked at a decision-making within the setting of a meeting of a business, a non-profit or other organization. Here, in order to have an overview, it is easier to start from the part and move to the whole.

One way of taking fully participatory decisions is to use the so-called "Consensus Decision-Making" coming from Quaker tradition, though adopted from its spiritual/sacred dimension to more secular settings. The "leading" of the spirit that comes from Quaker tradition has now been replaced by the experience of presencing, which is primarily entrusted to the skill of the facilitator rather than to a highly conscious and attuned meeting house.

In Consensus Decision-Making three very deliberate steps are taken. Let's look at the instance of a proposal to be approved, one that presents only an average charge and level of difficulty. In the first step the facilitator will take what are called "clarifying questions" with the goal of dispelling any charge arising from unfounded fears or a misunderstanding of the terms and details of the proposal. She will do this until all questions have been answered. Only now will all participants sit in front of the same proposal. It is important to underscore how crucial this step is.

In the following stage the facilitator will address all questions, concerns and objections that the proposal brings up. She will do it exhaustively, actively seeking objections rather than aiming at a quick agreement. The concerns

are addressed primarily by the originators of the proposal but also other participants, as they may feel moved to do. New ideas will emerge about how to adapt the proposal to the needs of the concerned parties. This is an iterative process that may move back and forth for some time according to the complexity of the proposal.

The facilitator will test the degree of approval of each change proposed, until she can sense a general agreement. When consensus is reached the atmosphere of the room is visibly altered for the best. All tensions have melted down and there is a palpable sense of optimism for having something that works for all. The proposal is then accepted with the incorporated changes.

If we now look at the larger picture, the format of the meeting itself is one that tries to incorporate as many experiences of consensus as possible. But there is no archetypal meeting, only an optimum that the facilitator seeks to achieve. To this effect the crafting of the agenda has required work, sometime extensive, ahead of time. Let us see what a frequent scenario looks like.

The meeting needs to set off with warmth and connection. To this end the group may want to start with a verse, or a more mundane reading, song, movement, ice-breaker activity etc. This is often followed by a brief check-in and the reading of the agenda. Time allowing, some groups at times add a community-building mini training. The space has been warmed-up and everybody should feel comfortable.

In an optimal agenda the meeting starts with easy items, the equivalent of an appetizer, that will not or should not bring up resistance, say at most clarifying questions. We build upon the cementing experience of consensus and go through a shortened experience of the consensus process. Only after a few such items do we confront the "plat de resistance", the proposal that has been aired for a while and that some may look at with apprehension. Here it is that the full process of decision-making takes its place, and we will suppose that everything goes well and that the proposal is accepted. Consensus has elevated the spirits and the energy is high.

On the other side of the peak we descend again with easier or medium difficulty items, having built on the cementing experience of consensus. The facilitator may think on how to capitalize on this. Gradually the meeting phases out, without forgetting the moment of review, often mixed with celebration and ending once more with a verse, song or light, celebratory activity.

The Threads / Conclusions

In setting a group in motion we cannot extrapolate as to how we will establish and format one kind of group based on what we know of another. Even though some level of theory can serve us as reference, experience will be the ultimate guide. However, in looking back, we can come to see that there is more that unites these experiences than what divides them and this can be seen in the organic ordering of the stages. In final analysis they point to the obvious, and when this is understood it can help us craft broader, freer formats moving forward. So let us look at what can be observed.

We can present the formats of the three kinds of groups according to the seven life processes, or more succinctly to their expressions in what we know of the first four processes from the widely known Theory U. Although Theory U derives from organizational development work, its main principles apply to a variety of work in the social realm (figure 1).

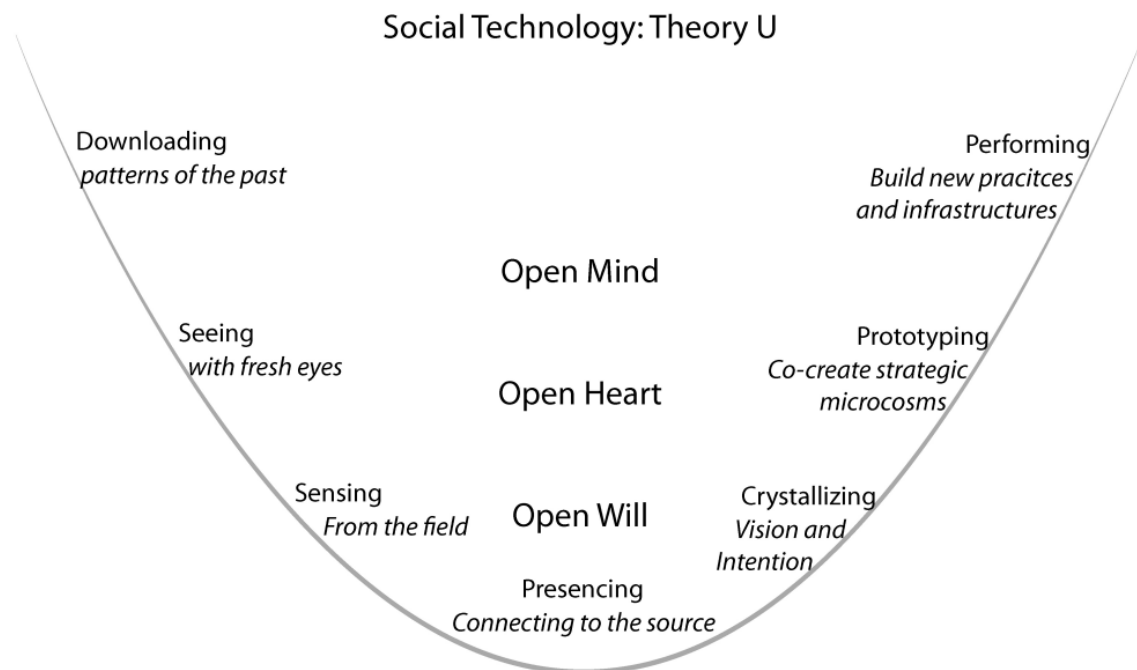


Figure 1: steps of Theory U

The first step in working with fully participatory processes helps the group, community or organization to see things differently, seeing them more fully. When we unquestioningly live as part of a group we are unaware, at least in part, of how its patterns shape us. We may accept the status quo as an unavoidable necessity or blame it on one person or another. Or we

can progress to the stage of the Open Mind (see table 1). Together we can build a broader perspective of the present situation and its complexity and gain a better, more realistic understanding. We can see things more fully.

From this first level, the participants can start to see patterns emerging and realize that they have unconsciously been part of them. Individuals and groups are encouraged to take responsibility for their part in the present reality. This is what encourages connection between stakeholders at the level of feelings, and what Otto Scharmer, originator of Theory U, calls the work of the Open Heart. We start "sensing from the field."

When the process is completed, the shift is perceived in that the participants acknowledge a common ground from which they can operate, allied with a new enthusiasm and desire for moving into concerted action. Through the Open Will a new stage is reached in which the new can finally emerge. A great number of possible solutions can be explored without emotional investment. There is no felt need to push for or advocate one's own perspective. The turning point is reached in the common experience of "presencing." This can happen because the individuals have reached the willingness to let go of everything that they wanted beforehand, and trust the process and the wisdom that is present in the whole. In presencing the past is as if put on hold, because the participants can collectively listen to the future wanting to emerge. The group soul can speak and be heard.

After presencing, the group moves into the right side of the "U." At the stage of crystallizing, the insight and seed ideas that have emerged so far are given focus and direction. Taking even more shape and form, the ideas give rise to prototypes, or pilot initiatives, that can test concrete goals on a small scale. Those that succeed can then be replicated at a larger scale. When a number of pilot initiatives succeed, change can then reach the level of the entire organization through "performing." More than simply integrating the new, performing means ensuring that all the processes described above are sustained on an ongoing basis. It implies a deep-rooted change in the group, or organizational, culture.

The above is true for great levels of complexity. For our present needs, the principles are applied to much simpler settings, but the parallels remain. And for our purpose a look at the first four steps will be sufficient. In the simplest possible terms we can speak of Open Mind, Open Heart, Open Will and Presencing. Theory U implies that work done socially will be the most effective when it includes the possible greatest variety of stakeholders/interest groups/perspectives and when it calls on the

presence of the whole human being of thinking, feeling and will. We will see how this applies to the examples offered above.

When we look at the format of the study group, we can recognize the four steps in the following way:

- Open Mind: the stage of rebuilding of the topics of the weekly study, which ends with an agreement that everything has been covered.
- Open Heart: here we are referring to what lives in the realms of feelings, in this case, broadly speaking our interests and our challenges. This allows the group to "sense from the field", from something larger than the previous, individual perspectives.
- Open Will: this is the bulk of the process, the attempt to create meaning, to digest and make the content our own.
- Presencing: when a study has followed the three above premises carefully, presencing is experienced as a feeling of satisfaction in our minds, a realization that we could only have reached such meaningful insights together and finally, as an experience of completion and ease.

Something similar would be true of the social group that supports people in working with the Calendar of the Soul. I knew of the group format before taking it up. To this was added the artistic experience and the shared facilitation element. Only upon looking back could I detect why the group seemed so rewarding and self-supporting. Here too the steps of the U can be recognized:

- Open Mind: the step of "taking the verse apart" to rebuild it as a whole. It allows us to stand on common ground. We can finally say that we are referring to the same set of ideas and feelings.
- Open Heart: this takes place in the artistic perception. Here we pass from the analytical to the synthetic, from the left brain to the right brain. We feel enriched by a perspective that stands side by side with the first one and that we can strive to merge or bring to a convergence.
- Open Will: this is possibly the most important part since it encourages the personal relationship to the Calendar, the taking of responsibility for the resolve to meditate with the verses. During this part, insights and new questions often emerge. To this end it is important to create an open space and avoid returning to a back-and-forth conversation in the sharing that immediately follows.

- Presencing: in the open space in which insights and questions are offered, and in which we refrain from having a neatly finished product, we can make room for the inspiration of the group soul.

Finally, we can say that the will-oriented group uses the U process even more intensively, both in the whole and in its parts. Let us take them apart in the instance of the work with Steiner's karmic exercises. First of all, the format of the session emphasizes a container of connection and safety, a space where we can share with trust and ease. Then follow the steps of the so-called "U":

- Open Mind: we receive the concepts that can help us connect with the content of the exercise. We are able to ask questions until we all stand before a common cognitive element.
- Open Heart: we cannot jump cold into the exercise. It is important to gain interest in it and feel at ease in approaching it. We are warming ourselves to the coming experience.
- Open Will: we enter the exercise in dyads and we learn everything we can from it.
- Presencing: the first presencing experience can emerge during the exercise itself. When we debrief we go from our own personal experience to the universal experience, complemented by the aspects perceived by other participants. We can often realize how the variations form an aspect of a whole; how little what another person has experienced stands at odds with what we ourselves have experienced. Of course the outcome also depends on the skill of the facilitator, on the conditions of the moment and other more imponderable elements.

All in all, presencing is a common experience. It follows on the heels of a smaller U cycle in which the participants have an opportunity to experience presencing at a more intimate, personal level. To this we turn now.

In the observation of the personal event we follow once more the U framework.

- Open Mind: we first look at the facts given by an event in a determinate setting. We objectify, we keep all attachment and emotion at arms' length.
- Open Heart: we look more closely at our reactions and the feelings and emotions they brought forth. We look at them objectively, with detachment.
- Open Will: the will lives in what we can qualify as our intentions, our values, our needs. Once more, we see them objectively.

- Presencing: if we manage to separate ourselves from the pain, anger, bitterness, disappointment, etc. generated by the event, we can create an open space in which acceptance can take their place. In its wake follow revelations, insights, questions and a sense of peace and lawfulness. Destiny and karma are not our enemies; they do not call for punishments for our misdeeds. We can learn and move forward from whatever comes to meet us in life.

What has appeared in the work for individual change is echoed at the organizational level. In the example of the facilitated organizational meeting it is quite straight-forward to recognize the four steps in the process of Consensus Decision-Making:

- Open Mind: clarifying questions about the proposal
- Open Heart: raising of concerns and objections
- Open Will: incorporation of concerns in an evolving, modified proposal
- Presencing: the proposal reaches the final form and consensus emerges

In the meeting itself the steps of the U process blend and overlap, so we can only speak in general terms:

- Open Mind: the first items only require the Open Mind part of the consensus process.
- Open Heart/Open Will: somewhere toward the middle of the process we may meet an agenda item in which the consensus process has to confront these two steps that are closely intertwined
- Presencing: the experience of consensus once achieved through one experience (one agenda item) carries us through the rest of the meeting.

The examples taken above also help us see how these complementary learnings offer us the means to differentiate and integrate our soul forces. In the study group we meet primarily the element of thought, in the social group the feeling life, in the action group the will. Of course, the primary soul force overlaps with the other soul forces in all three groups since we are always calling on mind, heart and will. Through the three activities/practices we can strengthen each soul faculty specifically, discern the effect that each activity has over the whole and see how one complements the other. The ultimate, possible goal is that of presenting ourselves in front of the abyss in order to cross the threshold as much as possible as a whole human being, one equally strong in thinking, feeling and will. Obviously—if the Mystery Dramas can be our guides in this

matter—the reality hardly ever meets the ideal, it only approximates it. Striving for integration can lessen the imbalances, nevertheless. In terms of the Foundation Stone Meditation we can say we learn to truly think (third panel, corresponding to the focus of the study group), truly feel (second panel and social group), truly live (first panel and will-oriented group). Bringing up the three together we can unite head and heart that “Good may become what from our hearts we may find and from our heads direct.”