

**Management, Change, Strategy and Positive Leadership**  
*Series Editors: Satinder Dhiman · Joan Marques*

**Ian I. Mitroff**  
**Ralph H. Kilmann**

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# The Psychodynamics of Enlightened Leadership

Coping with Chaos

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**Springer**

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# The Psychodynamics of Enlightened Leadership

Coping with Chaos

 Springer

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*Ian dedicates the book to Donna, his loving  
wife of 56 years.*

*Ralph dedicates the book to Theresa Lim,  
love side by side.*

# Preface

Democracy relies on an informed public responding in rational ways to the real-life facts and challenges before us. But a growing number of Americans are untethered from that. “They’re not on the same epistemological grounding, they’re not living in the same worlds,” says Whitney Phillips, a professor at Syracuse who studies online disinformation. “You cannot have a functioning democracy when people are not at the very least occupying the same solar system.”<sup>1</sup>

The overall picture drawn by [Joseph] Tainter’s work [in *The Collapse of Complex Societies*<sup>2</sup>] is a tragic one. It is our very creativity, our extraordinary ability as a species to organize ourselves to solve problems collectively, that leads us into a trap from which there is no escape. Complexity is ‘insidious,’ in Tainter’s words. ‘It grows by small steps, each of which seems reasonable at the time.’ And then the world starts to fall apart, and you wonder how you got there.<sup>3</sup>

As we write, the 2020 presidential election has just been decided. Nonetheless, the multitude of issues that still bitterly divide us are far from settled. Indeed, as of this writing, they’re only furthered by President Trump’s inability, and that of an overwhelming majority of Republicans, to accept the fact that he lost.

The fundamental problem is that we are struggling to cope with the fact that the basic nature of reality has been altered irreparably. In short, our old ways of thinking are not up to the task. In fact, they are a big part of the problem.

Adding to this is the fact that we are in the midst of one of the worst health crises the world has seen, certainly in the last 100 hundred years. This book is about how we need to think and act differently if we are to have any chance of coping better with—unfortunately not preventing—the next pandemics.

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<sup>1</sup>Charlotte Alter/Milwaukee, “Down The Rabbit Hole, How conspiracy theories are shaping the 2020 election—and shaking the foundation of American democracy,” *Time*, September 21/September 28, 2020, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph Tainter, *The Collapse of Complex Societies*, Cambridge University Press, UK, 1988.

<sup>3</sup>Ben Ehrenreich, “Why Societies Fall Apart,” *The New York Times Magazine*, November 8, 2020, p. 42.

As New York Governor Andrew Cuomo has said on numerous occasions, we must “Be smart and learn the lessons of the Coronavirus,” for the next pandemics will be even worse. In fact, we have to prepare ourselves for the godawful reality that no matter what we do, it will still be horrific. The best we can hope for is that if we are indeed better prepared then we will recover faster. But even this is not assured.

With regard to the key lessons, first, the coronavirus exposed the latent defects, major flaws, and inherent weaknesses in virtually all of our major systems—the economy, education, healthcare/medical, nursing homes, and public health. The best that can be said about the systems that were supposed to protect and make us safe is that they were not up to the task. In actuality, they failed miserably<sup>4</sup>.

It also exposed serious weaknesses in our national character and the lack of social responsibility in far too many of our fellow citizens. While many have suffered financially, and thus understandably have pushed back against the persistent injunctions of government and health officials to shelter in place, stand at least 6 feet apart from one another in public, wear face masks, etc., in a disturbing number of cases, the recommendations and orders were met with fierce opposition, and even worse, explicit threats of armed violence. Sizable numbers of people are willing in effect to trade the lives of others, and even their own, to “reopen the country.” The Lt. Governor of Texas had the unmitigated gall to say outright that since the elderly had already lived full lives, they were “expendable.”

Second, correcting the defects in the current systems entails much more than merely patching them up and returning to what they were. Overall, they are in need of serious redesign<sup>5</sup>.

Third, the systems must be considered as a whole. They are not independent by any means. The virus showed that all of them are inextricably intertwined such that a failure in one led inevitably to failures in all of them.

Like all major crises, the coronavirus is not a single crisis. Lacking a central governing body of some kind for monitoring the system as a whole makes it basically impossible to get out in front and gain control when a crisis of enormous proportions happens. We are lacking one of the critical functions of the Federal Government.

A major part of the problem is that while there were a number of simulations for a global pandemic, and public health officials having been warning of one for years, to our knowledge there were no simulations of the entire system being affected and therefore crashing as a whole.

Fourth, tremendous uncertainty is an inescapable fact of life. One cannot know for certain all of the Systems and all of the ways in which they will be impacted by the next pandemics.

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<sup>4</sup>For an incisive examination of the failure of our health system, see Siddhartha Mukherjee, “After the Storm, *The flaws of our health-care system revealed*,” *The New Yorker*, May 4, 2020, pp. 24–31.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

To pick up on the need for redesigning major systems, nursing homes need to be literally rethought from top to bottom and front to back. Since redoing all nursing homes everywhere all at once is impossible, we need to start with a model that can serve as an ideal testing ground and thereby a national, if not an international, standard. For one, it would have all of the necessary monitoring equipment built-in so that as soon as one entered, vital measurements would automatically be taken of the staff, visitors, service personnel, etc. The same would occur when anyone left the premises and as one moved throughout the facility. (It's too much to say that it would provide real-time testing for the virus since we're not that advanced at the present time.) Further, the rooms and layout would be such that it could easily be reconfigured to accommodate those who needed to be separated and quarantined. Needless to say, it would have necessary backup supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE). And of course, staffing needs to be seriously upgraded, if not rethought altogether. Importantly, the pay of nursing assistants and other personnel needs to be raised significantly, especially when they can often make more by working at cheap restaurant chains. In short, such a model would embody all of the ideal features we can envision at the present time.

While social distancing needs to be enforced among the general population, professional distancing needs to be minimized. Thus, epidemiologists and architects need to cooperate in designing better nursing homes. But then the barriers between all of the academic and professional disciplines need to be seriously rethought. They are an impediment to protecting the whole system. Thus, we not only need epidemiologists who have a deep understanding of economics but also economists who have a deep understanding of epidemiology. At a minimum, we need experts who not only respect, but take seriously the professional judgments of others. However, to do so requires a culture whereby one can indeed listen to others with different points of view. For this reason, we talk later about the nature of organizational culture and a specific process for changing it. We also talk about a specific kind of organization, the problem management organization or PMO, for fostering inter- and transdisciplinary thinking and thus the kind of cooperation that the complex, messy problems that we face require.

One can expect all of the various systems and segments of the population that were affected by the coronavirus to be affected once again: the economy, education, entertainment, food, vulnerable populations, restaurants, and transportation. In addition, the time is also now to consider that those aspects that were not primarily affected by the current virus such as utilities will be impacted by future pandemics. (They were certainly impacted by all of the fires raging out of control in the West adding emphasis to the fact that no crisis ever occurs in isolation.) For example, the current pandemic has made it painfully clear that different demographic and socio-economic groups do not have equal access to the Internet. Thus, the pandemic has exposed, indeed further inflamed, long-standing ethnic and racial divisions, not only in our country but around the world.

Unfortunately one cannot be more specific for again uncertainty is one of the prime features of major crises. All one can do is be constantly on the lookout for the early warning signals of impending crises via the consideration of the worst, worst

case scenarios. Since people in general do not like to hear bad news, one needs to plan for the fact that there will be serious attempts to ignore and block the signals, as was the case with the coronavirus. Thus, local Chinese officials in Wuhan were explicitly warned, if not prevented, from sending signals of the virus on to Beijing for fear of losing their jobs. This is in fact one of the prime aspects of a worst, worst case. But most of all, we should plan for the next major crisis to last longer, affect more people, and take longer to curtail. So even with the best preparations, we may not fare any better next time. This is not to say that we shouldn't try, for at least we will hopefully be better prepared psychologically.

One thing is clear. One cannot presume for one second that the next pandemic will merely be a global public health crisis alone. Unless we think and prepare broadly, it will exceed our wildest nightmares. It's not a case of "preparing for the worse and hoping for the best." It's "preparing for the worst and expecting it to be even worse." And that's the good news!

Finally, as is typically the case with all major crises, other unrelated crises can and will occur at the same time. Thus, during the height of the coronavirus, the tragic and wanton death of an unarmed Black man, George Floyd, by the Minneapolis Police happened, thereby setting off a wave of largely peaceful protests, literally around the world. As a result, it spurred calls for "defunding the police and using the money saved for greater investments in social programs." The peaceful protests were unfortunately used as excuses by unscrupulous parties for engaging in looting and violence.

At the same time, we've also been in the midst of a long and ugly 2020 presidential election campaign. And once again, Donald Trump has still not conceded. Further, since no major crisis ever happens in isolation, we discuss this as well. Indeed, they are parts of the general overall crisis we are experiencing. They are certainly fundamental aspects of the severe cultural divide in which we find ourselves.

To reiterate, this book is a guide to how we need to think differently if we are to do a better job in preparing for the next Mega Crises. More than ever, we need to face up to painful truths. The most important of which may be that because of the enormity of the crisis, we are under enormous stress, more than many have faced and will ever face in their lifetimes. As such, it affects every aspect of our being. It not only affects how we assess the crisis, but respond to it. In other words, the crisis is made worse by the crisis itself.

Finally, we discuss one of the most important topics of all, the enormous and crucial differences between enlightened and malignant leadership and how and why the need for the former has never been greater.

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# Chapter 1

## Wrestling with the Inner Demons of Contemporary Life: A Brief Overview of Psychoanalytic Thought



We begin our examination of Enlightened Leadership by exploring a number of Psychoanalytically based theories, in particular with regard to what they have to teach us about the human condition. Thus, we briefly examine some of the key concepts and ideas of Melanie Klein, Sigmund Freud, Donald Winnicott, Eric Berne, and John Bowlby. One of the major benefits is that they illuminate important aspects of the Coronavirus that are difficult to ascertain otherwise. For one, each provides a different take on the enormous stress we are experiencing as a result of the Virus. They also reinforce the absolute necessity of following the dictates of reputable scientific experts and science itself if we are to stand any hope at all in dealing with the Virus.

### 1.1 Melanie Klein

#### *Splitting*

Melanie Klein is, without a doubt, one of the most influential Child Psychologists/Psychoanalysts of all time.<sup>1</sup> Through meticulous observations of how young children actually played with dolls representing the major figures in their lives, namely, their parents, close relatives, grandparents, siblings, etc., Klein was able to witness the great distress and inner conflicts that young children experienced during the first years of their lives. As a result, she essentially created the field of Child/Play Therapy.

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<sup>1</sup>Phyllis Grosskurth, Melanie Klein, Her World and Her Work, Jason Aronson, Inc., New Jersey, 1986.

It is said that if Freud discovered the child in the Adult, then Klein discovered the infant in the Child, thus pushing back even further our understanding of the roots of human behavior.

In a word, very young children experience extreme anger and frustration over the fact that they don't have complete control over the primary caretaker who is responsible for feeding them both physically and emotionally. When Klein wrote early in the twentieth century, this was primarily the mother. Fathers generally did not play as much of a role as they do now in both the physical and emotional care and feeding of their children.

Under the age of 2 or 3, children literally Split the image of the mother into a "Good Mother" who cares and administers to the child's every need exactly when the child wants it and a "Bad Mother" who has to discipline the child and can't be there precisely on time and when the child demands it. Because its mind is not yet developed and mature enough, it can't comprehend, let alone accept, that the "Good" and the "Bad Mother" are one and the same person. To the young child, there are two separate and distinct mothers.

Splitting is in fact the basis of the world's great fairytales. Thus, the "Bad Mother" is the Evil Witch or Cruel Stepmother, and the "Good Mother" is the Good Witch or Fairy God Mother. Fairytales have an ever-lasting appeal for children, and even adults, because they allow one to play out harmlessly their fantasy of killing the Evil Witch, i.e., "the Bad Mother." In this way, they allow children to experience what they cannot verbalize at this stage of their lives.

### ***The Paranoid-Schizoid Position***

Klein termed this earliest stage of human development "the Paranoid-Schizoid Position," "paranoid" because the young child was deeply afraid that the parent would either abandon or hurt him or her, and thus not meet the child's needs at all, and "schizoid" because of Splitting.

Most children naturally develop out of this earlier stage, but some form of Splitting and paranoia stay with us our entire lives. Indeed, in times of extreme stress or threat, we shouldn't be surprised to find people regressing to the Paranoid-Schizoid Position. This is exactly what has happened because of the Coronavirus.<sup>2</sup> Aided by the Internet, it's allowed Dis- and Misinformation about who and what is responsible for the Virus to spread around the globe at virtually the speed of light. And, once out there, like the Coronavirus itself, they are extremely difficult to eradicate. We explore Dis- and Misinformation in detail in Appendix 2.

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<sup>2</sup>Max Fisher, "The Infectious Danger Of Conspiracy Theories," The New York Times, Thursday, April 9, 2020, p. A10.

## *The Depressive Position*

Klein also identified a subsequent, follow-on stage of human development: The Depressive Position. At this point, the child finally recognizes and accepts that the “Good” and the “Bad Mother” are one and the same. The child also accepts that there is good and bad in everyone, especially in him or herself. For the time being, the child moves beyond Splitting. Klein termed this stage “Depressive” because the child remembers and thus feels bad about its previous hostility toward its mother.

Of course, all of this takes place subconsciously. One certainly cannot explain it to the undeveloped minds of children. And, one cannot necessarily explain it to adults as well, especially those who are under the grips of Splitting.

## *The Paranoid-Schizoid Position and Donald Trump*

With his constant division of the world into friends versus enemies, plus his extreme vilification of anyone who is not with him 100%, Donald Trump is a perfect illustration of someone who is under the constant sway of the Paranoid-Schizoid Position. Indeed, he is a constant walking-talking, living-breathing model of it.

Trump’s supporters are also deeply under the throes of Splitting. They are simultaneously both “victims” and “villains.” They are “victims” in that they feel “deeply aggrieved” by those who act “superior and put them down.” As a result, they feel enormous hostility and, thus like Trump, become “bullies” and thereby “villains” in response. The Split is fundamentally due to the fact that they have little understanding that they are caught between two powerful and opposing forces.

One of the most critical things to understand about the Paranoid-Schizoid Position is that when one is under its grips, all thinking—rational thought—ceases to exist. One is constantly in a state of extreme paranoia accompanied by unrestrained Splitting. Thus, everything is potentially if not a real enemy. One’s true friends, if any, are few and far between. And, the forces of evil are literally everywhere. Saddest of all, while one desperately needs adults to come to one’s aid and rescue, the Paranoid-Schizoid Position makes it impossible to trust anyone. No wonder why Trump pushes all adults away, those who could really help him, and us by offering constructive criticism of poorly thought out, impulsive actions, and policies.

## *Dangers to Society*

To say that the country as a whole is deeply in the throes of the Paranoid-Schizoid Position is putting it mildly. Republicans and Democrats generally feel nothing but loathing and outright contempt for one another. Splitting is both the cause and effect

of the extreme polarization we are experiencing. It's been made worse by Republican Senators rushing through a successor to Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

We desperately need national leaders who can embrace the ambiguity that is necessary in acknowledging that there is good and bad in all of us. The late Senator John McCain stood out in this respect. While he obviously had basic disagreements with Democrats, he was not automatically willing to write off everything President Obama did and said, especially his calling out the Russians for interfering in our elections and his support for Obamacare. And, on occasions, Senator Sanders has shown himself able to listen to Trump supporters without entirely dismissing them or their concerns. Nonetheless, even he has been prone to Splitting with his "my way or the highway" attitude, and especially with his previous harsh attacks of former Vice President Biden. So has Senator Warren in this regard. Nonetheless, to his credit, Senator Sanders has been a strong supporter of President-Elect Biden.

Make no mistake about it. Splitting is as harmful to society as any threat. Unless more national figures are willing to come forward and reaffirm one another, then we see no hope whatsoever of moving to the Depressive Position. Without this, we don't know how "any house so Split can survive." To his enormous credit as well, President-Elect Biden has said time and again that he wants to heal the country and thus move beyond Splitting.

Finally, Splitting makes it impossible to make intelligent distinctions for to Differentiate is not the same as Splitting. For instance, not all brands of Socialism are the same. There are crucial differences between Socialism as practiced in Communist countries and Scandinavian, i.e., Social Democracies. Thus, Social Democracies are not inherently opposed to the holding of private capital and so-called Free Markets. Rather, they believe in putting strong social restraints and safety nets on the worst excesses of Predatory Capitalism so that the poor do not suffer unduly from gross inequalities when it comes to Education, Healthcare, Housing, etc.

Needless to say, with the extreme vilification and the vilest language directed toward those Governors and Public Health Officials who have suggested, and in many cases ordered, people to shelter in place, they have been subject to the worst aspects of Splitting. They have become "evil incarnate!"

There is another aspect which is just as troubling. Because many Health Workers are rightly in fear of transmitting the Virus to their children, upon returning home, they have deliberately refrained from holding and thereby comforting them. The fear is that this will sadly rekindle new episodes of Splitting in young children.

## 1.2 Donald Winnicott

Donald Winnicott is another leading Child Psychologist/Psychoanalyst. In fact, it was because of his work as a pediatrician that he became a Psychologist/Psychoanalyst. It led him to observe the critical role of the mother in helping children face the incessant and overbearing demands of Reality.

According to Winnicott, in the beginning, the mother and the infant child are both physically and emotionally so tightly bound together—“fused” as it were—that the experience is that of an indivisible connection. In other words, the child feels that she or he is an integral part of the mother, and vice versa. There is no individuation or separateness as it were.

Over time, and with great sensitivity, one of the most important jobs of the mother is to help the child separate and thus face external Reality. If the mother too quickly and too soon forces the child out of the protected cocoon, what Winnicott called “The Holding Environment,” then the child is not merely overwhelmed, but subject to trauma, thereby harming its future prospects in facing the unremitting demands of life.

With the failure of virtually all of the societal systems on which we depend, it’s no exaggeration to say that a goodly part of the stress we are experiencing is due to the breakdown of the larger “Societal Holding Environment.”

If on the other hand, the mother delays unduly the necessity of separation, then the child is also harmed. He or she is unable to make it completely on their own. In short, one is dependent on others to make crucial life decisions.

This is precisely why Winnicott stressed the role of “The Good Enough Mother.” The primary job of The Good Enough Mother is to help the child be the best he or she can be on their own. To accomplish this, the mother does not have to be perfect, but appropriately attuned to the needs and emotional states of the child. Indeed, demands for perfection actually work against healthy development.

Of course, all of us are naturally dependent on a host of others to function, let alone to exist and develop in the first place. Indeed, society wouldn’t exist without it. The problem arises when we unduly attach ourselves to others who promise to be the “very basis of our being.” When that happens, we are unable to think for ourselves. While we need leaders—indeed, quest after them—who by definition are larger than ourselves, we cannot let them take over completely and control all of our actions and beliefs. But then perpetually navigating the difficult shores of bonding on the one hand and independence on the other is one of life’s crucial tasks. One of the supreme challenges is choosing leaders who will help us be and think for ourselves. While we are incessantly drawn to those who exude charisma, one of the greatest pitfalls is that we’ll be swallowed up by them. Thus, if they fail to achieve what their followers believe that which is their due—for example, becoming the Democratic nominee for President—then they will refuse to vote for another candidate.

One of the most difficult tasks of a leader is helping, if not getting, us to face up to troubling Realities. In this regard, whether we like it or not—and even more whether they like it or not—our leaders are the embodiments of our parents. In effect, they “reparent us” so that we can face more and more difficult realities than our actual parents helped us when we were young. We say more about the crucial role of the parent later and much more about Leadership.

We fear that the Virus will lead many Health Workers to question whether they are “good enough.” If they cannot have direct contact with their children and hold them, then what “good” are they as parents? And since children pick up on the

feelings of their caregivers, we also worry about what the children are feeling. To whom can they talk about their deepest feelings?

More than ever, we desperately need “Good Enough Leaders,” not “perfect ones.”

### 1.3 Sigmund Freud

From the very beginning, when life takes us under its strict discipline, a resistance stirs within us against the relentlessness and monotony of the laws of thought and against the demands of reality-testing. Reason becomes the enemy.<sup>3</sup> [emphasis ours] Sigmund Freud

Without a doubt, one of Freud’s greatest contributions to our understanding of the human condition is his concept of Defense Mechanisms. If he had discovered or formulated nothing else, it would have been more than enough to ensure his lasting fame. To give her the proper credit she is due, Freud’s daughter Anna later elaborated on the mechanisms first identified by her father.

Defense Mechanisms not only basically exist, but work to protect one’s mind from events and Realities that are too painful to acknowledge and thereby face forthrightly. Thus, if one has been in a life-threatening situation; witnessed the harm and, worst of all, the death of a close friend or loved one; and been the subject of a violent attack, then the mind can literally shut down in order to protect one from remembering, and hence reliving, the horrific event. But since they are never perfect, painful events constantly resurface in the form of recurring nightmares, extreme sensitivity to sounds such as the backfires of cars, and disturbing images of catastrophes that remind one of the initial traumatizing events.

As one of the founders of the modern field of Crisis Management, Mitroff and his colleagues have witnessed the operation of Defense Mechanisms in countless organizations. While they were first discovered and thus pertained solely to individuals, they apply equally as well to larger groups and institutions. Indeed, it’s been found that the more that an organization subscribes to them, the less prepared it is and thereby the more susceptible it is to crises. And, the more ideological a group, the more it uses them as well to ward off serious challenges to its basic beliefs.

As individual Defense Mechanisms get reinforced and spread among a group or organization, they become an integral part of a group and an organization’s culture. New employees become socialized to unconscious norms such as “This is how we deny Reality around here.” In this way, shared, collective Defense Mechanisms become an organization’s fundamental way of protecting itself from overwhelming, highly stressful, and fearful events.

First and foremost is Denial. In this case, one staunchly denies that a life-threatening or disturbing series of events ever occurred in the first place, or dismisses those entirely with which one doesn’t know how to deal. Or worse, those with which one doesn’t want to deal. Thus, Climate Change Denial is especially

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<sup>3</sup>Sigmund Freud, New Introductory Lectures on Psych-Analysis, Norton, New York, 1990, p. 42.

high among Trump supporters and Republicans in general. But then so is a host of other things that they are loath to acknowledge. Thus, charges of collusion and corruption by the President are dismissed out of hand. Or, they are the product of Fake News concocted by those who are “out to get the President.” Similarly, the unprecedented numbers of resignations and indictments of those who have served in The Trump Administration are similarly dismissed. So are the charges of his innumerable affairs and constant demeaning of women and minorities, plus of course, payments of hush money to porn stars and others.

In the case of organizations, Denial takes the form of “We don’t have *any* problems around here.”

Disavowal at least acknowledges that unpleasant events and realities have actually occurred or are very likely to result, but it greatly diminishes their importance or impact. Thus, Trump may have indeed done some awful things in the past, but they don’t distract from all the good he’s accomplishing now. Disavowal is thereby one of the most powerful forms of rationalization. In the case of organizations, it assumes the form “All of our problems are minor and will go away on their own.”

Compartmentalization and Intellectualization not only go hand in hand, but complement Denial and Disavowal. In the case of Compartmentalization, things that are intimately connected are kept tightly apart and/or the connection is vigorously denied. Thus, it’s truly impossible to separate Trump’s constant insults and demeaning behavior from his policies as his supporters are wont to do. In a similar way, it’s impossible to separate the character/personality of any candidate from his or her policies. Nonetheless, Compartmentalization does the trick for their followers.

It’s also impossible to separate Trump from the history of the modern Republican Party. Trumpism has been in the making for years. And, it will continue long after him.<sup>4</sup> For this reason alone, we dissect his behavior.

In the case of organizations, Compartmentalization is the belief that “All of our problems are isolated and therefore can’t bring down the entire System.”

In the case of Intellectualization, one argues that while one may not like Trump’s constant Tweets and rants—his general form of “communication”—and in fact wishes fervently that he wouldn’t do it, once again, his policies overshadow bad behavior that wouldn’t be tolerated for one instant in any other President or major leader.

In the case of organizations, Intellectualization reads, “Excellent organizations don’t have major problems!”

Projection puts the blame for problems squarely on others who “are basically out to get us.” Thus, for Trump and his Republican cronies, all problems are due to the “Radical Socialist Democrats.” Indeed, the Coronavirus is a hoax purposely concocted by Democrats to bring down the President. In short, one projects all of those aspects that one doesn’t like about oneself and is thereby reluctant to acknowledge onto others. Thus, social distancing is the fault of “all those who don’t respect us

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<sup>4</sup>Nicholas Lemann, “The After-Party, What will happen to the Republicans post-Trump?,” The New Yorker, November 2, 2020, pp. 54–65.

and our ways of life.” In the case of organizations, “Our competition is out to get us.” To put it mildly, it’s a blatant example of Splitting.

Projection also justifies one’s actions because it attributes one’s own worst impulses to others. Thus, if Democrats were in power, then they too would also be trying to ram through Supreme Court Justices.

Finally, Idealization and Grandiosity are best seen in Trump’s own oft-expressed words that “only he and he alone can solve all of our momentous problems.” Indeed everything about him is “tremendous.” After all, “he’s accomplished things that no one ever has before him.” In short, he suffers from unrestrained Delusions of Grandiosity.

And, “As an excellent organization, we don’t have any problems with which we can’t deal.”

In spite of their persistence and power, Defense Mechanisms cannot ultimately hold Reality at bay. Indeed, the more they hold sway, the greater and the more debilitating the Reality that is needed to break through. The danger is that by then it’s so overwhelming that it’s done irreparable damage. Thus, by the time The Trump Administration publicly acknowledged the seriousness of the Coronavirus, it had already gotten out of hand and caused too much damage that tragically could have been curtailed, even if it couldn’t have been prevented altogether.

In short, by distorting Reality in one way or another, Defense Mechanisms end up preventing people from effectively coping with It. In effect, they are akin to a major addiction. They provide temporary relief from pain and feelings of discomfort, but they cause long-term damage to health and happiness by preventing a person from coping with real problems and severe challenges to life and society.

All of the Defense Mechanisms play a major role with regard to the Coronavirus. Thus, Denial and Disavowal work in tandem to deny that it’s all that dangerous in the first place. And Compartmentalization works to say that “While it may affect others, it won’t affect me.” Therefore, sheltering in place is not needed. Projection works to find fault with “those responsible for the Virus in the first place,” and so on. Major crises are a veritable breeding ground for Defenses. The bigger the crisis, the more that human beings unconsciously need to minimize it so they are not overwhelmed by a Reality with which they cannot cope.

## 1.4 Eric Berne

Eric Berne developed a highly engaging and eminently accessible account of the Psyche. Building directly on Freud’s Superego, Ego, and ID, Berne recast them as three distinct voices that so-to-speak are in everyone’s head: the Parent, Adult, and Child.

The Parent is the inner voice that says, “Do this and don’t do that.” Thus, Berne’s Parent is authoritarian following Freud’s harsh Superego.

The Child—Freud’s ID—is the unbridled instinctual energy that is in us all that “just wants to have fun with no thought whatsoever for the consequences.”

It thereby falls to the Adult—the Ego—to mitigate, essentially negotiate, and thereby resolve the inner conflicts between the harsh demands and strictures of the Parent and the endless pleasure-seeking, no-thought-of-the-consequences, Child.

If the Parent dominates, then one is perceived as cold and rigid. If on the other hand, the Child has an upper hand, then in effect one has refused to grow up. One remains, in essence, dominated by childish impulses and an insatiable neediness for love and attention and adoration that can never be fulfilled or satisfied.

Still, one is viewed as lifeless if one doesn't have more than a modicum of the Child. And, one always needs the Parent to rein in one's uncontrolled impulses.

One of the things that is most disturbing about Trump is that he is mainly all Parent and Child, indeed, primarily an undeveloped, if not an irreparably Wounded, Child. Lacking a well-developed Adult is what has made him supremely unfit for office. But then this is also what's so frightening about his supporters as well.

Sadly, when it came to the realities of how Senators Sanders and Warren would actually pay for their grandiose healthcare plans they are a mixture of the Parent and Child as well. But herein lies the great contrast and divide between Moderate and Progressive Democrats. Whereas Moderates appeal primarily to the Adult, Progressives appeal to the Parent and Child. More than ever, they need one another to become a fully functioning person. And of course, we wouldn't expect them to necessarily agree with our characterizations.

This illuminates another important aspect of Berne's theory, Cross Communication. This occurs when one treats and thus speaks to an Adult as a Parent does to a Child. That is, where one expects to be treated as an Adult, one is treated as a Child, and vice versa. To say that this leads to misunderstandings and lasting resentments is putting it mildly.

The Coronavirus is a virtual laboratory for Cross Communication. Whereas the Governors and Public Health Officials have done their best to communicate with the general public in the language and style of the Adult, the vast majority of their constituents have accepted their messages and responded in turn. Nonetheless, sizable numbers have responded as Petulant Children citing that it's "their Constitutional Right to defy orders to stay at home." The worst is the behavior of fringe groups that have shown up in State Capitols with assault weapons.<sup>5</sup>

The Governors and Public Health Officials cannot abandon communicating as Adults for it would be to forsake their basic responsibilities. But they have to be aware that in times of extreme crisis, people revert to either the Parent or the Child. Without sounding like an overbearing Parent or treating them as Children, they have to reassure them as a kind and understanding Parent would.

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<sup>5</sup>See Like Mogelson, "Nothing to Lose but Your Masks, A conservative rebellion against lockdown," *The New Yorker*, August 24, 2020, pp. 32–45.

## 1.5 John Bowlby

John Bowlby was a British Psychologist/Psychoanalyst. He established what is known as Attachment Theory (AT). AT stresses that humans have an innate need to connect, to form deep attachments with one another. In particular, he discovered the different forms and styles of attachment and especially what happens when healthy forms are lacking.

Bowlby began his work during World War II. Since many children were sent out of London for safety and others were orphaned, he studied the toll of what long hours of deprivation from one's basic caregivers did to the emotional lives of young children. When they were first separated or institutionalized and left alone, the children cried uncontrollably for hours. When no one finally came to comfort them, they shut down emotionally and became in effect comatose. In short, they were suffering from Attachment Disorders. When they were eventually reunited with their parents or caregivers, Bowlby was able to discern very different styles of Attachment, in effect Reattachment.

There are two basic styles: Secure and Insecure. Secure parents are comfortable with others because they are basically comfortable with themselves. As a result, they are able to respond appropriately to the distress of others. In sharp contrast, Insecure caregivers are uncomfortable with others because they are basically uncomfortable with themselves.

In many ways, Secure parents or caregivers correspond to Authoritative Parents. They know the "right things to do in the right ways." In contrast, Insecure Parents are either Authoritarian, Laissez-Faire, or Completely Uninvolved. Authoritarians are cold, harsh, and unforgiving. Once again, it's "my way or the highway." Laissez-Faire Parents leave children themselves to set their own rules without appropriate guidance. And, Uninvolved are exactly what the name implies. For all purposes, they are not there physically and emotionally. They don't care at all.

To say that on every level and facet of society—the world in general—that we need Secure Leaders is putting it mildly. Indeed, we need them desperately.

Once again, we worry what the Coronavirus is doing in terms of Attachment. We worry that it's causing Secure health workers to act and to be viewed Insecure in both their eyes and that of their children and spouses.

## 1.6 Concluding Remarks

While different and highly distinctive, all of the Psychologists whose work we've examined all too briefly build on one another. Each and every one of them stresses the need for understanding and thus coming to grips with the deeper forces that guide human behavior. They certainly emphasize the serious dangers in ignoring them. We do so at our extreme peril.

In Appendix 1, we discuss the work of another eminent Psychiatrist, Dr. Kübler-Ross. Her studies of those facing eminent death shed additional light on the various reactions to the Coronavirus.

Especially now in our nation's history, in order to be "secure" in every sense of the term, we need Secure leaders. Indeed, the Coronavirus brings out the Fearful, Wounded Child in all of us. We all feel abandoned and betrayed by forces that the so-called Adults are unable to control.

Most important of all, they reaffirm the dire need to listen to and follow the dictates of reputable scientific advisors.

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## Chapter 2

# Crises: A Major Systems Problem



In the last chapter, we showed that Defense Mechanisms operate on at least two levels, the personal and the organizational. They also apply equally to institutions and thus to societies as a whole. Indeed, they relate to every aspect of our Being.

In this chapter, the levels and interactions become even more pronounced. Thus, every type of crisis not only applies to, but has direct counterparts at the personal, organizational, national, and international bearings of our existence. In brief, there is no such thing as single, self-contained, independent, and isolated crises. Every crisis is capable of being both the cause and the effect of every other. In fact, unless one is prepared to think and to act Systemically, every crisis is capable of setting off an uncontrolled chain reaction of additional crises, and in many cases, those that are even worse than the initial ones. For this reason, it's never sufficient to plan for individual crises in isolation. In fact, it's completely counterproductive. Thus, Systems Thinking is key. (For this reason, we give an in-depth treatment of Systems in Appendix 3.)

For instance, in 2015, the automaker, Volkswagen (VW), experienced a severe Public Relations Crisis when it came to light that the company had systematically lied about the true, unacceptable levels of pollutants emitted from its cars' engines. What began as a PR crisis soon became a major Financial Crisis. And, it quickly became an Ethical and Organizational Crisis when the company executives who had approved the practice were identified and publicly castigated. Indeed, the blame went all the way to the top showing that crises are rarely contained.

Mitroff and his colleagues have identified the following major categories and types of crises. Each contains a never-ending series of subtypes. For this reason, they are better thought of as different, ever-expanding "families of crises:"

- Product recalls/defective products
- Product/service tampering
- Employee sabotage/nefarious actors
- Fires/explosions/chemical spills

- Environmental disasters/climate change
- Significant drop in revenues/financial
- Natural Hazards
- Loss of confidential/sensitive information/privacy
- Terrorism
- Ethical breaches
- Technological

Notice that instead of the usual category “Natural Disasters,” the label “Natural Hazards” has been chosen deliberately. The reason is that all crises are “Human-Caused.” For it’s humans, not Mother Nature, who make the important decisions where to build houses and other structures and to what standards and building codes. In this way, all disasters bear the indelible imprint of humans and, in this sense, are “Human-Caused.” As a consequence, they are better labeled “Natural Hazards.” Humans are responsible for turning Hazards, such as Earthquakes due to Fracking, into Crises.

To show how each of the various types spans multiple levels and gives rise to a host of different crises, consider the important case of Technology.

## 2.1 Managing Technology

[Zuckerberg] is right that our democracy can survive a pandemic. It is unclear, however, if it can survive a platform optimized for conspiratorial thinking. Like industrial-age steel companies dumping poisonous waste into waterways, Facebook pumps paranoia and disinformation into the body politic, the toxic byproduct of its relentless drive for profit. We eventually cleaned up the waste. It’s an open question we can clean up after Facebook.<sup>1</sup>

The Management of Technology is arguably one of the most important problems facing humankind.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, second only to Climate Change and the Global Pandemic due to the Coronavirus, it is arguably the most important of all.

For better and for worse, we are engaged in nothing less than the “complete, if not revolutionary, alteration/control” of the Human Body, Mind, Reality, Trust, and Truth itself. In short, for good and for bad, there is not a single aspect of our existence that Technology does not affect in an important way.

Thus, on the one hand, Social Media have allowed us to communicate widely and instantly with scores of “new friends,” thereby increasing our sense of connection with and participation in the world. On the other hand, it has proved a veritable boon for the systematic spread of Dis- and Misinformation, Conspiracy Theories, and Boldface Lies, thereby fomenting distrust and disbelief in Democracy on scales

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<sup>1</sup> Jamelle Bouie, “Facebook Is A Disaster For the World,” The New York Times, Monday, September 21, 2020, p. A25.

<sup>2</sup> See Ian I. Mitroff and Rune Storesund, Technlash: The Future of the Socially Responsible Tech Organization, Springer, New York, 2020.

previously thought unimaginable. Truth is not only under constant attack, but in abject danger of vanishing altogether. In too many cases, Social Media have shirked their fundamental Moral and Ethical responsibility by allowing outright lies to go unchecked for far too long and thereby to proliferate.

Gene-editing technologies promise the alleviation of countless childhood diseases. At the same time, it's given rise to the all-too-present fear that it can be used by rank amateurs to create veritable half-human monsters.<sup>3</sup>

AI can be used to help humans better navigate complex tasks and hopefully make more informed decisions. On the other hand, it can be used to create videos of prominent people saying and doing things that they never would but nevertheless fool experts as to their authenticity. Reality itself is in under constant attack. Who and what can one trust? To put it mildly, in the wrong hands, AI can lead to harmful decisions.

For another, AI fails seriously when it comes to incorporating diametrically opposed and conflicting patterns of thought. The plain fact is that there is not a single aspect of human existence that is not subject to widely different expert judgments and opinions. And yet, AI fails to incorporate this important facet of human experience. If anything, it embodies all of the biases and prejudices of its creators.<sup>4</sup> We thereby question the "Intelligence" of AI.

We cannot continue on the same disastrous path of unleashing the most powerful technologies on the world and then later cleaning up their worst aftereffects, if we can indeed later. We have to get out in front by doing all that we can to anticipate the worst and then undertaking everything in our power to mitigate it, if not prevent it altogether. We have to plan for the fact that all technologies produce unintended side effects and negative consequences. Further, they can and will be systematically abused and misused by nefarious parties for ill ends.

As a result, let us outline and contrast two sharply opposing approaches to the Management of Technology. It's never been more important to compare and contrast these two. For want of better names, we call one the FDA Approach and the other Get-It-Out-the-Door ASAP.

The FDA Approach starts with the basic presumption that all Technologies are complex bundles of benign and potentially harmful and even dangerous properties. Furthermore, it's extremely difficult, if not virtually impossible, to ferret out and clearly distinguish between the two early on in the development and use of a Product/Technology. Intertwined with every set of benign, well-intended attributes and properties are Latent Defects and even Fatal Flaws. In addition, everything is capable of being abused and misused even by responsible users, let alone by disreputable parties who are deliberately out to cause as much harm and trouble as possible. Thus, even though it was not intended, and thus not planned for, Social Media has proved to be a perfect tool for Cyberbullying. It's also a perfect vehicle

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<sup>3</sup>Jennifer A. Doudna and Samuel H. Sterberg, A Crack In Creation: Gene Editing And The Unthinkable Power To Control Creation, Mariner Books, New York, 2018.

<sup>4</sup>Cathy O'Neil, Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy, Crown, New York, 2016.

for the distribution of Conspiracy Theories and outright lies, not to mention direct interference in our elections.

Modeled after the strict, but not perfect, policies and regulations of the Food and Drug Administration, the FDA Approach mandates the scrupulous testing of a Product/Technology to expose as much as possible harmful effects and unintended ill consequences before it causes irreparable harm on an unsuspecting public. If a Product/Technology cannot be proven to be safe, then it is strictly prohibited from being released. Furthermore, testing is ongoing over its entire lifetime. It's never final or complete.

In sharp contrast, the Get-It-Out-the-Door ASAP Approach is exactly what its name implies. When it comes to potential problems, it's completely Reactive. Namely, since everything cannot be known beforehand, see what problems if any arise from the use of a Technology. In this way, one gets a hand up on the competition by releasing an innovation as quickly as possible. From the standpoint of Crisis Management (CM) whereas the FDA Approach is Proactive, the Get-It-Out ASAP is completely Reactive.

Of course, these two are archetypes since most organizations are a mixture of the two. Nonetheless, every organization leans more toward the one than the other.

Importantly, we know of two organizations which show unequivocally that it's possible to make thinking about the worst that can happen as a result of using their Products/Technology an integral part of their everyday operations. It allows them to pick up on major problems before they are too big to fix and thus turn into significant crises. In this way, instead of distracting from profits, it contributes substantially to them.

One uses In-House Internal Assassin Teams to attack and thereby find weaknesses in their products and manufacturing processes. The other uses a Chaos Team to do the same. In each case, they assume that they are in a perfect position to attack their products and processes because "they know more about them than anyone else." From their standpoint, they do indeed "know more than anyone else about their products and processes," but this does not mean that outsiders with completely different points of view should not be involved. Outsiders typically see things that insiders take for granted.

The point is that as much they are required, strict rules and tight regulations only work when we know or can anticipate the specific problems connected with Technology. In short, they need to be as detailed as possible. But when we lack such knowledge, we need other means—open-ended processes—such as Internal Assassin and Chaos Teams to help us be forever on the lookout for that which we cannot predict or know beforehand.

The point is that thinking about the worst cannot be left to chance or to the whims of a company if and when it feels like doing it. Similar to the FDA, it has to be enforced by a new Government Agency that will protect us from the worst abuses of Technology. Before any company is allowed to operate, it must show that it has planned for the worst and taken every step to prevent it. And, it must continue to do so over the entire course of its lifetime.

Ideally, planning for the worst is the cornerstone of The Socially Responsible Tech Company, indeed every company. However, given that Mitroff has a PhD in Engineering Science, he knows personally that such thinking is not uppermost in the minds of technologists. They are mesmerized by their wondrous creations, and thus primarily focused on them, not on their social consequences. Indeed, they overly hype the positive benefits and ignore and downplay the disbenefits.

We can no longer continue to reap the great rewards of Technology without planning and taking action against the worst. Doing it in a timely manner is in fact one of the predominant moral and ethical challenges of our times.

## 2.2 Proactive CM

Let us summarize the discussion thus far by emphasizing the key elements of Proactive CM.

Since with very few exceptions, all crises send out a repeated trail of Early Warning Signals announcing the highly probable occurrence of a particular set of crises, setting up mechanisms and procedures throughout an organization, institution, or society that will deliberately look for and record such signals is paramount. It's also necessary that such signals be transmitted to the right persons who have the authority to act on them in a timely and appropriate fashion. Above all, the messengers of bad news need to be rewarded, not "killed," as was unfortunately the case with the officials in Wuhan who first discovered the Coronavirus but were explicitly warned not to pass "bad news" onto their superiors in Beijing.

One of the best ways of ensuring the adoption of Proactive CM is to make it an integral part of a program that an organization already takes seriously. Thus, CM is a natural ally of Quality Control, not to mention Stress Testing, in order to surface, as best as one can, the underlying Latent Defects and Fatal Flaws in products and services. Quality Control and Stress Testing are also natural allies in surfacing the unintended consequences, and the abuses/misuses of a Technology, Product, or Service.

One of the most critical aspects of Proactive CM is uncovering harmful organizational Defense Mechanisms like Denial and fostering a corporate culture that works constantly to eliminate them as much as possible. To achieve this obviously requires Secure, Adult leaders. Lacking this, crises are virtually guaranteed to happen on a regular basis. For make no mistake about it, Denial will effectively kill any program in CM.

For example, early on Mark Zuckerberg was warned repeatedly by more than one subordinate that its enumerable crises—Cyberbullying, selling users' personal information, providing a primary means whereby foreign governments could interfere in our elections, etc.—were virtually guaranteed to happen. Not only did Zuckerberg suppress the warnings, but he actively discredited those who brought them. Worst of all, he labeled critics as "anti-Semitic."

For another, in the early days of the transition from President Obama to Trump, simulations showed in no uncertain terms that a major Pandemic was virtually guaranteed to happen. Unfortunately, President Trump did not take the warnings seriously. Indeed, he cut the budgets of major Public Health Agencies because they were a “waste of time and money.” After all, the worst didn’t happen. Denial big time!

And, while it’s finally come out that he privately acknowledged the seriousness of the Virus, he offered a flimsy excuse for downplaying it, namely, that “He didn’t want to panic the American people.” Given that he continually stirs up and stokes fears, it’s completely bogus.

Ferretting out potential crises is obviously important, but no less important are serious Mitigation Plans and Procedures.

For even with the best plans and procedures, crises still occur. Thus, Damage Control Mechanisms to limit their spread and resultant harm are essential. While each type of crisis naturally requires its own form (for instance, oil spills require physical barricades and cleanup dispersants to keep them from spreading), what’s absolutely crucial is that Damage Control Mechanisms cannot be invented in the heat of actual crises. The classic case is that of BP’s 2010 oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Millions of gallons were spilled from an errant well before it was capped. By then, incalculable damage was done to the environment.

Finally, every organization needs a fully functioning, full-time, and well-staffed Crisis Management Team or CMT. All of the senior officers of an organization need to be well-trained members of the CMT. In this way, all of the major corporate functions and specialties will be represented. Thus, since all crises invariably involve huge financial costs, the necessity of the Chief Financial Officer is obvious. But all crises involve serious legal issues, PR, etc. Furthermore, the CEO, or someone acting in his or her place, has to lead the team and give it the importance it deserves. Indeed, all of the members of the CMT need to be trained to step in and lead it.

The CMT needs to meet regularly to review both the status of potential crises and the adequacy of its programs in meeting the threats to the organization, its surrounding communities, the nation, and the world.

## 2.3 Concluding Remarks

The Coronavirus painfully shows how the world is susceptible to new crises all of the time. Unfortunately, Global Pandemics were not on the original list of crises. And, it painfully illustrates the Systemic nature of all crises, how something that originates in one country can quickly affect the entire world.

On February 24–25, 2020, the US stock market lost nearly 6% of its value, losing 2000 points on the Dow Jones. It was the biggest drop in 2 years. And, even though as of this writing in November 2020 the stock market has recovered, it only got worse in the days and weeks immediately following February. It still fluctuates

wildly as the Virus continues to wage. And while unemployment has also recovered, it's still dangerously low.

The world's economies and production facilities are inextricably linked. Thus, if China's manufacturing facilities are literally shut down, then it affects production worldwide. Further, if the Virus spreads to other countries such as Italy, then it damages the tourist industry.

It bears repeating: Each and every type of crisis is linked to every other one in predictable and unpredictable ways. Thinking the Unthinkable via Worst-Case Scenarios has never been more critical.

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# Chapter 3

## Wicked Messes: The Ultimate Challenge to Reality



The first two chapters have presented major challenges to what we commonly take as Reality and what we need to know and do if we are to stand any hope whatsoever in managing it. This chapter shows that it's even more complex than we have dared imagine in our wildest dreams.

### 3.1 Russell L. Ackoff: Messes

The late great, distinguished Social Systems thinker par excellence, and one of Mitroff's major mentors, Russell L. Ackoff, appropriated the word "Mess" to stand for a whole system of problems that were so interconnected such that one couldn't take any single problem out of the Mess and attempt to analyze and manage on its own without doing irreparable damage both to the fundamental nature of the problem and the larger Mess of which it was an integral part. The point is that the interconnections between the problems that constitute a Mess are not only one of its key defining properties, but are as important as the problems themselves.

The result is that the notion of "single, independent problems" is more a bygone and outdated figure of speech than it is a characteristic feature of Reality. In short, all of the problems of modern societies are fundamentally parts of Messes. Indeed, they cannot be handled apart from them.

To take one of the most disturbing examples, Homelessness cannot even be defined, let alone managed, independently of a host of thorny problems: Income Inequality, Drug Addiction, Urban Crime, Mental Illness, the Unaffordability and Unavailability of Proper Housing, Onerous Eviction Procedures, the Extreme Divisions between Democrats and Republicans when it comes to providing Financial Relief for the unemployed, etc. Homelessness is thereby not a single, self-standing, and well-contained, and thereby well-defined, problem, but a host of complex,

deeply intertwined problems and issues. That's precisely what makes it and all of the other problems of modern societies "Messy."

If Homelessness weren't bad enough, the Global Pandemic brought on by the Coronavirus is even worse. Consider the constellation of factors that are part and parcel of the Pandemic. First and foremost is the glaring inability of an authoritarian government that is supposedly in control of every facet of Chinese life, to curb the practice of selling the infected meat of animals that thereby made it highly likely that a deadly virus would easily jump from animals to humans. At the same time, the government also failed miserably to acknowledge the existence of the Virus and thus to act swiftly to contain and treat it. (In fairness, the Chinese government has done a far better job in managing the resultant crisis than the USA<sup>1</sup>) As a result, underlying racial and ethnic prejudices that are always near the surface and have never been fully eradicated were easily inflamed. President Trump characteristically called it the "Chinese Virus," and even worse, "Kung Flu."

And of course, we have created a worldwide financial system that is easily disrupted. Further, the US Economy is largely service-based so that it's especially at risk if large numbers of people stop going out to shop, eat, attend theatres and public gatherings, etc. In addition, the US Public Health System has been seriously hampered by a President who is woefully ignorant of Science, and who has repeatedly lied so that when he needed to be believed when a major crisis struck, he had no credibility whatsoever. Add to this a long, drawn-out, nasty contest between the Democrats as to whom is best positioned to replace a President who is not only completely unfit for the job, but exhibits daily mounting signs of serious mental disturbance.<sup>2</sup> All of which has only added to the growing uncertainty and accompanying anxiety. In addition, the elderly and other Vulnerable Populations who are most at risk have added to uncontrolled feelings of despair and fear. So too has the unparalleled closures of schools and universities.

Once again, contrary to the President's oft-repeated claims that the Pandemic was totally unanticipated and therefore nothing could have been done prior to it, a key member of the transition team from President Obama to Trump reported that high up on the list of potential crises was a Global Pandemic.

In Systems terms, the Coronavirus is not only a Mess, but as we shall see shortly, even worse, it's a Wicked Mess.

Because of their complexity, Ackoff argued that Messes did not have "solutions" in the classic meaning of the term. They were never "solved" per se. Above all, they didn't have solutions that were "solutions" for all times and places, let alone for all affected and interested parties, i.e., Stakeholders.

The best one could do is to "cope" with Messes. Thus, coping strategies were key. Since the intense interactions between the problems that make up a Mess is one of their major properties, one of the key elements in coping with a Mess is

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<sup>1</sup> Murkherjee, *Op. Cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Brandy Lee, Ed., *The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump: 27 Psychiatrists and Mental Health Experts Assess a President*, St. Martins Press, New York, 2017.

identifying as best one can as many of the important interactions between them as possible, especially the most troubling and unanticipated, thereby doing one's best to get out in front of them. The Coronavirus shows as much as any how the family of Public Health Crises is inextricably linked to Financial Crises, and every other type. Thus, the Coronavirus has not only affected the health of China's citizens, but it damaged China's reputation as a responsible member of the world community. As such it's a major PR, and even more an Ethical, crisis for the country as a whole.

The inescapable conclusion is that CM is a major component of every Mess. Indeed, since each crisis is capable of setting off every other kind of crisis, the various types are themselves part of a Mess, The Crisis Mess. But it's even more complex. Since Defense Mechanisms are an integral part of CM, all of the Psychodynamic forces and theories we discussed in Chap. 1 are part of every Mess as well. Since Psychology is a key component of everything that humans do, it's thereby an integral part of every Mess. In short, a Mess not only contains the key problems and issues that compose it, but everything pertaining to the human condition. In this way, every Mess contains all of the Stakeholders and their associated history and past involvement with a Mess. In sum, the fundamental nature of Reality has altered fundamentally.

## 3.2 Horst Rittel: Wicked Problems

There's another complication that makes dealing with Messes even more difficult and problematic.

The late, distinguished UC Berkeley Architectural planner, Horst Rittel, introduced the notion of Wicked Problems. Wicked Problems are the complete opposite of Tame Problems, problems that can not only be well-defined, but have single, stable solutions. The classic examples are exercises. Thus, " $X+6=11$ ; find X" is an exercise. First of all, it's completely well-defined, indeed overly so, such that following the accepted rules of Algebra, everyone is expected to get the single, right answer " $X = 5$ ." In this way, exercises are the province of independent, well-structured, i.e., "exact," disciplines.

In sharp contrast, Wicked Problems have none of the supposedly desirable properties of Tame Problems, i.e., exercises. Thus, no single discipline or profession has the final say in formulating, let alone attacking successfully, Wicked Problems such as Homelessness or the Coronavirus. Homelessness and the Virus demand experts in Public Health, Community Finance and Resources, City Planning, Mental Health, Drug Addiction, Community Groups, and a host of others that can work well together. In short, Wicked Problems demand the intense and long-lasting cooperation of Secure Adults.

### 3.3 Concluding Remarks

We cannot emphasize enough that Messes do not have “solutions per se.” We cope with them as best we can. And, coping means that we only have broad Heuristics or approximate rules of thumb for managing Wicked Messes. For instance, a prime Heuristic is always be on the lookout for important connections such as the Coronavirus and the World Economy. Given their importance, we say more later about the Heuristics that are known to date.

To help ferret out important connections that no single discipline acting by itself can identify, we need “new experts” such as those who are equally well versed in both Economics and Infectious Diseases, thus calling once again, for Interdisciplinary, indeed Transdisciplinary, cooperation in the formation of new fields that can deal effectively with the Messes we face.

For those who were raised primarily on a steady diet of exercises, Wicked Messes pose an incredible challenge. They demand nothing less that we think and act as Secure Adults so that we can bear incredible amounts of uncertainty.

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# Chapter 4

## Inquiry Systems: How Do We Know What We Need to Know?



Where doctors and scientists see a public health crisis, President Trump and his media allies see a political coup afoot.

“Distorted realities and discarded facts are now such a part of everyday life that the way they shape events like impeachment, a mass shooting or a presidential address often goes unmentioned.

“But when partisan news meets a pandemic, the information silos where people shelter themselves can become not just deluded but also dangerous, according to those who criticize conservative commenters for shedding any semblance of objectivity when it comes to the president.<sup>1</sup>

No less problematic than the various elements we’ve been discussing are the kinds of knowledge that are needed to navigate a complex world of Wicked Messes. As we shall see, it’s not just a matter of Epistemology, i.e., formal theories of knowledge, but how they are affected by and interact with different Psychological states of mind, especially the Parent, Adult, Child, and Secure versus Insecure Adults.

At a minimum, the history of Western Philosophy recognizes the following Five Archetypal Ways of Knowing or Inquiry Systems (ISs). They not only differ fundamentally regarding what is valid knowledge, but no less basic, how to obtain it. Indeed, the two are inextricably intertwined:

1. Expert Consensus or Empiricism
2. Analytic Modeling or Rationalism
3. Multiple Models or Kantian
4. Dialectical or Hegelian
5. Systemic or Pragmatic

Since Epistemology is at best an arcane subject, we want to use a prosaic example to help make it as accessible as possible. In fact, it comes directly from an

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremy W. Peters and Michael M. Grynbaum, “To Doctors, It’s Crisis. To Hannity, It’s a ‘Hoax’.” *New York Times*, Thursday, March 11, 2020, p. A12.

assignment that we've used for years to help students understand complex topics such as Wicked Messes and ISs. They are to write a three- to five-page letter to someone important in their lives explaining in their own words what they've been learning. The key is "explaining in their own words to someone important in their lives." We've found this to be much more helpful than impersonal term papers in helping students master the material.

One of the best letters we've ever received was from a student who wrote to her mother explaining "How to Bake the Perfect Apple Pie." Needless to say, she got an A both for her clarity of expression and her creativity in understanding and portraying the material. In short, she nailed it!

## 4.1 Expert Consensus

According to the first way of knowing, or IS, one sends out a survey to as many expert bakers as one can worldwide. The particular recipe, or general type thereof, receiving the most votes is deemed "The Perfect Apple Pie."

This particular IS is not only dependent fundamentally on the agreement between experts, but who is considered to be an expert in the first place. The tighter the agreement between a set of reputable, independent experts, then supposedly the more it represents the Truth of a situation. Ideally, the experts are not all located in the same location, or even time zone, so that they do not unduly influence one another with regard to their personal judgments.

One of the most important examples of Expert Agreement, if not arguably the most, is Climate Change. Up to 97% of Reputable Climate Scientists worldwide are in strong agreement that humans are primarily responsible for Global Warming. Their agreement is not a matter of "raw opinion," but is based on their independent scientific studies. The point is that Expert Agreement is as important in Science as it is in any field. And, Informed Expert Agreement is very different from casual, everyday opinions, certainly Uninformed.

To be sure, if and when we produce a vaccine for treating the Coronavirus, Expert Agreement will play an important role in ensuring that it is both safe and effective.

Nonetheless, the student was rightly wary of using this IS in all matters. In the case of the Perfect Apple Pie, it may well result in picking the most bland and least offensive recipe, not the "Perfect One."

The student therefore rejected this IS for all issues. While we did not discuss in the particular class she took the various theories of Psychodynamics that we reviewed in Chap. 1, it's clear that this IS in particular can be easily manipulated by those who pretend to be experts, for example, Anti-vax groups on Facebook who claim to know more about childhood vaccinations than trained Medical Personnel. Thus, those with an authoritarian or paranoid bent of mind can easily misuse this IS for despicable ends. In fact, it's especially open to the production of Dis- and Misinformation. In this regard, the Coronavirus has proved to be a goldmine for Conspiracy Theories of all kinds. In this respect, Trump's tacit support for QAnon is thoroughly reprehensible.

## 4.2 Analytic Modeling: The One Best True Formula

The student then turned to the next IS. In this case, one typically uses the theories and knowledge of a particular scientific or technical discipline to produce “The Single Correct Solution” to a problem.

To illustrate its use, the student picked the science of Chemistry as “the model” for the perfect ingredients, their order, and combination in order to produce the “Perfect Apple Pie.” But as soon as she did this, she pulled back and questioned why Chemistry and it alone should be the sole basis for making a decision in this or any other important case.

Without alluding to the Psychodynamic theories we’ve discussed, she asked, “If one had to pick a single discipline, why wouldn’t the science of Psychology be a better choice?” After all, “Aren’t the basic attitudes and mental states of the bakers important?”

In short, the student rejected this particular IS because she didn’t believe that one and only one discipline generally applied to all of our problems, especially complex messy ones. It’s not that this IS doesn’t have anything at all to contribute, for theories of some sort underlie everything we do. Indeed, it’s the basis in Appendix 2 for the derivation of a mathematical theorem that adds insight into Wicked Messes. Nonetheless, in general, it’s best suited for those problems and issues that can be tightly defined as in the case of exercises.

Most troubling of all, those with crackpot and/or Conspiracy Theories could easily manipulate this IS to their distinct advantage. For this reason, one cannot separate a theory from the theorist. Again, Compartmentalization doesn’t work in the case of real complex, messy problems.

## 4.3 Multiple Realities

Because the problems of our world increasingly demand Multiple Perspectives, for the first time, the student felt comfortable with a particular IS. Instinctively, she knew that different schools of baking and cooking would frame the issue differently and thus come up with different solutions.

To use this IS, it necessitates a decision-maker who is not only comfortable with divergent views of a problem, but relishes them in the sense that he or she realizes that they are absolutely essential before one can make an informed decision. For instance, one wouldn’t expect a Social Worker, Medical Doctor, Psychologist, Police Officer, etc. to have the same views regarding how best to address drug addiction, but that all of them are relevant to building a comprehensive program of treatment. In short, it requires a Secure Adult. As an added note, this IS wouldn’t tolerate for a moment treating Homelessness and the Global Pandemic from one and only one perspective.

## 4.4 Dialectics

The Third IS is a natural transition to the Fourth. One picks two schools of baking that are the most in opposition and arranges a drag-down, knockdown debate between them. It requires a decision-maker who is not only comfortable with conflict, but also appreciates that it's absolutely necessary to get to the roots of any complex problem or issue. Hopefully, as a result of witnessing the debate, he or she can come up with a new alternative that was not considered before.

In brief, Dialectic ISs purposely generate conflict between two or more opposing views of a situation or topic. It's therefore essential that the participants be comfortable with productive conflict, and especially different ways of responding to it.

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Model (footnote 3 in Chapter 2) is particularly relevant in this regard. Essentially, there are basically five different ways or modes of handling conflict. Two underlying dimensions are at the basis of the Model: assertiveness and cooperativeness. The first dimension, assertiveness, is the extent to which a person tries to satisfy *his or her* needs or concerns irrespective of those of others. The second dimension, cooperativeness, is the extent to which a person tries to satisfy *another* person's needs or concerns.

Combining the two dimensions in all ways results in the five basic modes: competing (high in assertiveness and low in cooperativeness), accommodating (low in assertiveness and high in cooperativeness), compromising (moderate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness), avoiding (low on both dimensions), and collaborating (high on both dimensions).

Based on extensive research with the Conflict Model Instrument (TKI) (footnote 3 in Chapter 2), it has been found that at best people typically rely on only one or two of the five modes. As a result, they tend not to use the remaining ones. Nonetheless, all five modes are applicable to any situation. Each is helpful in addressing and resolving different needs and perspectives. The key is whether a particular mode matches the key attributes and/or requirements of a situation.

For this reason, we strongly urge everyone not to use a mode purely out of habit or based on their underlying personality. Instead, depending on one's answers to the following questions, one needs to choose one or more of the five modes as they are appropriate:

## 4.5 The Eight Key Attributes of a Conflict Situation

1. How stressful is the situation?
2. Is it simple or complex?
3. How important is the topic to each person?
4. Is there ample time to discuss the issues?
5. Is there sufficient trust to openly share needs and concerns?
6. Do people have good listening and communication skills?

7. Does the Culture and Reward System actively encourage people to share their true needs and concerns?
8. How important are the relationships to each person in the situation?

Depending on one's responses to the questions, one ideally chooses the particular mode that has the best chance of incorporating their perspective along with the opposing perspectives of others. One especially needs to practice using those modes that one typically doesn't. At the same time, one also needs to reduce one's use of those with which one is most comfortable. To emphasize a key point: *The first step for managing a conflict is correctly assessing the immediate situation before selecting a particular mode of behavior so that the chances of having a constructive debate and thereby integrating opposing viewpoints are maximized.* Notice that "correctly assessing a situation" demands at the very least that we use a Multiple Realities IS.

If there is high or, worse yet, overwhelming stress in a situation say due to the Coronavirus or any other Mega Crisis, then the five ways of handling a conflict quickly collapse to three defensive reactions: Fight, Flight, or Freeze. Ideally, as much as possible, all of the discussions or debates need to take place under conditions of low to moderate stress so that those involved in a Dialectic will be able to choose that mode that is best suited to the situation. At the same time, one is hopefully able to switch modes as the situation changes.

To return to the example of "The Perfect Apple Pie," the student made reference to the hackneyed TV show Iron Chef where two chefs staged a "bakeoff" as to which one had the best recipe for a particular dish.

A more serious example is the following: It's reputed that when Alfred P. Sloan, one of the early Chairmen of GM, had an important decision to make and when his key subordinates agreed too readily on a single proposal, he's alleged to have said, "Gentlemen, I propose that we adjourn so that we can formulate at least two opposing perspectives so we can have a reasoned debate regarding what we should do." In short, Sloan didn't trust any single perspective.

It should be noted that as was characteristic of his times, there were apparently no women who were members of Sloan's key group of subordinates and key advisors. We deplore it in every way possible.

One of the key properties of this and the previous IS is the clear recognition that Data are not Theory or Value-Free. Ever since the great Prussian philosopher Immanuel Kant, we've known that one has to presume some Theory, however informal or taken-for-granted, about the phenomenon in which we are interested in order to collect Data that are relevant with respect to it. In short, any old kind of Data will not do. Thus, it requires considerable training in the Physical Sciences to collect the "right kinds of Data" that are informative with regard to Global Warming. But it also requires the Social Sciences as well since we need to change human behavior significantly.

One of the chief defects of Classical Empiricism was its taken-for-granted assumption that Sense Data were readily available just by opening one's eyes, ears, etc. In other words, one didn't need to presuppose any Theory in order to collect any

Data. As a result, it didn't account for the "fact" that those with different perspectives not only saw different Data, but interpreted the "Same Data" differently.

In this regard, those who assert that "there are alternate facts" are both right and profoundly wrong. They are right in the sense that different theories allow one to uncover different facts. They are wrong if they think that all so-called facts are of equal standing. The theories that are needed to uncover the "facts" are themselves not of equal weight.

## 4.6 Pragmatist Inquiry

The last IS is the most comprehensive of all. It is in fact the underlying basis of Systems Thinking (see Appendix 3).

It's based on the pioneering work of the American Pragmatist Philosopher, E.A. Singer Jr. In turn, Singer was one of the best students of the great American Philosopher/Psychologist William James. As such, he developed James' ideas further.

Pragmatism is best summed up in the following: "Truth is that which Makes an Ethical difference in the Quality of One's Life." Thus, according to Pragmatism, the systematic search for Truth, i.e., Epistemology, is not separate from Ethics and Aesthetics where the short phrase the "Quality of One's Life" is a stand-in for Aesthetics. Furthermore, the little word "Makes" is critical for in Pragmatism one does *not* have "Truth" merely or solely in an abstract theory or published paper but in a series of Ethical actions carefully designed to cope with an important problem.

With regard to our baking example, the student realized that the Aesthetics (setting) of the kitchen, the use of Ethical ingredients, and the attitudes of the cook and his or her staff were as important as anything.

Singer also stressed that no single science or discipline was more fundamental than any other. Indeed, they were all interdependent and on an equal footing. For instance, whether it acknowledges it or not, and mostly it doesn't, Physics is dependent on Psychology and Sociology, for it's humans with all of their conscious and unconscious needs and desires who concoct theories and make informed observations about the world.

Without a doubt, the greatest contribution of modern Pragmatism is the concept of Wicked Messes. To reiterate, it follows from the foundational ideas of William James and Singer. Indeed, C. West Churchman, Mitroff's major Philosophical mentor, was one of Singer's most prominent students. And Ackoff was one of Churchman's first PhD students in Philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania. Thus, if Singer is intellectually the authors' Grandfather, then William James is our Great Grandfather! A fact about which we couldn't be more proud.

In the end, we only get out of Inquiry what we put into it. We not only put ourselves into it in the form of our collective Psychology, but our collective Social Actions as well.

## 4.7 An Addendum: The Muddled Ethics of the Coronavirus

Before we leave the discussion of ISs, it's imperative that we say a brief word about Ethics, especially since it's a prominent aspect of Pragmatist ISs. But then, the various schools of Ethics strongly parallel the major ISs we've been discussing.

In addition to exposing glaring weaknesses in virtually all of our major systems, the Coronavirus has also exposed serious weaknesses in the Ethical Systems that we use to justify our actions and, even more, to make sense of the world. The misuse of some of the prominent schools of Ethical reasoning is appalling. Indeed, it's profoundly Unethical.

The dreadful misuse of Utilitarianism is by far the worst. Thus, in one of the many protest rallies, someone had the absolute gall to say, "10,000 deaths are acceptable if it puts people back to work." In other words, "it's not only a small, but an acceptable price to pay."

If this wasn't bad enough, to reiterate, the Lt. Governor of Texas said we could afford to "lose grandparents because they've already lived their lives."

In brief, Utilitarianism is the philosophy of "The greatest good for the greatest number." In modern times, it's the basis of Cost-Benefit Analysis. That is, something is "acceptable"—in essence Ethical—if its Benefits clearly exceed its Costs or Disbenefits. The trouble of course is who determines what is a "Benefit versus a Cost and to whom." Indeed, whom of your loved ones would you consign to death in order to benefit "the greater good?" The use of Utilitarianism in this way is not just supremely callous, but downright evil.

It's not that Utilitarianism is never warranted. Many times, we are put in the unenviable position of having to choose and thereby justify a particular course of action where the Benefits do exceed the Costs, but where the Costs nevertheless are harmful to ourselves and others. We do it not only because we must do something, but we see no other reasonable alternative. The most obvious case is where we willingly sacrifice untold lives in war to save many more.

The school of Deontology which owes its origin to Kant fares better, although it's not without its own problems. The basic idea is that one should choose that course of action that one can "Will as a Universal Maxim or Principle for All Humankind." Thus, "sheltering in place" qualifies as a Universal Principle because it's proven to save lives. Indeed, lacking a vaccine, along with the wearing of masks, it's the only effective means we have of containing the Virus. The trouble is that while it's absolutely effective, indeed required, it fails to account for the severe backlash that it's generated. In this sense, while its clear intent is to be universal, it's not necessarily Systemic. It does not take into account all of its effects, let alone unintended consequences.

Situational Ethics fares no better. It basically argues that the vast majority of circumstances that we're forced to navigate are far too complex and varied to be dealt with by all-encompassing rules. Instead, each situation must be handled according to its individual merits. This is of little comfort to those Health Workers who must make the god-awful decision as to who gets a lifesaving ventilator or

treatment in short supply, let alone the use of severely limited supplies of Personal Protection Equipment or PPE.

Without reviewing all of the other schools of Ethics, the point is that the Coronavirus has put us in the tragic situation of having to make life-altering decisions without sufficient Ethical guidelines. We are left in a deep social quandary. It's only furthered by deep cultural and social divides. More than ever, we need a shared Social Ethic. We're truly in this altogether.

In a strange way, Utilitarianism comes to our aid. A substantial majority of Americans are strongly in favor of keeping sheltering-in-place until if and when we have a proven means of defeating the Virus.

As imperfect as they are, for many of us, our theories of Ethics are all that we have to guide us through troubled times. If they do not provide perfect answers, it's because perfection is not open to us mere mortals. Nothing reflects better our ongoing struggle than the constant search for Ethical principles by which to direct our lives.

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# Chapter 5

## Inquiry Systems as Coping Mechanisms



First and foremost, Inquiry Systems or ISs are major models for the production and authentication of credible knowledge in which, along with Ethics, we put our basic trust to guide our lives. However, at the same time, ISs also serve as fundamental coping mechanisms to alleviate the intense anxiety that accompanies the immense uncertainty associated with less than perfect knowledge, especially in today’s problematic and highly uncertain world.

In their classic formulation, ISs are certainly not the only ways in which we cope with the anxiety brought about the complexities of modern life. Far from it.

One of the best ways of seeing this is by examining what each IS takes as “Objective Knowledge,” especially how they direct us to produce it. Further, comparing different forms of “Objectivity” yields another important benefit. It makes clear the nature of very different kinds of coping mechanisms that are the direct counterparts, if not opposites, of each IS, especially the first four.

### 5.1 Objectivity

We cannot emphasize enough that each of the ISs that we’ve explored has a distinct and very different concept of how best to produce “Objective Knowledge,” indeed what is “Objective.”

According to Expert Consensus, *something is Objective if and only if it’s the result of “Hard, Irrefutable Facts” as determined by a group of Reputable Experts who are in strong agreement with one another.* Based on the “facts,” they are also in strong agreement regarding how to address and best cope with the situation responsible for an important problem. Once again, one of the most important examples is that of Climate Change. Based on their independent scientific studies, the “fact” that 97% of “reputable climate scientists” are in strong agreement is taken as “objective evidence” that humans are primarily responsible for Global Warming. They are also

in strong agreement that humans need to cut back drastically on the use of carbon-based fuels to prevent further damage to the planet. The worry is that we may soon, if not already, be past the point of irreversible damage.

According to Analytic Modeling, or the One True Formula, *something is Objective if and only if it's the result of a Rigorous Theory that has been validated repeatedly by independent analysts*. Furthermore, the theory has to have shown time and time again that it is able to predict the behavior of an important phenomenon. A primary example is Sir Isaac Newton's Laws of Motion. Even though they are a special case of Einstein's, for bodies moving slowly with respect to the enormous speed of light, Newton's Laws are extremely accurate with regard to predicting the behavior of moving objects. For example, starting with Newton's Theory of Gravitation, and using the Calculus, which Newton played a fundamental role in its invention, one can derive a formula for the distance  $D$  that a body falls in time  $T$ . The result is the familiar formula,  $D = \frac{1}{2} G T^2$ , where  $G$  is the Gravitational Constant.

As a general rule, only the Physical Sciences meet the strict criterion of this IS, whereas the Social Sciences supposedly do not, a contention that the other ISs do not necessarily accept and, indeed, object to strongly.

According to Multiple Realities, *something is Objective if and only if it's the product of widely different perspectives of an important problem or issue*. Indeed, according to this IS, it's extremely dangerous to base an important decision on any single theory or perspective no matter how well-validated it is or how strongly a group supports it. Since everything depends on the assumptions we make, it's virtually impossible to get at the assumptions underlying a single perspective or theory without comparing it systematically with others. As a result, *to be Objective is to expose and contrast the assumptions of varying perspectives and thus to be able to choose that perspective, or perspectives, whose assumptions "best fit" the complexities of a particular situation*.<sup>1</sup> In other words, no single perspective is sufficient to account for any complex situation. In turn, coping with a complex situation is a function of the "blend" between multiple perspectives, at the very least, taking into account differing recommendations on how to best treat a complex situation.

The Coronavirus in particular shows the extreme importance of assumptions, particularly those that we take for granted. Thus, a primary assumption was that the general public would follow scrupulously the recommendations of major Public Health Officials when it comes to wearing masks, practicing safe social distancing, washing hands, sheltering-in-place, etc. While many did indeed follow such advice, unfortunately many did not, thus not only endangering the general population, but as a result, not slowing the spread of the Virus.

Furthermore, many of the reasons that were given for *not* wearing masks and practicing social distancing border on the bizarre. Thus, "it's my Constitutional right to behave as I see fit." Or, "the Government is out to curb my freedom by

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<sup>1</sup> See Mitroff and Harold A. Linstone, *The Unbounded Mind: Breaking the Chains of Traditional Business Thinking*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1993, for how to surface and analyze key assumptions.

forcing me to wear masks.” According to our reading, we don’t see where the Constitution gives anyone the unfettered right to cause harm to one’s fellow citizens.

The Dialectical IS posits that *Objectivity is only achieved by means of witnessing the strongest possible debate one can produce between the two most opposing views of a problematic situation. The view that survives and/or is the product of the debate, which is not necessarily either of the original two, is deemed Objective.* Once again, this assumes that one has a decision-maker who not only tolerates but appreciates the right kind of conflict.

One of the most prominent examples of the Dialectical IS is Medicine. Even though more and more Medicine is Evidence-Based, whether in the form of Expert Consensus or otherwise, every case is subject to differing interpretations and thus recommendations as to how to best treat it. After all, different doctors have different bodies of experience, training, etc., all of which affect how they “see” and “size up” a situation.

Finally, according to Pragmatic ISs, *Objectivity is not a property of any single IS, but ideally of all of them working together and thus supporting one another.* Only by means of their honest and sincere cooperation can one possibly hope to make headway and thus cope with complex messy problems. Thus, Global Warming requires all of the ISs in order to “make significant progress.” All problems of importance require the best Data and theories we have. But in line with Multiple Realities, the Data and theories we have are only indicative, rarely final. Likewise, all important issues require the best debate we can arrange with respect to them. And, the Data and theories we have are only fuel for the debate, not necessarily deciding factors.

Once again, a key element of Pragmatic ISs is that all of the Sciences, Physical and Social, are on equal footing. Indeed, they presuppose one another. Thus, the Physical Sciences couldn’t work without the Social, and vice versa. This consideration gives rise to different forms of coping mechanisms.

Consider Expert Consensus. According to the various Psychological and Psychodynamic theories we’ve examined, impersonal, geographically separate, dispersed groups are not the same as groups who personally know and support their members intimately. They are also not the same as groups that are led by a specially trained facilitator who is well versed in Group Dynamics and thus able to help people cope with intense personal conflicts and disagreements. They are certainly not the same as where the leader is a trained Psychotherapist. Whereas Expert Agreement calls such groups nothing but a morass of “subjective feelings,” Pragmatist ISs counter with the “hard fact” that feelings are a fundamental part of everything humans do. Better to get them out and air them than to pretend they don’t exist. In this regard, surfacing and examining one’s feelings only adds to Objectivity, not diminishes or detracts from it.

In a similar manner, the use of theories as instructed by the One True Formula is often but just a prominent way of hiding our anxieties and feelings about an important situation. By their very nature, this is less true of Multiple Realities and Dialectical Inquiry.

The point is that Coping with Chaos not only requires Individual, but Group Therapy. In every sense of the term, it requires Secure Adult leaders who have experienced Secure Attachments in childhood, or have overcome Insecure ones.

Consider the broad spectrum by which individuals and groups respond to uncertainty. At the one end is “shutting down completely, and thereby effectively withdrawing from uncertainty and extended social life.” Alternatively, one seeks out groups that have the wildest conspiracy positions and theories. At the other end is “embracing uncertainty and using the best means available of coping with it.”

The point is that just as there are Secure and Insecure forms of Attachments in childhood, and later in life, there are Secure and Insecure forms of Inquiry.

The end result is that the admonition to be “Objective” is largely meaningless. The proper response is “What kind of ‘objectivity’ is most appropriate for the problem at hand?”, which is the basic consideration of Pragmatic ISs.

It bears repeating. ISs are not only diverse ways of producing and authenticating knowledge, but of fundamental ways of coping with the uncertainties of life. And, they help us understand those ways of coping that are their opposites.

In the end, the prime question is “How much uncertainty can we bear?” And, “Who can help us to bear it?”

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# Chapter 6

## The Coronavirus: A Jungian Analysis



Since we've talked repeatedly about the importance of Systems Thinking, we want to examine the Coronavirus from a different form. It brings out different aspects of the Virus that along with the Psychodynamic theories we examined in Chap. 1 are difficult to ascertain without it.

The approach that's the subject of this chapter is based on four very different perspectives and styles of decision-making, indeed fundamentally different views of Reality. In this regard, it does not use the widespread and commonly accepted notion of a System as a series of boxes composed of key activities, decisions, and/or processes that are connected by a complex tangle of arrows running each and every which way between them. In this framework, the arrows represent the multiple interactions and feedback loops between the various elements that comprise a System.

It's not that this more common notion of Systems is wrong. Rather, it's limited in that it leaves out some of their most crucial aspects. For one, it doesn't account for how different types of people have very different perspectives that not only depend on each other, but have to work together. If they are not able to do so, then a more comprehensive system can't exist in the first place, let alone accomplish its intended goals. In this sense, the common approach is not Systemic enough in the truest sense of the term.

The approach adopted here is based on the pioneering work of the Swiss Psychiatrist and Psychoanalyst Carl Jung. It pinpoints the different types of activities and processes that are essential if organizations, societies, and now most crucial of all, the entire world are to survive in today's turbulent environment.

Figure 6.1 outlines four essential sets of activities that all human Systems in one way or another need to accomplish. They fall into four distinct quadrants. More than ever, the leaders of all organizations and institutions are challenged with ensuring that the four quadrants not only support one another, but work together seamlessly if they are to be successful in realizing their intended goals. Acting alone, none of them can succeed by themselves.

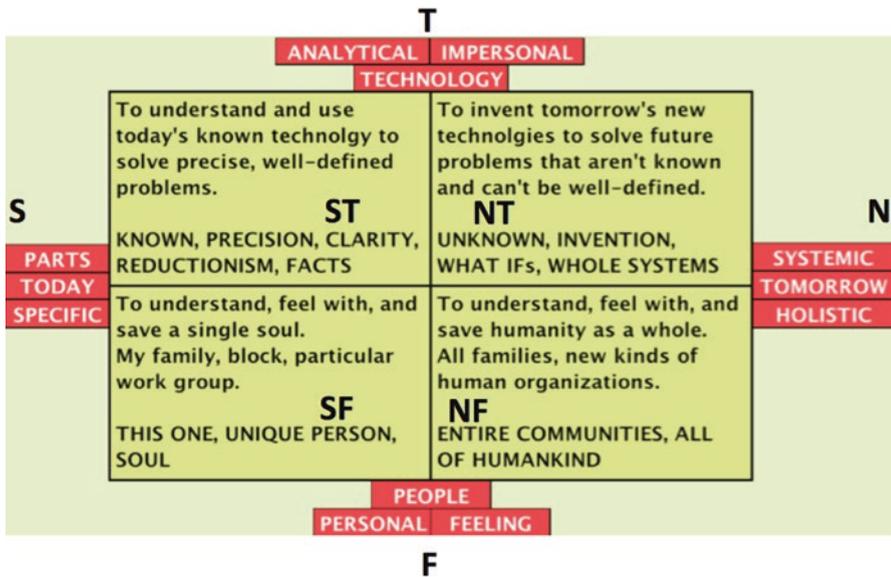


Fig. 6.1 The Jungian Framework

Two basic dimensions are fundamental to, and thereby underlie, the Jungian Framework.

The horizontal dimension refers to how one initially represents, structures, or views a complex entity. The vertical dimension refers to how one analyzes, responds to, or the process one uses to make an important decision with regard to the entity. To reiterate, taken together, they comprise two of the key aspects of the Jungian Framework.

As a highly educated European of his time, Jung was well versed in a wide variety of fields. He observed that no matter what the particular field of human endeavor he studied—Art, History, Literature, Psychology, Science, etc.—the same two dimensions emerged repeatedly. They captured the essential differences between how different people viewed any situation, field of human knowledge, or practice.

The left-hand side “Details Parts” refers to the fact that no matter what the particular entity or situation, there is always the perspective or point of view that instinctively breaks a complex whole (problem, situation, system, etc.) down into its so-called separate, individual parts and then analyzes/studies the parts in isolation and independently of one another. In other words, some people are comfortable if and only if they can break a complex problem or whole—a Mess—down into its “individual parts” so that they can focus solely on the parts alone. The left-hand side also represents those aspects of a system that can be understood in terms of well-established concepts, measures, and theories.

The left-hand side is called Sensing or S for short. Sensing Types—people whose S side of their personality is strongly developed—prefer to gather information in

terms of their senses, or more generally, scientific data. In fact, anything that isn't ultimately based on or reducible to "hard data" isn't considered to be "valid information."

The right-hand side "Wholes" stands for those who instinctively prefer *not* to break something down into its so-called independent parts. Instead, they instinctively look at the whole—The Big Picture—of any entity or situation. If they consider the "parts," it's not only to draw out all of the interconnections between them, but to create a whole whose value is greater than the "product" of the values of the individual parts. In other words, they don't look at anything in isolation. Finally, the right-hand side also represents the use of nontraditional concepts, innovative ideas, and measures to assess the performance of a system.

As an important aside, the term "product" is used deliberately because the typical notion that a "system is more than the 'sum' of its parts" does not fully capture the Reality of the situation. Instead, a "System is the product of its critical interactions." Again, this is especially true of Wicked Messes.

The right-hand side is called Intuiting or N for short. (In the Jungian Framework, the letter I is reserved for Introversion, and E for Extroversion, which is a whole other dimension altogether.) Intuiting type personalities—people whose N side is strongly developed—prefer to gather information in terms of their imagination. Indeed, they focus on "possibilities," not "what currently is." In fact, anything that isn't ultimately based on imagination—"possibilities"—isn't "informative," and hence "not information." In other words, so-called hard facts hem Ns in. It's not that facts don't matter, but that today's facts have a way of becoming the discarded realities of yesterday. In different terms, facts only matter to Ns in the aggregate, not in isolation.

The top of the vertical dimension, "Analytic," represents the use of impersonal means (Logic, Science, Statistics, etc.) of analyzing entities and situations, and reaching decisions. The bottom "People" represents the use of Feelings to assess a person, organization, or situation. The bottom also represents looking at an organization, situation, etc. in intensely personal terms.

It's important to note that the dimension "People" does not mean "emotional" for all of the types can be extremely "emotional" in defending their positions.

In terms of the Jungian Framework, the top of the vertical dimension is called Thinking or T for short. Thinking Type personalities—people whose T side is strongly developed—prefer to analyze situations impersonally. In sharp contrast, Feeling or F Types respond to every situation in intensely personal terms, e.g., "likes and dislikes." It's not that one Type is "right" and the others are "wrong," but that all of them depend upon and need one another in order to pick up and respond appropriately to all of the factors that are involved in every situation.

Putting the horizontal and vertical dimensions together results in the four quadrants, or Personality Types, in Fig. 6.1. With these ideas in mind, we turn to the Coronavirus.

## 6.1 The Coronavirus

The ST approach is concerned primarily with the search for the single best model that correctly explains the origin, spread, and hopefully treatment of the Virus. Starting with the correct explanatory variables—numbers of people who have been exposed, rates of infection, mechanisms for spreading, speeds of transmission, etc.—the variables are combined mathematically to result in a single model that best predicts the numbers of people who will be infected in the future, and worse yet, die from the Virus. Models are also devised to predict the numbers of beds, Doctors, and Medical Personnel required to treat the disease, and most of all, when the Virus will run its course, i.e., “the flattening of the curve.”

The ST approach typically does not treat more than one model. The consideration of the respective strengths and weaknesses of multiple models, and especially the surfacing and assessment of the assumptions that underlie them, is the province of NT. But more than anything, NT looks at the entire system of factors that are not only integral “parts” of the Virus, but affect it in a myriad of ways. Thus, to reiterate, the Economic Crisis that has resulted from the fact that in order to control the Virus, people have been ordered to shelter in place, thus bringing economic activity to a halt, is an inseparable part of the entire crisis. Even more, the fact that that serious defects have been exposed in virtually all of our key societal systems are key parts as well. The fact that the US Public Health System has been weakened under The Trump Administration is another key factor. So is the fact that Trump was warned repeatedly about the serious nature of the Virus, but on multiple occasions, deliberately ignored the warnings, and intentionally chose not to warn the American people. Indeed, it’s absolutely reprehensible.

NT also looks at other variables for which traditional medicine gives lip service, for instance, obesity and diets, but to which it often does not give enough serious attention. Thus, obesity puts one at greater risk for the Virus.

The key point is that NT fundamentally looks at the whole System. Indeed, from the standpoint of NT, no single model or set of variables can be evaluated apart from the larger whole.

NT also has alternate interpretations of the concept of a “model.” Thus, as before, NT is concerned with Architectural models of new kinds of Hospital, Nursing, and Retirement Homes that will protect both the Medical and Service Personnel and the Patients and Residents. The point is that NT’s approach is not strictly mathematical.

NF also looks at the Virus systemically, but whereas NT does it impersonally, i.e., analytically, NF does it in intensely personal terms. Thus, NF is concerned primarily with how the Virus affects society as a whole in terms of how people are coping and dealing with feelings of Loneliness, Anxiety, Depression, Upsurges in Domestic Violence, Alcoholism, Divorce, Suicides, etc. NF is also concerned with what can be done to bring people together as a total community in times of a national and worldwide tragedy. It is especially concerned with the state of First Responders, Medical Personnel, and Funeral Directors who put their lives on the line every day.

Where NF focuses on society as a whole, SF focuses on particular people and how they are coping with Loneliness, Isolation, Anxiety, etc. How are they, their individual families, and loved ones bearing up? What support do they need?

The Jungian Framework also helps to make clear how and why each of the Types gets hung up. For example, STs often have an inordinate need for clarity and precision far beyond what a particular situation demands. In sharp contrast, NTs and NFs often float off into futuristic fantasies that are not “grounded in today’s ‘Realities’,” etc. In turn, SFs make everything personal that completely revolves around them, etc.

While it’s certainly not the only framework that one can use to understand both people and organizations, it’s one of the most powerful ways of analyzing an organization as a Total System. For instance, the ST aspects of Organizational Health are concerned fundamentally with efficiently well-planned and run meetings. It is also concerned with individual Physical Health. NT is concerned with innovative, strategic thinking and plans, NF with how much an organization works together as a community, and SF with how much it really cares about individual people.

It should come as no surprise to point out that Expert Consensus and Analytic Modeling are the two preferred Inquiry Systems of STs. Multiple Models and Dialectical Inquiry are preferred by NTs. Given their preference for human interaction, NFs turn to the Feelings inherent in both sides of a Dialectic. SFs prefer those particular experts that they know and trust intimately. And, Pragmatic Inquiry stresses the need for all of the quadrants to work together.

## 6.2 Concluding Remarks

The Jungian Framework leads to the following definition of a problem: *something is a problem if and only if it has significant aspects in each of the four Jungian quadrants*. To turn it around, *something is an exercise if it exists or emanates primarily from one or two at most of the Jungian quadrants*. *But most of all, exercises are the province of ST*.

There is no doubt that on their surface and when they are first presented, many problems, primarily technical, do not involve all of the Jungian quadrants. Nonetheless, from our experience, we’ve never seen a “problem” in the truest sense of the term that does not have important aspects in all four quadrants. For instance, every problem has technical aspects of some kind (ST/NT). But given that it is humans who perceive what is and is not a “problem,” every “problem” impacts human behavior and thereby has important NF and SF components.

To reiterate, something is a problem if and only if it has significant aspects in all of the quadrants. The danger is that the aspects we neglect or downplay often come back to haunt us in the form of major crises.

In sum, in terms of ST, we need the best models we can build that will not only help explain the Coronavirus, but will help us contain and ultimately defeat in. But to do this requires the intense cooperation of NT, NF, and SF.

We also note that we've used the Jungian Framework as follows to help organizations better understand their problems. Using the Myers-Briggs Personality Assessment, all the STs are put in one group, all the NTs in another, and so on. Each group is then asked to describe the problems the organization is facing and how they would handle it.

After each group has presented its deliberations, we then present the Jungian Framework and thus how the groups were formed. We've never seen a case where the Framework has failed to explain how and why each group has analyzed the "same problem" differently.

Next, four new synthesis groups are formed by taking at least one person from each of the "pure Jungian groups." The task for each of the new groups is to integrate as best as they can the different perspectives of the "pure groups."

The point is that synthesis does not always happen naturally by itself. It has to be aided by the best we can do to ensure it.

We also need to note that the Coronavirus has resulted in overwhelming feelings of enormous loss and that each of the Types experiences it in very different ways. For STs, it's the loss of certainty and prediction as to what will happen. For NTs, it's the loss of an overall pattern that makes sense of the Mess. For NFs, it's the loss of far too many members of one's community, indeed the entire world community. And, for SFs, it's the loss of one's personal friends and family that have succumbed to the Virus.

More than ever, we need to understand the different senses of loss. We need to bolster one another.

Finally, we refer the reader to Appendix 2 where Dis- and Misinformation are analyzed in terms of the Jungian Framework.

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# Chapter 7

## Assumptional Analysis: The Key Role of Assumptions



We cannot emphasize enough the importance of assumptions. For this reason, we want to describe a general method known as Assumptional Analysis for uncovering and analyzing key assumptions. It's best described in terms of an important case with which Mitroff was involved.

The case involved McNeil Pharmaceuticals. Indeed, Assumptional Analysis owes its origin to it.

The case concerned the fact that a major painkiller that was a financial mainstay of the company was threatened by the onslaught of cheaper generic drugs. If they were successful, generics would in effect destroy the market for the company's painkillers, thereby threatening its entire financial standing and well-being.

Since the company was threatened as a whole, all of the top executives were involved in responding to the situation. At the heart of it was the fact that three equally powerful groups of the top executives recommended three very different ways of combatting the threat. One group wanted to lower the price of their drugs, in effect to "out-generic the generics." Another wanted to raise the price, thereby sending a clear signal to consumers that they had supreme confidence in the fact that their drug was vastly superior to generics. The third wanted to hedge their bets by setting the price midway between the first two groups. Since all three groups were of equal standing, none of them could force through their individual strategy without the full consent of the others.

In effect, all three groups were making very different assumptions about the key Stakeholders who were at the heart of each strategy. Among them were Patients, Pharmacists, and Physicians. The difficulty was the fact that all of the groups were only barely aware of the assumptions and how they influenced their strategies.

This was the situation when James Emshoff, a researcher at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, and Mitroff entered as external consultants. Mitroff, who by then was a Full Professor at the Graduate School of Business at the University of Pittsburgh, was a Visiting Professor at Penn for the year 1978–1979.

To get at the assumptions, Emshoff began by asking what each Stakeholder needed to be like for a particular strategy to work. Next, the assumptions were then plotted on a two-dimensional chart that showed how they interacted to form three very different, but equally coherent, Belief Systems.

The horizontal dimension ranged from those assumptions on the Left that were Relatively Unimportant to those on the Right that were Extremely Important to a strategy's success. The Vertical dimension ranged from those assumptions on the Top that were felt to be Certain to those on the Bottom that were felt to be Uncertain. They were thus as likely to be False as they were to be True.

All of the groups felt that the key assumptions with regard to Patients were both Certain and Very Important. Namely, Patients wanted high-quality, low-price drugs. At the same time, they would go along with whatever their Primary Care Physician recommended. They also felt that Pharmacists would go along as well with whatever a Physician recommended, but they were less certain for in some States, Pharmacists were mandated by law to recommend a lower-price generic drug if it was available. But the biggest difference by far was with regard to Physicians.

The group that wanted to lower the price of the drug was assuming that because of the rising costs of Healthcare, Physicians were increasingly Price-Sensitive. In sharp contrast, the group that wanted to raise the price of the drug was assuming that Physicians were Price-Insensitive. If a Physician felt that a particular drug was absolutely necessary to the health of a Patient, then he or she would prescribe it regardless of the cost. But once the various assumptions were stated, neither group had the Data to prove its case beyond all doubt. Were all Physicians everywhere Price-Sensitive or Price-Insensitive to the same degree? They didn't know because they never had to test their assumptions before. Again, they were largely unaware of them.

Even though they couldn't agree on a final strategy, as a result of the process, they decided to carefully raise the price of the drug in certain key test markets to see what the responses were. They reasoned that if they lowered the price of the drug, then they wouldn't find out if they could have raised it for who would push back against a lower-price drug.

We will not burden the reader with further details except to mention the name of the drug, Extra-Strength Tylenol.

## **7.1 Tech's Misguided Assumptions: The Intelligent Person's Guide to Thinking the Unthinkable**

Because of their extreme importance, assumptions warrant further discussion. Because it affects every aspect of our lives, the assumptions we make with regard to Technology are among the most critical.

Given that humans lack perfect knowledge, we have no recourse but to make countless assumptions every day just to get up and function. Thus, we have to

assume that our fellow citizens and creatures are basically predictable and trustworthy; our institutions will work as intended; the sun will rise tomorrow as it always has; etc. In other words, we have to assume the orderliness and predictability of the world and our fellow beings. In this way, a whole array of assumptions underlies everything we do and think.

To challenge our assumptions requires that “We Think the Unthinkable.” It involves surfacing the underlying assumptions on which we depend and take for granted, and then doing everything we can to question their validity and in this way anticipate their serious challenge, if not ultimate demise.

But herein lies a fundamental paradox. Because they are the very foundation of all that we think and do, for the most part, the great body of assumptions on which we depend are largely invisible. (As we shall see, the same is largely true of Corporate Culture.) Most of the time, they operate safely well below the plane of consciousness. For this reason, to question them openly is often regarded as strange, if not downright bizarre. Only in times of severe and prolonged crises when our assumptions no longer serve us well do we become aware of them. As painful as it is, we're finally forced to confront and challenge them.

Tech has reached this point. The largely taken-for-granted assumptions that underlie it are no longer working for the betterment of humankind. As a consequence, in spite of its many benefits, it's now one of the greatest Existential Threats facing humankind.

The following are prime examples of the major kinds of assumptions that Tech takes for granted:

1. The idealized nature of end users
2. The nature, i.e., primary benefits, of Technology and its underlying ideology
3. The idealized contexts in which Tech is used and operates
4. The broader groups of Stakeholders who interact with Tech and on which it depends
5. The underlying views of Crisis Management

To be sure, there are more than merely five categories or types of assumptions, but these are enough to pinpoint the general kinds on which Tech not only depends, but are needed to make it work.

## *End Users*

It's virtually never stated explicitly, but a basic, taken-for-granted assumption is that users are conscientious, responsible, and sufficiently intelligent. They are therefore both able and willing to follow instructions exactly as intended to ensure the safe and responsible use of a Technology. It's also assumed implicitly that they will not intentionally abuse or misuse it.

Facebook is *the* classic case of mistaken, taken-for-granted assumptions. To reiterate, no prior thought was given to the fact that it would serve as a perfect platform

for Cyberbullying 24/7 and thus to torment relentlessly those at most risk, young children. Even after Cyberbullying occurred repeatedly, it took Facebook far too long to take appropriate corrective action. In this and countless other ways, Tech makes all kinds of idealized assumptions about users, not to mention a host of other Stakeholders.

We cannot emphasize enough that if early on Facebook had assembled groups of Parents, Kids, Teachers, etc. and asked them to Think the Unthinkable, we have little doubt that they would have come up with the strong possibility of its being used for nefarious purposes. Facebook is still not responsible enough.

### ***The Underlying Ideology of Technology***

A previous book, *Technology Run Amok: Crisis Management in the Digital Age*,<sup>1</sup> explores the primary belief system of technologists and thus underscores modern Technology. We call it The Technological Mindset. Thus, a major, taken-for-granted assumption is that “Technology is the solution to all of our problems, including those caused by Technology itself.” For another, “Technology is the single factor most responsible for material progress.” Still another, “technologists need only be concerned with the positive aspects and Benefits of their marvelous creations. The Dis-benefits, if any, are secondary and thus the major concern of others.”

Even though the history of Technology demonstrates repeatedly that along with all of their positive Benefits, all Technologies produce the exact opposite of what they promise, technologists still generally overly hype the Benefits to the virtual exclusion of anything negative. As a result, they are oblivious to the fact that no Technology could even exist, let alone operate without a whole host of societal institutions both to nourish it and give it the support it requires on an ongoing and long-term basis.

It’s also assumed that not only will we adapt to any and all technologies, but it’s the fundamental duty of humans to do so. Notice that in no way does the assumption actually guarantee that we will adapt. That’s precisely why it’s an assumption, not a fact.

One of the most important assumptions concerns Racial and Ethnic bias. In particular, the developers of Facial Recognition did not take into account that it’s consistently biased against women of color. It repeatedly misidentifies them, leading to false claims of the commission of crimes.

In sum, the general assumptions of technologists are not broad enough to be widely inclusive. They lack both the interest and social maturity that are required to truly develop Technology for the betterment of humankind.

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<sup>1</sup> See Mitroff, Op. Cit.

### ***The Various Contexts in Which Tech Is Used and Operates***

The major operating assumption here is that Technology, specifically Social Media, will not serve as major vehicles for the spread of Dis- and Misinformation, Hate Speech, Conspiracy Theories, Far Right-Wing Propaganda, and Direct Interference in our Elections. If we had deliberately set out to accomplish these and other contemptible ends as effectively as possible, we couldn't have invented a better means. Once again, it requires Thinking the Unthinkable systematically and Systemically.

### ***The Broader Groups of Stakeholders Who Interact with Tech and on Which It Depends***

A major assumption is that malicious and nefarious actors will not prevail. They will not take advantage of a Technology for antisocial, criminal, or evil purposes. Given the direct interference by foreign governments in our elections, this particular assumption has failed miserably.

And of course, users have wrongly assumed that Tech companies will both protect and safeguard our personal data, and most of all, will not sell it to third parties for the financial gain of others.

### ***Tech's Underlying Views of Crisis Management***

A front-page article in *The New York Times* reported that Amazon is responsible for at least half of all the book sales in the USA.<sup>2</sup> This not only allows it to crush the competition, but to set whatever prices it wants for books. If a publisher does not agree to its terms, then Amazon refuses to carry its books.

A highly disturbing consequence is not only Amazon's absence of quality control, but its basic lack of concern with it. Not only has it carried counterfeit books, but it's done little to curtail their all-too-frequent appearance on its website. One of the most disturbing cases concerns the poor print in bogus Medical books. The correct dosages for medications are often dangerously misleading, thereby putting the health of patients seriously at risk.

Amazon's attitude and behavior is unfortunately far from the rare exception. It's reflective of the Tech's industry general attitude toward Crisis Management, which is largely Reactive. "Don't do anything until the crises are so many and so bad that one is finally forced to act!" is the mantra.

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<sup>2</sup>David Streitfeld, "Amazon's Control Over Books Shows the Perils of Tech Power," [The New York Times](#), Monday, June 24, 2019, p. A1, and A12.

Even more serious crises are in the making. Increasingly, in our quest to become The Masters of Human Evolution, and thereby control it for our benefit, we're playing with forces of whose ultimate consequences we have little knowledge. To reiterate, in the hope of curing childhood diseases, Chinese doctors have made significant modifications in the DNA of twins, thereby giving rise to the all-too-real fears of "designer babies." We are faced as never before with the foreboding question: "Who or what will be human?"

## 7.2 Concluding Remarks

It's often contended that it's virtually impossible to predict the crises associated with any enterprise or institution. (Talk about a major taken-for-granted assumption!) If by this one means that one cannot predict the exact forms that specific crises will take, then this is true virtually by definition. Nonetheless, it ignores the basic fact all crises involve the direct collapse of the assumptions that we take to be true without question. Indeed, the longer that they operate with impunity, the more we are setting ourselves up for a crisis. It's precisely for this reason that Proactive Crisis Management is concerned with the continuous scrutiny of one's fundamental assumptions. While not perfect, it's the only insurance we have against major crises and calamities. It's key to Thinking the Unthinkable!

It's time to abandon once and for all the facile belief that examining one's assumptions is a luxury. To the contrary, it's an absolute necessity.

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# Chapter 8

## Heuristics and Meta-heuristics for Coping with Messes



Given the importance of Wicked Messes, we need to say more about ways of dealing with them. In a series of publications, we and our colleagues have developed a number of Heuristics for Coping with Messes.<sup>1</sup> If the underlying conditions are met, there is every reason to believe that they will accomplish their intended job. Nonetheless, they are only Heuristics, i.e., approximate rules of thumb. As such, they do not guarantee that we'll be able to cope successfully with a Mess. Worst of all, they can even backfire such that instead of making Messes more manageable, they can make them worse, thus producing the exact opposite of what's intended. Still, they're all that we have. Nonetheless, by not looking at their potential downsides, the inescapable conclusion is that some of the most important aspects of Messes have not been given the serious consideration they demand.

A strong qualification is in order. In many cases, as part of their original formulation, many of the Heuristics openly express their limitations and pitfalls. Thus, we're not saying that no attention whatsoever has been given to the issue. However, we are saying that the discussion needs to be expanded—as well as updated—to include all of them. In short, they need to be examined Dialectically.

The following is a list of the Heuristics as they've been originally formulated. Each is then followed by a brief commentary, or rejoinder, of what's required to make them work, and how they can not only fail, but can actually make things worse.

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<sup>1</sup> Vincent P. Barabba, and Ian I. Mitroff, Business Strategies For A Messy World, Tolls for Systemic Problem-Solving, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2014; Ian I. Mitroff, Can M. Alpaslan, and Ellen O'Connor, Op Cit, 2014; Ian I. Mitroff and Lindan B. Hill and Can M. Alpaslan, Rethinking The Education Mess, A Systems Approach to Education Reform, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2013.

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This article is based primarily on Chap. 6 of Ian I. Mitroff, Can M. Alpaslan, and Ellen O'Connor, Everybody's Business, Reclaiming True Management Skills in Business Higher Education, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2014.

In effect, the commentaries constitute Meta-Heuristics, i.e., Heuristics for managing Heuristics. Without them, any discussion of Messes is seriously incomplete.

In terms of the Jungian Framework, in their original formulation, the Heuristics are mainly NT. Thus, they not only urge us to expand our thinking, but adopt novel, unorthodox ways of looking at Messes. In sharp contrast, many of the commentaries raise NF and SF concerns. They urge us to proceed with caution to avoid having the original Heuristics backfire.

## 8.1 Key Heuristics for Coping with Messes

### Preconditions

1. First, not only recognize, but accept that everything needs to be treated as a Mess in its own right or as an important part of a Mess.

Commentary: While we have no doubt whatsoever as to the truth of this Heuristic, it fails to account for the fact that how a Mess is initially presented and by whom is a big factor in its acceptance and subsequent treatment. One of the most prominent examples is a diagram which appeared on the front page of the Tuesday, April 27, 2010, edition of *The New York Times*. It featured a complex power point slide that was prepared by the Junior US Officers in Afghanistan showing the full array of factors that were involved in fighting and winning the Afghan War. Thus, it not only displayed the Military, but the multitude of Cultural, Political, and Social factors that needed to be addressed as well, especially how they interacted. For instance, if for any reason Afghan farmers were prevented from growing opium poppies, it would produce fierce opposition to the US war effort. Thus, while it gave an exacting overview of the full situation, the power point was so complicated that General Stanley McChrystal, the Supreme Commander of Afghan troops, said, “When we understand this diagram, we’ll have won the War!” The point is that the basic acceptance that something is a Mess is complicated by how it’s presented. In other words, the presentation of a Mess is an integral part of the Mess. Indeed, everything related to a Mess is part of it.

2. Recognize and accept that treating problems with a Machine Age Mindset only makes Systems Age problems worse. One cannot even begin, let alone proceed, without these first two preconditions.

Commentary: One of the key defining characteristics of the Machine Age was that Aesthetics, Epistemology, and Ethics were separate and distinct. Therefore, because they essentially existed in separate realms, they could be dealt with independently of one another. This is not true in the Systems Age where the Aesthetic, Epistemic, and Ethical components of problems are inseparable. Indeed, the Machine Age had its own largely unrecognized and underlying Aesthetic. In effect, it believed that there was one and only way to represent all problems, namely, in terms of their technical or ST components alone. In this sense, it was always more than just an Epistemic Stance alone.

The power point slide of all the factors involved in fighting and winning the Afghan Ware shows in no uncertain terms the importance of Aesthetics.

#### Increase the Diversity of Perspectives

3. View a Mess from as many different perspectives as possible. For example, look at whatever Financial Mess we are experiencing not only from a Financial or Economic perspective, but also from a Psychological, Sociological, Anthropological, Historical, Moral, Political, Technological, and even Spiritual perspective. In each one, find at least one Producer of the Mess. (A “Producer” is a necessary factor for the “production” of a Mess, but by itself is not sufficient to cause it. In other words, a “Producer” is one of many “Co-Producers.” For example, planting an acorn is necessary to “Produce” an oak tree—an end “Product”—but other Co-Producers such as air and water are also necessary. A “Producer-Product” relationship thus stands in sharp contrast to a “Cause-Effect” relationship where a prior “Cause” is both necessary and sufficient for an end “Effect.”) Accordingly, human Cognitive Biases (Psychological), the Culture of Wall Street (Anthropological), the Political Swings between Capitalism and Socialism during the process of Globalization (Political), and so on all play an integral part in the constitution of every Mess. In general, the Producers never fall clearly and neatly under a single Scientific Discipline or Profession. Next look at the Consequences, and ask, “What are, and what will be, the Consequences of The Current Financial Mess?” Again, don’t focus on the Financial Consequences alone, but also on the Psychological, Sociological, Anthropological, Moral, Political, Technological, Spiritual, and Historical Consequences as well.

Commentary: While absolutely true and necessary, it neglects the fact that a diversity of perspectives and the sheer number of factors is more likely than not to overwhelm and confuse those who have not been trained to think and to act Systemically. To tolerate, let alone appreciate a diversity of perspectives, requires Interdisciplinary Thinking and, even more, Transdisciplinary Thinking and Practice. In other words, a diversity of perspectives requires the intense cooperation between a diversity of different experts. As such, they do not appear magically on their own. For this very reason, Kilmann has developed the notion of the Problem Management Organization or PMO.<sup>2</sup> One of the key defining properties of a PMO is its explicit inclusion of different experts on whatever the topic of importance. One of its primary purposes is to facilitate a deep sense of collaboration between different experts. We say much more about PMOs in the last chapter.

In sum, increasing perspectives challenges one’s Comfort and Tolerance Zones. And, the two are definitively not the same. One can often tolerate that for which one is moderately uncomfortable, but not be comfortable with that for which one has low tolerance. The point is that Psychology plays a central role in the treatment of Messes.

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<sup>2</sup> Kilmann, R. H. Quantum Organizations: A New Paradigm for Achieving Organizational Success and Personal Meaning, Newport Coast, CA: Kilmann Diagnostics, 2011.

4. Never ever trust a single formulation of a Mess. Seek out and sweep in the analyses of experts who are skilled at making connections between different fields. Get different Stakeholders from different professions to formulate a Mess. For instance, long before 9/11, the artist Mark Lombardi developed intricate and elaborate ways of uncovering and tracing complex webs of international corruption. Part Investigative Reporter, Postmodernist Art Historian, and Graphic Artist Lombardi showed that by turning to public sources of information, he could demonstrate convincingly that the bin Laden and the Bush families were connected through complex and nefarious Financial dealings. In short, Lombardi developed a new art form that showed pictorially how disparate and powerful global actors were interconnected. In effect, he showed the seamy side of the Global Economy. As a result of his work, Lombardi was one of the few, if only, artists to be accorded the dubious distinction of having his work examined by an FBI agent—in a museum no less—in order to gain clues into the terrorist financing of 9/11.

Commentary: This is one of the most powerful examples on the role of Aesthetics in the formulation of and Coping with Messes. It also reinforces the need for PMOs. The point is that a PMO is an explicit model for bringing together different experts in ways such that they can interact productively.

#### Examine and Challenge Taken-for-Granted Assumptions and Beliefs

5. In particular, using the various schools of Psychoanalytic thought among which we discussed in Chap. 1, examine the deep and thereby often unconscious assumptions that are made about different Stakeholders. It is not that Stakeholders are “completely irrational.” They are just not “perfectly rational.” This Heuristic thus increases the diversity of an Inquiry by forcing us to put ourselves in the shoes of different Stakeholders. Because no Stakeholder is ever perfectly rational or irrational, every Stakeholder’s perspective is at least partially rational. By analogy, formal systems based on pure Logic alone are either incomplete or inconsistent.

Commentary: We couldn’t agree more with the spirit of this particular Heuristic. Nonetheless, it poses one of the greatest challenges to our current Educational System. To our detriment, many Disciplines and Professions regard Psychology, let alone Psychoanalysis, as “irredeemably soft” and thereby not to be taken seriously. The point is that before a field can be utilized, we are first required to take them earnestly. But this necessitates that we’ve tackled previous Messes such as the Education Mess. To reiterate, all Messes are part of one another. In sum, Psychology is an integral part of every PMO.

6. Monitor different Stakeholder assumptions over time so that as the assumptions change, one can show the corresponding changes in how various Messes are conceived and represented. If Messes are the new Reality, then assumptions are the building blocks of Messes, and hence, of Reality. As assumptions change, different perspectives on Reality emerge. In this sense, Reality is constantly being constructed and reconstructed over time. Also, a crisis occurs when all or nearly all of one’s basic, taken-for-granted assumptions collapse. Thus, what

assumptions are most vulnerable? Which ones are believed to be invulnerable? What are an individual's, an organization's, an institution's, or a society's crisis plans, if any, for what to do in the case where its major assumptions collapse?

Commentary: This Heuristic requires that Assumptional Analysis not only be taught, but reinforced throughout our entire Educational System. It also requires that people be rewarded for uncovering, monitoring, and challenging assumptions in virtually every organization, institution, setting, and aspect of their lives. The sad fact of the matter is that at the current time, people are not trained or rewarded for doing challenging assumptions. Indeed, they're often punished for merely raising the mere possibility that our assumptions may be faulty.

Even worse, what safeguards are there against the misuse of Assumptional Analysis? Suppose one rigs the Evidence to "prove" that one's assumptions are still valid? Or that all of them have been completely surfaced and correctly identified? In short, in order to be effective, it requires safeguards in the form of Dialectical Thinking. That is, what assumptions are we making when we act on the belief that we can correctly identify and track our basic assumptions?

Visit/Examine Extremes; Perturb the Ordinary/Conventional

7. Imagine/Design the Impossible. Ackoff's notion of Idealized Design frees us from constraints. Imagining and designing the impossible not only frees us, but it also forces us to question our deepest assumptions. (An Idealized Design embodies as many of the features we would like to see realized. An Ideal System is not Utopian. One of the key properties of any Idealized Design is that it must be capable of being implemented. That is, it must include an implementation plan as an integral part of its basic design.)

Commentary: All of the previous challenges and considerations apply here as well. In particular, what ensures that we have in fact questioned our deepest assumptions? At a minimum, it requires Dialectical Inquiry.

8. Ask "Smart-Dumb" Questions. Never accept conventional, traditional constraints or boundaries. Always have someone play the Devil's Advocate. Even more important, construct a Dialectical opposite to the Inquiry System in use.

Commentary: Once again, we agree. But all of the previous considerations apply here as well.

9. Pay special attention to outliers. An outlier is an observation "that appears to deviate markedly from the other members of a sample in which it occurs<sup>3</sup>. Alternately, it's "a person or thing situated away or detached from the main body or System." Because what we observe is a function of our theories, outliers often inform us more than what we expect to observe. For instance, if we find too many outliers, then this may indicate that our perspectives are too narrow, for instance, by putting different things/people in too few or the same categories. Thus, one needs to sweep in more perspectives to make sense of outliers and messes.

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<sup>3</sup>Grubbs, F. E.: 1969, Procedures for detecting outlying observations in samples. *Technometrics* 11, 1-21.

Commentary: Again, what if instead of informing us the different perspectives confuse and overwhelm us all the more? What if they cause us to dig in our heels and become even more attached to our pet theories and perspectives? What then do we do? Carefully, reduce their number? Put more effort into educating ourselves with regard to the need for PMOs?

10. Use “random interventions.” These are deliberate strategies designed to understand the “noise” in any system. Noise is that which one cannot make sense of. Noise may include outliers and more. Another way to view it is “A Mess is misunderstood order, and order is a misunderstood Mess.” That is, in every order is a Mess waiting to be surfaced and thereby discovered. Conversely, Messes are not totally devoid of order, but are a different kind of order. Understanding or making sense of the “noise” in a system requires a great number and variety of different perspectives. What is noise according to one perspective may as well be order according to another. In fact, Messes and order are opposite sides of the same coin, i.e., Reality.

Commentary: All of the previous considerations apply here with equal force.

Investigate/Understand the Complexity of Interactions; Examine Improbable Interactions and Stakeholders

11. Ask at least two questions: (1) “What are some of the problems and Messes that ‘Produce’ a particular Mess?” (2) “What are some of the problems and messes that a particular Mess ‘Produces’?” In other words, go forward or backward in time to connect problems and Messes. The key point is that, in Systems terms, problems are co-produced by other problems. It’s absolutely vital to assume that all problems or Messes are linked with other problems. Therefore, no problem can be solved or formulated in isolation from other problems or Messes. For example, the Financial problems of a corporation or a country cannot be formulated, let alone be solved, in complete isolation from other problems. To repeat, the “Co-Producers” of a problem (which are themselves problems produced by other problems) are necessary, but by themselves, are not sufficient to result in a Mess.

Commentary: To reiterate, what if the problems that constitute a Mess grow faster than our Cognitive and Emotional abilities to make sense of them, let alone grapple with them? What then do we do? What are the kinds of preparations that one needs to undertake Psychologically to be able to approach any Mess? Psychology is not only a key part of any Mess, but it’s a fundamental part of our ability to tolerate a Mess.

Once again, every Mess poses enormous challenges to our Comfort and Tolerance Zones.

12. In messes, the interactions between the parts (problems, emotions, etc.), not the parts themselves, are the fundamental topics of investigation. Therefore, design specific scenarios that deliberately probe for difficult interactions.

- (a) Give special attention to the most improbable interactions, whether they seem important or not. These are the ones most likely to cause major crises. In fact, every major crisis has been shown to be the result of two or more assumptions, factors, and interactions that were assumed to be unlikely and inconsequential.
- (b) Look at what seem to be least important interactions. These deserve special attention for these are the ones that come back to haunt us.
- (c) Look at the most damaging interactions.
- (d) Pay special attention to counterintuitive, paradoxical, and unintended interactions and relationships. For example, in *Republic, Lost*, Harvard Law School Professor Lawrence Lessig notes that the US tax system is not only a direct and intended source of revenue for the US government, but it is also an indirect and unintended source of campaign funds for Congressional candidates. The link and thereby unintended interaction is as follows: Congressional candidates have a direct stake in keeping the US tax code complex and tax rates high for the wealthy. By promising to work for lowering tax rates, Congressional candidates have a never-ending source of campaign funds. Despite all the talk of flat taxes, candidates in both parties stand to lose greatly if it were actually enacted. No wonder that they are really opposed to the idea even though they can't say it because it would inflict enormous political damage on themselves. One cannot hope to understand, let alone reform, the tax code unless the entire system of campaign finance is understood and reformed.<sup>4</sup>

Commentary: Once again, what if the interactions grow faster, become more complex, and thereby overwhelm our abilities to make sense and thus tolerate them? Are cross-disciplinary teams and PMOs that can both support and challenge one another therefore better equipped to address Messes? If so, how should they be constituted? What are the kinds of education and training they require such that they are able to face the situation where the interactions grow faster and thereby beyond the capabilities of any single expert to grapple with them?

- 13. Keep timelines of different Messes over time and how they interact and are “parts” of one another. Again, the Financial Mess and The Health Care Mess are integral to one another. As such, they do more than just “interact.”

Commentary: Once again, we need Epidemiologists who have a deep understanding of Economics, and Economists who have a deep understanding of Epidemiology. And this is only a bare minimum of the barriers between the different academic disciplines and specialties that need to be torn down. Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary thinking are essential.

- 14. Bear in mind that every proposed “solution” becomes an integral part of the Mess to which it is attempting to respond. Every proposed solution spawns its own set of problems. Ideally, the new problems are “better” than the old ones in

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<sup>4</sup>Lessig, *Lawrence. Republic, Lost*, Twelve, New York, 2011.

the sense that they are more easily resolved. The only way to assure this is to examine explicitly the consequences of different proposed solutions.

Commentary: To do this requires that one be well versed and comfortable with Systems Thinking.

15. Carefully examine different “wild-card Stakeholders.” These are the “seemingly insignificant Stakeholders” like Rosa Parks who spark a revolution (the Civil Rights Movement). Or, Mohamed Bouazizi who burned himself to death, thereby setting off the Tunisian Revolution, which morphed into the Arab Spring. These are the ones who “can’t and won’t take ‘it’ anymore.” Wild-card Stakeholders may themselves seem insignificant, but when the whole System/Society is at the edge of chaos, even the most insignificant Stakeholders, events, or interactions can trigger a chain reaction of events and interactions that can lead to major crises.

Commentary: In short, this requires people who can Think the Unthinkable. It requires that we take seriously how our most basic assumptions can be invalid.

16. Who are the known and unknown Stakeholders that stand to gain the most/least? How will the most vulnerable fare versus the most well-off? How will the poor and disadvantaged be affected?

Commentary: In short, high degrees of Emotional Intelligence are required to manage Messes. Not only will Cognitive Intelligence alone not suffice, but by itself, it makes things worse. Empathy is critical.

#### Rules for Intervening/Presentation

17. Carefully Manage Presentations and the Degree of Challenge They Present

- (a) Do Not Overwhelm One’s Audiences: Increasing the diversity of perspectives and attempting to make sense of complexity can create high levels of anxiety and can thus be overwhelming. In a basic sense, the Junior Officers that prepared the power points on the Afghan war were fundamentally wrong. Ideally, they should have led up to the final, complicated power point in carefully orchestrated steps, and not have shown the full diagram all at once. The purpose of displaying Messes is not to confuse and overwhelm one’s audience, but to help them understand and tolerate complexity. Nonetheless, there is no getting around the fact that the appreciation of Messes and the ability to handle them requires a high tolerance for ambiguity. Thus, if there are more than ten factors, which there always are, then one needs to prepare more than one diagram.

Commentary: The “fundamental truth” of this particular Heuristic cannot be overemphasized.

- (b) Rock the Boat (or let boat keep rocking – in a sense, maintain the status quo). When there are no better options left, create/let happen series of “minor” crises in the hope that crises will shock people to their senses. Of course, a major, if not very risky, assumption is a prolonged, sustained series of minor, contained, and containable crises which is the ONLY way

in which to force people to abandon the status quo and to move off their deeply entrenched, divisive ideological positions. (In the case of the 2013 government shutdown, this wasn't true. The members of the Tea Party were just as committed to their tactics as before.) From the standpoint of Messes, the definition of a crisis is as follows: A major crisis occurs when the interactions that are seemingly the most invincible/stable break down; a Mega Crisis occurs when a substantial majority of desired, planned interactions break down. Ideally, letting the boat rock brings to surface and forces us to examine our faulty assumptions about improbable, insignificant, unimportant, easy/hard to manage, etc. interactions. The danger is of course that "minor" crises can lead to "major" ones that can spin wildly out of control.

Commentary: In other words, crises are an integral part of every Mess. Therefore, Crisis Management is an integral part of Coping with a Mess.

#### 18. Pick Your Battles

- (a) Easy Wins: Go after the easiest to manage/understand interactions and by making headway build hope and show that it's possible to achieve change with and/or without revolution or major (mega) crises.
- (b) Magic: Court/Slay the Monster. Go after the most difficult to manage/understand interactions and by making headway show that it is possible to achieve change with and/or without revolution or major (mega) crises.

In every complex situation, organization, institution, system, etc., there are always things (values, culture, rules, structures, friendships, pay and reward compensation, etc.) we would like to preserve or keep the Same (the status quo), and there are always things we would like to Change, sometimes radically. Similarly, there are always some things that are Easy to keep the same or change. And, there are always some that are Difficult.

If things are Easy, then by definition, one can manage the process smoothly of either preserving or changing things. If preservation or change is Difficult, then leadership is called for.

Because of their very nature, Messes have an abundance of issues in the Difficult to Change quadrant. That is precisely why Transformative Leadership is necessary.

Commentary: To work on the profusion of issues that are Difficult to Change requires leaders who have achieved a proper balance between Cognitive and Emotional IQ. If the issues were easy, it wouldn't be a Mess!

#### 19. Intervention Scale and Scope

- (a) Use Global/Macro interventions. Foster Special Interest/Worldwide Groups for Taking Charge of/Managing Messes.
- (b) Use Grassroots interventions.

Commentary: Once again, this Heuristic reinforces the need for special Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary teams.

Virtually all of the preceding Heuristics urge us to expand the boundaries and the scope of our thinking. They force us to make sense of Messes in unconventional

ways. In short, they are essential. But there's a catch. First, one needs to acknowledge that everything is a Mess. To accept that the Producers of messes cannot be understood and their effects cannot be isolated is once again to recognize and accept that treating Messes with a Machine Age mindset only makes them worse.

Finally, we readily acknowledge that 19 or so Heuristics are a great deal to keep track of. Indeed, they are a Mess in themselves. But, hopefully, they become easier to manage with practice. We wouldn't expect anyone, including ourselves, to be able to remember, let alone use, all of them at once.

Nonetheless, it is important to list as many Heuristics as we can so that we can begin to "map out the territory." It also helps to set an agenda for further research to expand our knowledge of Heuristics. As opposed to the kind of research that is common in today's Business Schools, we desperately need research into the nature of Heuristics for coping with Messes.

## 8.2 Concluding Remarks: The Need for Meta-heuristics

In many ways, our review of Heuristics has demonstrated the need for Meta-Heuristics. Namely, what do we do when the Heuristics for Coping with Messes not only break down and thereby fail to do their intended job, but become part of the Mess, and thereby make it worse? As we've indicated throughout, we have no alternative but to monitor as carefully and systematically as we can the impacts of our Heuristics on a Mess. In effect, the Heuristics are a fundamental part of every Mess for which they are attempting to cope. In this regard, the Commentaries following each Heuristic are in effect Meta-Heuristics. They are Heuristics for managing Heuristics!

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## Chapter 9

# Changing the Culture of Policing: A Moral Imperative!



We want to turn to another major crisis that demands our serious attention. Not only is it important in its own right, but it reveals other important factors that bear on the nature of complex messy Systems.

It also demonstrates a key point that we've been making throughout, namely, that no major crisis ever happens in isolation. Every crisis is influenced by what is going in the larger society of which it is a part. Thus, even though in the strict sense they have not caused one another, they have a strange way of interacting with other crises and thereby intensifying one another. Indeed, the very fact that millions were forced to stay home because of the Coronavirus allowed many for the first time to see a prominent instance of where a Black man was killed for no apparent reason other than the fact that he was Black.

Given the completely unjustified and wanton murder of George Floyd, the calls for real and long-lasting change in the culture of policing have never been more resolute. (The recent shooting of Jacob Blake in Wisconsin has only intensified the outrage.) It couldn't be any clearer that policing won't survive without serious reforms.<sup>1</sup> But other than the seemingly endless calls for change, concrete proposals for how in fact to achieve it are conspicuously absent.

For this reason, based directly on Kilmann's work,<sup>2</sup> we want to describe a specific process that has proven highly successful in changing the culture of individual organizations and how it needs to be modified to combat structural and systemic racism with regard to policing.

First of all, the culture of organizations is so powerful that it accounts for up to 80% and more of what goes on. No wonder why it's so hard to change. Even if you got rid of all of the current participants and replaced them entirely, in no time at all

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<sup>1</sup>See Laurence Ralph, "To Protect and to Serve: Global Lessons in Police Reform," FOREIGN AFFAIRS, September/October 2020, pp. 196–202.

<sup>2</sup>text

you'd hear the same exact conversations and witness the same behaviors again and again.

In short, culture is the very lifeblood of an organization. It extends far beyond the private desires and inclinations of its individual members. It causes people to go along with actions and put up with policies even when they violate their deepest values and convictions.

Given that it's largely taken for granted and rarely discussed, one of the biggest difficulties is that the culture of most organizations is largely invisible and silent. Essentially, it spells out "how everyone is expected to act toward one another and its constituents, basically, how we do things around here, how to defer to those in authority, how to treat subordinates, how to dress and speak if one is to be taken seriously, etc." The clear but unwritten message is "If you want to make it around here, then you'd better get on board, learn the 'rules of the game' as quickly as possible, and play along like everyone else, or you'll be ejected so fast that you won't even know what hit you!"

Changing the culture of an organization necessitates surfacing the actual behavioral norms or "current rules of the game" that govern its everyday behavior, and then comparing it staunchly with the ideal or desired behavioral norms that are necessary to achieve the organization's stated mission. Most organizations have never done it before, certainly not explicitly and systematically. The larger the gap between the actual and desired norms, the greater the effort that's required to close it and thereby change the culture.

The oft-stated, desired norm of policing is "to serve and protect the public equally without regard to class, ethnicity, race, religion, sexual preference, or social standing." Further down on the list, if at all, is "to report unacceptable behavior in one's fellow officers as quickly as possible to one's superiors." Deplorably, it's taken the death of George Floyd to force a number of departments to abandon chokeholds and to require officers to report immediately violations of acceptable police behavior.

In practice, the actual norms often deviate substantially from the desired norms. Not only are different members of the public treated differently, but the primary message is "Don't rat on your fellow officers!" If you do, then "Don't expect them to show up, protect your back, and cover your a\$\$ when you need them most." In this way, the System closes ranks to protect itself first even though primarily it's supposed to protect the general public.

Fundamental change requires that an organization be both willing and able to list the real norms that govern its actual day-to-day behavior and then to specify the detailed and specific actions it's willing to undertake both rigorously and Ethically to enforce the desired behavioral norms that are fully aligned with the organization's basic mission. Those who break the new norms will not only be called out for unacceptable behavior, but will be reprimanded appropriately, either demoted or fired, and in the worst cases, tried for criminal offenses.

Primarily, the organization itself has to specify the ways in which the new norms will be strictly enforced. Although necessary, creating and enforcing new behaviors cannot be imposed entirely from the outside. (As we show, this has to be modified

to achieve systemic change with regard to policing.) Police officers themselves must be the principal participants in the design and management of their own “sanctioning system” by indicating exactly what will happen when someone violates one or more of the new desired norms. In this way, hopefully they will “own” the new behavior.

Ironically, since they are the ones who are in the best position to observe how and when the new norms are being violated, the police must police their own culture. However, no matter what, some will hang onto the old, dysfunctional norms, whether out of habit, fear, or just plain spite.

Real cultural change also needs to be reinforced by additional training, e.g., in conflict management via the TKI and how to diffuse tense situations, in particular teamwork that encourages the open expression of differences, and a formal performance appraisal system that can further sanction and reward new norms. However, we cannot emphasize enough that real culture change *must precede* any attempt at further training, team development, and changes in the reward systems. Otherwise, they will only produce more lip service, not real behavioral change where it’s needed most.

Even though we’ve seen dramatic cultural change take place in a wide variety of organizations both public and private, because of the special nature of police work, just raising the topic of culture change is especially challenging, if not out-and-out threatening. This is especially the case since policing frequently involves instant life-and-death situations, which is obviously not the case in other organizations. Due to the ever-present stress and tension between protecting oneself and that of others, and especially not hurting innocent people, the life-and-death, split-second decisions that police officers always face present major challenges. Nonetheless, there are clear signs that serious change is afoot. Once again, several departments have declared their willingness to abandon chokeholds.

Still, we have no illusions whatsoever that it will be easy. An article in *The New York Times* says in no uncertain terms that police unions are the staunchest defenders of the current culture of police behavior.<sup>3</sup> And an article in *The New Yorker* only reinforces the point.<sup>4</sup> Thus, it’s not just a matter of changing the culture of individual departments, but in those organizations that are closely aligned as well.

Changing the institution as a whole is even more daunting. It not only requires that national police organizations be willing and are able to do to what individual organizations are, but that a number of them need to meet regularly to share the gaps they have uncovered and what they are doing to close it. In other words, it requires a Systems-wide effort to change the System as a whole. It has to be sustained by means of frequent meetings and constantly updated action plans.

But something even more is required to combat systemic racism. First of all, representatives of small-, medium-, and large-sized departments need to meet

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<sup>3</sup>Noam Scheiber, Farah Stockman, and J. David Goodman, “Fierce Protectors of Police Impede Efforts at Reform,” *The New York Times*, Sunday, June 7, 2020, p1 and 22.

<sup>4</sup>William Finnegan, “The Blue Wall, The police and their unions in the wake of the protests,” *The New Yorker*, August 3 & 10, 2020, pp. 48–57A.

regularly. The challenges they face are not necessarily the same. For this reason, they need to share on a frequent and timely basis what's worked in changing the culture of their respective organizations, what hasn't, and why. In particular, special attention needs to be given to the different sanctioning Systems, what if anything they share in common, and what can be modified for their individual situations.

Since we cannot wait for every department far and wide to go through the same process, there is no realistic alternative but to issue a Systems-wide mandate to demand that what's worked for other departments be adopted universally. Indeed, a new Federal Commission needs to be fashioned that will assess how well police departments nationwide are complying with the new directives. Furthermore, there need to be clear penalties for the failure to comply on a timely basis.

Nonetheless, we wouldn't expect the sanctioning policies of different Stakeholders to be in agreement. We would in fact expect the policies of Mayors, Police Commissioners, Civilian Review Boards, and the Police themselves to disagree, often sharply. For example, sanctions are expected to differ with regard to the kinds of situations requiring the use of force and what types are appropriate. The general issue is how far individual police officers are allowed to depart from the new norms, not give their full support, and what the resultant punishments will be.

One of the key jobs of the new Federal Commission is the training of Federal Mediators, if need be Federal Judges, who will have the final say in the determination of particular sanctioning systems. Again, it's entirely unrealistic to expect that all of the parties concerned will go along with any System that's proposed. Serious negotiations are also expected to take place with regard to the training and involvement of Mental Health Experts, Social Workers, and others who can accompany the police as needed.

In sum, embracing serious culture change must be the rule or the future of policing everywhere is in danger. Nevertheless, anyone who thinks that modern, complex societies can survive without the police is seriously misguided. If anything, more funding, not less, is required for serious and long-lasting change.

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# Chapter 10

## The Choice Is Between Mental Health and Mental Illness



...The United States hasn't lost ground; the ship of state is pointed in the wrong direction, and the rest of the world has moved on. Global concerns about U.S. credibility aren't simply tied to the calamitous presidency of Donald Trump—they're rooted in the fact that the American people elected someone like Trump in the first place. Having seen Americans do that once, foreign leaders and publics will wonder whether the United States might do it again, particularly given the fealty of the Republican party to Trump's authoritarian brand of politics...<sup>1</sup>

Even though the 2020 election has been decided, the issues underlying it will be around for a long time. For this reason, we return once again to the topic of Leadership and examine it from the standpoint of a different perspective on Mental Health.

The choice in the 2020 Presidential election couldn't have been any clearer. It's fundamentally a choice between Mental Health and Mental Illness. And, it will be forever more.

As scholars and practitioners, for over 50 years, we have observed firsthand what true Leadership is about. Unlike simple, well-defined problems, as exemplified by textbook or classroom exercises that have one and only one right answer, and in theory can be solved by just one person acting alone, genuine Leadership requires the ability to bring together diverse groups of recognized experts in order to address complex, messy, and ill-defined problems, in short, Wicked Messes. It requires a healthy culture, whereby the experts are not only free, but actively encouraged, to openly express their true differences and opinions and thus to respectfully challenge one another. Most of all, it requires a leader who is comfortable with the basic fact that a diverse group of experts knows more than he or she could possibly know on their own.

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<sup>1</sup> Ben Rhodes, "The Democratic Renewal: What It Will Take to Fix U.S. Foreign Policy," FOREIGN AFFAIRS, September/October, 2020, p 46.

By definition, complex problems exceed the knowledge and capabilities of anyone no matter how well-qualified or intelligent they are. This pertains especially to the office of the Presidency where the most inordinately complex problems arrive by the minute. As we've stressed throughout, they are made complex by the fact that the Economic, Ecological, International, Political, and Public Health problems we face are not only deeply intertwined, but are fundamentally inseparable. They are parts of a complex, messy system that must be dealt with as a whole. They cannot even be properly defined, let alone coped independently of one another.

But even more, in order to correctly define and effectively address complex, Wicked problems, character "trumps" policy (pun intended!). However well-intended, all of the policies in the world cannot make up for the absence of character and Mental Health. Leadership requires that one fundamentally be in touch with Reality, is confident enough to actively encourage diversity and disagreement, and knows how to integrate the knowledge of diverse experts to result in effective solutions.

The fact that we've had a President who exhibits daily acute symptoms of multiple forms of Mental Illness, and in turn is further aided by Republican enablers, is cause for the gravest concern. Indeed, his condition has deteriorated constantly before our eyes.

The damage he's done is so egregious such that we couldn't endure four more years of it. It would be a national and international disaster from which we could never recover.

Simply put, Mental Illness irreparably distorts and manipulates Reality in the worst possible way. In the case of Donald Trump, his deep narcissistic "needs"—more accurately "wounds"—govern his behavior, not the legitimate needs of the citizens. And, as a way of fending off direct assaults to The Self, his self-loathing is largely responsible for personal attacks on others. Along with his glaring ignorance and sheer incompetence about what it takes to address complex problems, all of the above dangerously combine to result in a sure-fire formula for failed policies and escalating national and international crises on a horrific scale.

He also lacks one of the most essential qualities of a leader, namely, Emotional Intelligence: the basic ability to experience and express empathy for others, to exhibit calm in the face of cataclysmic events, to unite not divide us, and to show proper respect toward friends and foes alike—not to utter a never-ending string of tasteless slurs and childish name-calling of respected experts who, based on their areas of expertise and experience, naturally have different points of view.

While one can acquire through proper education the fundamental knowledge and skills that the job of the President requires, the necessary emotional and social skills are not as easily obtained. They have to be instilled in childhood. If not, it takes a prolonged and dedicated course of Psychotherapy and other forms of Social/Emotional Development to create a well-functioning human being who can work with others. But then, it also requires that one has enough emotional understanding of what's needed to take the necessary steps to heal one's own limitations and childhood wounds in order to become an empathic human being who can attend to the needs of others. We've seen no evidence whatsoever that Donald Trump has had any

inclination to examine his life, become a better person, and thereby become a better leader. Indeed, he's made perfectly clear again and again that he's not capable of it.

Make no mistake about it: As much as any time in our history, the 2020 election has been a vote for Mental Health, human decency, genuine caring, real empathy, and the emotional ability to bring together, and actively listen to, diverse experts with both an open mind and an open heart. We've desperately needed a sane leader who can focus on the needs of the country and entire world, not himself. In short, we need someone who is Secure in every sense.

In short, we've needed a true leader who is strong enough to face hard truths about themselves so that we can face those same truths about ourselves—and act accordingly.

At the time of this writing, Trump and his supporters are not able to face the fact that he lost the 2020 election.

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# Chapter 11

## Enlightened Leadership: Coping with Chaos in Increasingly Turbulent Times



We want to summarize and thereby tie together all of the previous discussions on Mental Health, Attachment Theory, Inquiring Systems, Culture, the Jungian Framework, Conflict Management, Surfacing Assumptions, and Defense Mechanisms. Used appropriately, they are indispensable in helping people deal with Reality.

Above all, coping with chaos requires Enlightened Leadership. If we're to improve our institutions and society as a whole, nothing less will suffice.

### 11.1 The Problem Management Organization (PMO)

Since the early 1970s, Kilmann has worked with scores of companies, both domestic and international, to help them address their most complex problems. To accomplish this, the organizations have had to bring together diverse groups of experts and representatives with very different points of view to address the “Big Picture.” As a result, it's been necessary to create a new institutional arrangement, the Problem Management Organization or PMO for short.<sup>1</sup>

In particular, if we are to have any chance whatsoever of coping with Wicked Messes, then PMOs are an absolute necessity. Most basic of all, a PMO cannot accomplish its goals without Enlightened Leadership both to initiate and to see the entire process through. Without it, Wicked Messes cannot be successfully addressed. As a result, the contrast between Enlightened Leadership and Malignant Leadership couldn't be greater.

If the leaders in society are suffering from Mental Illness and other forms of malignancy, they will persist in advocating—and worse yet, implementing—simplistic, political, self-serving, or harmful solutions to complex problems.

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<sup>1</sup> Kilmann, R. H. *Quantum Organizations: A New Paradigm for Achieving Organizational Success and Personal Meaning* (Newport Coast, CA: Kilmann Diagnostics, 2011).

In brief, *The worst Mess of all is Malignant Leadership*. It's worse because Leadership is a critical component, if not the most important ingredient, of every Wicked Mess. Dysfunctional behavior of any kind prevents an organization, institution, or nation from effectively addressing Mega Crises. Indeed, Malignant Leadership adds even more chaos to what is already a highly chaotic situation. Thus, for better or worse, Leadership is deeply intertwined with every System. As a result, the enormous challenge before us is to do all that we can to ensure that Enlightened Leadership is in place *before* any organization, institution, or nation attempts to address Wicked Messes, especially those whose life-and-death consequences require immediate attention.

To begin with, it's vital to identify the kinds of expertise and perspectives that are necessary to bring to bear on the unbelievably complex, messy problems with which we are confronted. In the case of the unprecedented Wicked Messes we are facing—the Pandemic, Political Divisiveness, Waves of Protests, Police Violence, Systemic Racism, Global Warming, and a Floundering Economy—making effective use of experts with very different backgrounds and perspectives is absolutely essential if we are to make any headway at all on these and all of the other momentous problems we face. PMOs require the best experts in Public Health, Infectious Disease, Alternative Health, Economics, and so on. We also need to include those who are deeply affected such as Public School Principals and Teachers, College Administrators and Professors, Students, Parents, Psychologists, Lawyers, Politicians, Police Officers, Business Leaders, and a diverse group of Community Leaders from urban and rural settings. In addition, it requires people who differ with regard to gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation.

While it would seem that the vital need for such a wide range of expertise (and different demographics) requires a large group, in practice 30 to 40 diverse participants are usually more than sufficient for a PMO.

Ideally, all the participants would be Secure Adults and therefore have largely dealt with whatever traumas they've suffered as children. In the best case, they will have developed more resourceful, Reality-based beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. They will also have (a) a healthy ego; (b) the ability to communicate their ideas to others in a civil, dignified, and engaging manner; and, most importantly, (c) the interpersonal skills to listen intently—and earnestly—when others are presenting different facts, theories, and opinions.

Once a group of about 30 to 40 diverse experts and representatives have been assembled, the next step is to develop a beneficial “behavioral infrastructure.” It's absolutely essential to ensure a PMO's healthy behavior. It consists of three Tracks: the Culture Track, the Skills Track, and the Team Track.<sup>2</sup>

In most cases, it takes about three full days of instruction and group exercises in order to instill an effective behavioral infrastructure. Nonetheless, the 3-day investment in time and education is the only way to ensure that the members will be able to have a productive and probing dialogue across very different perspectives.

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<sup>2</sup>op. cit., Kilmann, R.H.

## 11.2 The Culture Track

As we discussed in an earlier chapter on the need to change the culture of Policing, we cannot overemphasize the importance of surfacing the actual behavioral norms—the unwritten “rules of the game” that govern “how we do things around here”—so it can be determined if they are functional, and thereby healthy or not.

Consider the cultural norm that says, “Respect only those persons and perspectives that support your particular background, experience, and training, official company policies, and consider all other viewpoints as irrelevant to the problem at hand.” If such a norm is operating, it prevents members from reaching more encompassing—and thereby synergistic—approaches to Wicked Messes.

Once the actual, and typically dysfunctional, cultural norms have been surfaced, the focus shifts to specifying the desired, more functional norms that would make full use of a PMO’s collective expertise and wisdom. For example: “Since all of us are limited in our knowledge and experience to be expert in every aspect of a Wicked Mess, we not only need to respect vastly divergent viewpoints, but we explicitly need to include them in our discussions.”

The differences between the actual and desired norms identify the “culture-gaps” that must be significantly overcome before an effective behavioral infrastructure can be established.

But how can the culture-gaps be closed? Once they are out in the open for explicit examination, the participants need to determine from this point forward, how they will reward the new desired behaviors. They need to specify the positive sanctions that will be administered whenever the members enact the new desired norms as well as what negative sanctions will be if there is any reappearance of the old, dysfunctional norms.

Simply put, if the members do not experience any positive consequences when they enact an agreed-upon desired norm and if they also do not experience any negative consequences when they act out what their group has identified as a dysfunctional norm, why would they ever be motivated to change?

Essentially, once they have openly agreed to do it, it’s the basic social power that a group has over its individual members that enables it to maintain a healthy culture. Thus, instead of allowing the previous *silent* sanctioning system to reinforce old dysfunctional behaviors, a PMO intentionally designs a Legal, Ethical, and *Open* Sanctioning System that ensures a healthy exchange of ideas and knowledge.

## 11.3 The Skills Track

Once the members of a PMO have identified the culture-gaps and have designed an effective sanctioning system for closing them, it’s necessary to proceed with the Skills Track. The central task for the entire community is to learn the five steps of effective problem management: (1) sensing important problems (i.e., recognizing

and acknowledging problems in the first place), (2) defining them correctly (i.e., making sure that one is solving the “right problems” vs. the “wrong ones”), (3) deriving workable solutions, (4) implementing them effectively, and then (5) evaluating the outcomes.<sup>3</sup>

When the members have learned the key lessons that are embedded in the five steps of problem management, they are then able to understand why any truly complex problem cannot possibly be defined and solved by relying on only one area of expertise, scientific discipline, or perspective. Since humans have limited mental capacities that more often than not lead them to become extreme specialists, each of us can only deal with a few facts and theories at a time. As a result, it’s virtually impossible for any one person, no matter how brilliant he or she is, to be equally expert in Public Health, Medicine, Police Work, Politics, Pandemics, Psychology, Climate Change, Economics, Law, Biology, and Leadership, let alone to fully appreciate the different life experiences—and hence, the needs and concerns—of people with different racial, ethnic, religious, generational, and other backgrounds.

Yet, until we can successfully integrate the divergent perspectives of different experts and life experiences, we will always fail to accurately define the root causes of complex problems. Anyone, let alone a leader, who proclaims, “I alone can fix it,” is only fooling himself or herself and all those who allow themselves to be conned into believing that a single perspective is sufficient for effectively addressing Wicked Messes.

A second critical component of the Skills Track is Assumptional Analysis. If a person’s assumptions are blatantly false, then his or her conclusions—i.e., how he or she defines the root causes of a problem—are also blatantly false. Ironically, since one has to take a great deal of things for granted in order to become an expert, most experts are blind to their own assumptions. But what one person takes as a given, another regards as an unwarranted assumption. Every discipline or specialization has a set of behind-the-scenes assumptions that are automatically and unconsciously treated as facts. Indeed, assumptions govern the ways in which an expert is taught to see the world. As a result, no specialization can exist without automatically accepting a set of assumptions that are specific to a particular discipline.

For this reason, the Skills Track not only teaches, but reinforces the participants’ use of a step-by-step method for surfacing one’s typically hidden and underlying assumptions, analyzing whether they are in fact true or false, and then based on further group discussions, probing investigations, and survey research, revising any false assumptions. As various assumptions are modified, the group’s initial conclusions will be as well. Clearly, it’s essential that any and all approaches to managing Wicked Messes be based on valid assumptions, not on past falsehoods.

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<sup>3</sup>Kilman, R. H. “Problem Management: A Behavioral Science Approach.” In G. Zaltman, Ed., *Management Principles for Nonprofit Agencies and Organizations* (New York: American Management Association, 1979), 213–255.

## 11.4 The Team Track

The purpose of the Team Track is to learn how to have productive group meetings by applying several, agreed-upon key principles. At the beginning of each meeting, everyone needs to be fully aware of the objectives. Members need to plan their time wisely and determine the priority of agenda items before any subject is discussed at length. Members must address the most important issues first and the less important ones last. Participants should also plan how each agenda item will be approached and whether it can be subdivided into several manageable pieces so a problem's inherent complexity does not immobilize them. (Needless to say, with regard to Wicked Messes, this poses special challenges.) Spending time first planning how to apply key principles saves a lot of time later.

Furthermore, the more talkative members of the group need to make a concerted effort to bring the less talkative ones into every discussion to ensure that all perspectives are heard and that all of the available information is used. Even more to the point, the members need to assess regularly whether the group's cultural norms continue to support new and creative ideas. All communications need to be civil, thereby showing respect for every person. Only one person should speak at a time. Everyone else needs to listen. Collaborative behavior, not competitive behavior (fighting to talk the most and trying to win the final argument), needs to be the desired norm in order to make full use of everyone's knowledge and thereby help to ensure the best outcomes. Occasionally, the members need to take a break from the discussion on *content* and concentrate on the *process*: "How are we doing as a group? Are we applying all the key principles and practices for having a productive meeting? If not, what should we be doing differently, and better?"

When it comes to ensuring that the members will actually apply the key principles and thus continuously improve their group's process, it's beneficial to appoint a "process observer" (PO) at the start of every meeting. The PO is responsible for monitoring how well the key principles are actually guiding the group's discussions. At the end of each meeting, the PO summarizes what the group did well and in the ways it fell short. A plan is then formulated regarding what can be done to improve the next meetings.

As we've said, in most cases, a diverse group of 30 to 40 participants can learn the material in the Culture, Skills, and Team Tracks in about 3 days. Nonetheless, someone always asks: "Wouldn't it be better to bypass those three days of 'school-work' and, instead, use that same amount of time to begin addressing a particular Wicked Mess?"

Basically, without a healthy behavioral infrastructure at the beginning, the members would be wasting their time and, most importantly, would fail in coping with a Wicked Mess that, by definition, exceeds every person's limited perspective, knowledge, and experience.

## 11.5 The Jungian Framework

Once an effective behavioral infrastructure has been established, based on the four Jungian Types, the 30 to 40 participants are divided into four groups: ST, NT, SF, and NF. The four Types guarantee that any Wicked Mess will be approached in four radically different ways. Based on past experience, the various academic and professional specialties and disciplines will be spread across the four Jungian groups. Nonetheless, there is a strong tendency for Economists to be mostly ST and NT and for Psychologists, especially Clinical, to be mostly SF and NF, etc.

As we've noted, the Jungian Framework is based on two different ways of gathering information, indeed what is considered to be "information," (Sensing and Intuiting) and two different ways of making decisions (Thinking and Feeling). Thus, each group slants its perspective toward the extreme characteristics of its Personality Type, which vary along the lines of Technical vs. Human and Short-Term vs. Long-Term.

Briefly, the ST group, no matter what the particular specialties it contains, will focus on the Short-Term Technical aspects of a complex problem; the NT group will examine on the Long-Term Technical aspects of Wicked Messes; the SF group will give most attention to the special concerns of particular families and neighborhoods; and the NF group will mainly consider the Long-Term consequences to society and the human condition as a whole.

Once the participants have been placed into one of the four Jungian groups, typically based on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator<sup>4</sup> or a similar instrument for assessing the same four Psychological Styles,<sup>5</sup> each group is instructed to meet, introduce everyone to one another, and then openly discuss and confirm its desired cultural norms. It next confirms its knowledge of problem management and Assumptional Analysis. It then affirms that it will make use of a PMO for ensuring that all the key principles of group process will govern how members interact with one another during every meeting.

Next, each of the four Jungian groups plans the process by which it will develop its initial conclusions: its position statement on the "the primary root causes of a Wicked Mess" and what to do about it. Each group then uses Assumptional Analysis to surface its underlying assumptions, which are then sorted into a matrix according to the certainty/uncertainty of an assumption being true or false as well as the relative importance of each assumption support for the group's initial conclusions about the root causes of a Wicked Mess, in a word, defining the problem. Naturally, exactly how the problem is defined subsequently constrains the options that will be considered for how a particular complex problem can be best addressed.

Once each of the four Jungian groups has developed its initial conclusions with regard to the root causes of a Wicked Mess, the stage is set for an intense debate.

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<sup>4</sup>Myers, I. B. *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* (Mountain View, CA; CPP, Inc., 1962).

<sup>5</sup>Kilmann, R. H. *Kilmann's Personality Style Instrument* (Newport Coast, CA: Kilmann Diagnostics, 2011).

Each group in turn presents its initial conclusions and its underlying assumptions to the entire community. The other three groups are allowed to question—and debate—the truth and certainty of the focal group’s underlying assumptions behind its initial conclusions.

After each group has presented its case to the entire community, followed by discussions and debates with the other three groups, a list is made of all the “unresolved issues.”

Typically, during the four intergroup debates, a number of modifications to the conclusions and assumptions will already have been made. But even if the debates are completely open, candid, and thorough, there will still be some basic core issues that remain unresolved. Indeed, lingering conflicts get at the heart of why Messes *are* so complicated and overwhelming. As a consequence, another mechanism is needed to help resolve the unresolved conflicts that remain among the four groups in order that the entire community can use all of its collective knowledge and wisdom to develop the most comprehensive, inclusive, and promising approach to the problem, i.e., Wicked Mess, at hand.

## 11.6 S-Groups

A new and very different kind of group is formed from the entire PMO. It’s called a Synthesis or S-Group. The S-Group is made up of two members from each of the four previous Jungian groups. Ideally, each of the selected S-Group members has a balanced repertoire of conflict-handling behavior, as measured by the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument.<sup>6</sup> In this way, an S-Group is able to effectively use all five approaches to conflict management: competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating.

In essence, the unresolved issues represent the “nagging underlying conflicts” that cut across the radically different disciplines and perspectives that could not be resolved through the intense discussions and debates among the four Jungian groups. The goal now is to address and resolve the remaining differences with the use of one or more conflict-handling modes.

In the best S-Groups, collaborating prevails. This enables the members to incorporate fully the different perspectives into an integrated approach. When this is not possible, compromising may be able to allow each expert’s perspective and assumptions to be partially incorporated into an agreed-upon approach to a particular Wicked Mess. In some cases, one expert is clearly more knowledgeable than the others so he or she needs to assert their position, and hence use competing to get their points across. Naturally, some members in an S-Group will choose to accommodate other people’s perspectives, especially when the latter clearly know more

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<sup>6</sup>Thomas, K.W., and R. H. Kilmann. *The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument* (Sunnyvale, CA: Xicom and The Myers-Briggs Company, 1974).

about a particular topic or area of expertise. Other members will sometimes choose to avoid debating certain topics that turn out to be much less important than first thought. The effective use of the five different approaches for managing conflict is precisely why it's so important for each member in the S-Group to have a balanced repertoire of conflict-handling behaviors.

It's often beneficial to form a number of S-Groups, from two to four, each composed of two representatives from the previous Jungian groups. This allows for greater participation by all of the members of a PMO, instead of relying on only a handful to form a single S-Group.

In most cases, when multiple S-Groups are used, each of the resulting syntheses is not that different from one another, *especially since each S-Group has been purposely composed by choosing two participants from each of the same four Jungian groups*. In fact, it's a powerful experience for the members to see that the multiple S-Groups are in basic agreement regarding (a) how to resolve the unresolved issues/conflicts and (b) how to derive a new, holistic conclusion that takes into account all of the relevant disciplines and perspectives.

Not surprisingly, a striking similarity across the revised conclusions that were derived by multiple S-Groups serendipitously confirms the validity of the whole process. Unless there are logistical constraints, we strongly encourage the use of multiple S-Groups to address the unresolved conflicts of the four Jungian groups.

Another serendipitous byproduct that usually arises from an enlightened problem management process is as follows: Once a large gathering of diverse experts and relevant representatives have intimately experienced an effective PMO in action, some of the members naturally wonder (often out loud): "What would our society be like if all families, neighborhoods, schools, work organizations, and federal, state, and local governments had already learned how to create mentally healthy and Reality-based behavioral infrastructures so that the following PMO skills would be widely shared—and practiced—throughout our social systems: (1) identifying and closing culture-gaps, (2) using the five steps of problem management along with Assumptional Analysis, and (3) applying the key principles of group process during all discussions and meetings?"

The short answer is as follows: Widespread use of effective PMOs throughout society (from families to the United Nations) would be a major step in helping to transform our current divisiveness (with its corresponding animosity across most demographic and national boundaries) into illuminating debates and fully integrated solutions for effectively resolving Wicked Messes.<sup>7</sup> Such a widespread transformation of all of our social systems is not just a lofty ideal toward which to strive, but it also becomes a Moral Imperative for the healthy evolution of the human race.

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<sup>7</sup> Kilmann, R. H. *The Courageous Mosaic: Awakening Society, Systems, and Souls* (Newport Coast, CA: Kilmann Diagnostics, 2013), Chapter 20.

## 11.7 The Psychodynamics of Leadership in a PMO

We return to the fundamental theme of the book: What kind of Leadership is required to initiate, conduct, and support the entire PMO process—effectively, legally, and ethically—in the best interests of society and the entire planet?

In the worst cases, if the leaders are Insecure with Mental Health challenges of one kind or another, they won't tolerate, let alone respect, different points of view. Nor will they be inclined to recruit a diverse group of participants. Typically, Insecure and mentally challenged leaders will do their best to *prevent* alternative perspectives from coming to light, particularly any opinions that even remotely appear to contradict the leader's personal and political agenda. We cannot say it enough: There is no more perfect example of Malignant Leadership than when a top leader proclaims again and again: "I alone can fix it."

The leaders also need to appreciate the importance of creating and maintaining a healthy behavioral infrastructure so that all of the diverse talent in a PMO will rise to the surface for open discussion and debate, and not remain submerged and inaccessible. Having brilliant and experienced experts in the same room is a complete waste of time if the operating cultural norms and implicit sanctioning system punish people who even dare to express views that are different from a leader's opinions and/or egocentric patterns of thought. Regardless of a member's brilliance in a particular discipline or perspective, there's no substitute for also having to learn the fundamentals of problem management and Assumptive Analysis, both of which are rarely taught in professional schools. Moreover, experts are rarely required, or take the time on their own, to learn the skills necessary for engaging in civil, dignified, and open-minded conversations. One of the prime purposes of a PMO is to correct such deficiencies in our formal educational system.

The top leaders also need to understand that a special effort is needed to create effective teamwork among the diverse members of a community so that cooperation, not competition, will rule the day. Without following the key principles of effective group process, all the talent in the world cannot—and will not—be utilized. For example, if a few members dominate the group discussion and thereby silence the quieter members, some of the valuable wisdom of the group as a whole will—inadvertently or deliberately—be excluded from the discussion. Every member in a Jungian group or an S-Group needs to have his or her voice heard.

We return to the core question: What exactly is Enlightened Leadership? Ironically, the prime leader does not have to possess any particular scientific, professional, or in-depth knowledge about the complex issues and Wicked Messes in question. Of course, what the leaders *do* know about the various relevant subjects and scientific disciplines will enable them to better appreciate what the experts have to say, and why. But the leader's knowledge, or lack thereof, about the various topics should not be the basis for judging his or her success as a leader.

Instead, the essential quality by which to judge the success of the top leader of a nation or institution with regard to addressing any and all Wicked Messes can be succinctly summarized as follows:

*The top leader and his or her leadership team needs to make absolutely sure that a diverse group of experts and other representatives will engage in a Reality-based, mentally healthy process that has the best chance of effectively addressing the entire scope of a Wicked Mess, both short-term and long-term.*

To be absolutely clear, we are far less concerned about the depth and breadth of a leader's scientific knowledge or prior work experiences with regard to all of the aspects of a Wicked Mess. Instead, we are most concerned about a leader's ability to initiate a healthy and resourceful process that will greatly increase the likelihood that a Wicked Mess can be managed effectively. So long as the leader initiates the process and also models the very behavior he or she wishes to see occur within a PMO, an Enlightened Leader is doing exactly what's needed for everyone to survive and thrive in today's global village.

In sharp contrast, the exact opposite of Enlightened Leadership is Malignant Leadership. It ensures that all Wicked Messes will increasingly undermine, and ultimately destroy, the soul of democracy and the hope for health and happiness.

Malignant Leadership only fuels more and more chaos, which makes everything far worse. Malignant Leadership, and all those who support it, will continue to escalate and prolong every Wicked Mess.

Alternatively, Enlightened Leadership mobilizes—and inspires—a mentally healthy, Reality-based PMO, which thus provides a thoroughly diverse community of participants with the best chance of effectively addressing the onslaught of mega challenges to democracy and civilization.

Given the increasing prevalence of Wicked Messes, more than ever before, we need Enlightened Leaders.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: The Coronavirus and the Five Stages of Grieving

The work of the highly influential Psychiatrist Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross on near-death experiences, and especially those of patients who were actually facing death, sheds additional light on how we deal with traumatic events. In particular, Ross identified five stages of grieving that people go through upon learning that they are facing their ultimate demise.

Although they were initially formulated to explain how individuals struggled with the realization of their impending death, Ross's five stages are generally applicable to a much broader range of situations. They are especially helpful in understanding why so many are unable to accept that the Coronavirus requires us to substantially alter our normal behavior and routines. In addition, Kilmann has extended their application to the more encompassing category of Loss in general, such as suffering from the demise of one's job, one's felt sense of purpose, everyday routines, etc.

The five stages are Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance. Due to the Pandemic and the various restrictions and guidelines for avoiding being infected and spreading the disease, citizens everywhere are suffering through all five. In fact, many are stuck in the early stages of Denial and Anger. To break the vicious cycle that results from oscillating between Denial and Anger, one not only has to understand what each entails, but more importantly, work through them with self-awareness, mindfulness, and determination.

The first stage is outright Denial. As we said in Chap. 1, one denies the god-awful reality of a situation that is too overwhelming and painful to bear. For many, it takes the form of contending that the Virus is not actually real. And, it's furthered bolstered by self-defeating rationalizations such as "It's a complete hoax fabricated by the Democrats to gain power and foster their Radical Left-Wing Agenda." In this regard, Denial is often coupled with conspiracy theories of all kinds. For others,

primarily young people, it's the unfounded, and dangerously false, contention that "It won't affect me, or at least not seriously, and if it does, I'll take my chances."

The latter in particular is the height of social irresponsibility. For even if one personally doesn't become infected, a person could easily pass the Coronavirus on to others, especially to those who are highly vulnerable.

The second stage, Anger, closely follows Denial. Indeed, the first two stages are more often than not experienced simultaneously. One is angry at all those that are responsible for causing the Virus in the first place and second for forcing us to abandon our normal, routine activities, and especially for causing the loss of income and job security.

In the case of the Virus, Bargaining has assumed one of the most vicious and ugly forms imaginable. Thus, to reiterate, on more than one occasion, some have said that they are more than willing to sacrifice hundreds of thousands of people, especially the old, if it allows us to restart the economy. However, as it was originally formulated, Bargaining typically assumed the following: "I promise to make amends and be super good if it will make a bad situation go away."

When Bargaining fails to work, as it must inevitably, then Depression sets in. The growing numbers of suicides in response to the Virus is stark evidence. So is domestic violence, a steep rise in divorces, drug abuse, and deaths from overdosing.

Finally, the last stage is Acceptance. Many have been both able and willing to accept that it will take months if not years to defeat the Virus. The point with Acceptance is not that it's equivalent to giving up or giving in, but that it's finally admitting the Reality of a hard, cold situation, and then moving on. In the best of ways, Acceptance is honoring a life well-lived. In the case of losing one's job, it's accepting that one's old job is never coming back so that it's necessary to train for new ones.

The key point is that it takes considerable self-worth and determination to move beyond the first four stages. And, for many, it requires considerable therapy. No wonder why so many are stuck in one or both of the first two stages.

Kilmann has reformulated Ross's ideas to make them more generally applicable. He's split them into two cycles, one, Doom and Gloom, and two, Growth. The Doom and Gloom Cycle is characterized by Shock, Anger, and Denial. The Growth Cycle is characterized by Sadness, Acceptance, and Adaptability. Regrettably, it can take years to break the Doom and Gloom Cycle and thereby to move to the Growth Cycle. The latter, of course, is taking full advantage of whatever "silver linings" that emerge from any disaster or loss. And, Acceptance entails more than just moving on. It entails a whole new set of coping skills.

It should come as no surprise that the dangers of the Doom and Gloom Cycle reveal that more than ever we need calm, soothing, i.e., Secure, leaders to help us accept the Reality of the Virus, do all that we can to enlist Science to defeat it, and thereby finally move on to a different life with acceptance and adaptability.

This book has been written in the hope of making Acceptance more possible.

## Appendix 2: Combatting Dis- and Misinformation

The Jungian Framework is especially helpful in responding to Dis- and Misinformation.

First of all, the dictionary makes a crucial distinction between Dis- and Misinformation. Where Misinformation is supposedly unintentional, Disinformation is done intentionally. Unfortunately, once they are “out there,” neither is easily eradicated. To be sure, each is bad enough in and of itself. They are made even worse by the role they play in arguments with regard to the role of Science in combatting the Coronavirus.

If humans behaved according to the “Strict Laws of Formal Logic,” then they would be guided by following in disposing of invalid arguments and handling faulty reasoning.

According to one of the Laws of Classical Logic known as Modus Tollens that was discovered by the ancient Greeks some two millennia ago, if a proposition P implies another proposition Q and if Q is false, then P is false beyond all doubt. Therefore, one has no choice but to give up one’s belief in P. In fact, it can be shown via Truth Tables that the conjunction of “P implies Q” and “not-Q”—i.e., the falsity of Q—implies “not-P,” or the falsity of P. (A trivial example is P—All men are six feet tall—implies Q, All men are greater than five feet nine inches tall. Not-Q, all men are not greater than five feet nine inches tall, allows us to conclude that P is false; not all men are six feet tall.) While as a law of Logic Modus Tollens is unquestionably correct, things do not work this way in human affairs. In short, people do not operate by the Strict Laws of Formal Logic alone.

The other great Law of Logic discovered by the Greeks, Modus Ponens, which says if “P implies Q” and P is true, then the truth of Q follows automatically, does not fare any better. In general, the truth of P is no more easily established than the falsity of Q or not-Q. Thus, Modus Ponens does not work in many cases.

No matter how strong the counterevidence not-Q may be, people are not easily induced to give up their beliefs in Ps that are deeply ingrained, especially that which goes against their fundamental beliefs and is part of their core makeup, i.e., read “identities.” As we’ve pointed out, the “fact” that eminent Epidemiologists such as Dr. Anthony Fauci and others have argued persuasively for the wearing of face masks and social distancing to help prevent the spread of the Coronavirus has not only caused many not to comply, but has produced fierce opposition. Indeed, many of the so-called arguments in favor of not complying are nothing less than outright bizarre. For example, Republican Louisiana Congressman Clay Higgins said that the wearing of masks is “part of the dehumanization of the children of God. You’re participating in it by wearing a mask.” We can hear William James countering by saying that any God who doesn’t sanction the wearing of masks is too irresponsible and uncaring a God for me.

The reason why traditional Logic alone doesn’t suffice is that it doesn’t take into account the full set of ways in which people react to new and especially

uncomfortable information. Consider ST, NT, NF, and SF. As before, all four need to work together if “the facts” are to prevail.

ST is squarely in the camp of Modus Tollens and Modus Ponens. In this case, “hard facts” are both necessary and sufficient to get people to reaffirm or change their fundamental beliefs. While absolutely necessary, by themselves they are not sufficient to convince a wider public.

NT is concerned with the total context of a person’s beliefs. Namely, how does any piece of new information “fit” with the total System of a person’s beliefs? Are only those facts that are compatible and thereby support a person’s prior beliefs even considered, let alone admitted? In other words, how much adjustment and revision are required to admit new facts?

NF not only refers to the social context, but the larger social community of which one is a member and what they hold dear as “fundamental beliefs.” For another, what is threatening to the community and produces great anxiety if an old belief is shown to be false? Correspondingly, what’s threatening if it’s required to accept a new belief? Conversely, how does one engage the broader community to embrace new and contradictory ideas? How does one induce leaders to come forward?

Finally, with regard to SF, how does a new belief fare with one’s immediate family and personal friends? Will it alleviate their anxiety or cause them great consternation? Instead of impersonal Logic, is there a friendly face in whom one places implicit trust that will come forward to embrace new ideas? Indeed, it’s been shown repeatedly that trusted faces are essential in getting one to embrace new ideas and to give up old ones.

All four are not only basic but need to work together. Of course, one needs the best impersonal, hard scientific data and facts on which to base one’s beliefs and actions. But one also needs to assess the total context and situation in which any new fact will impact. One also needs to assess the beliefs of the social community of which one is a part and what a new belief will do to it. And, finally who is the friendly, trustworthy face that will not only be the living embodiment of a new fact or belief, but one trusts implicitly?

Ever since the great Prussian philosopher Immanuel Kant, we’ve known that there are no facts without an underlying theory that is needed to uncover the facts. We cannot stress enough that facts are not theory- and value-free. But ever since the equally great and eminent American philosopher/psychologist William James, we’ve known that facts and theories are not separate from the particular theorist/spokesperson who is responsible for them. Our conscious and unconscious states of mind—our personalities in general—enter into what and whom we trust.

## **The Laws of Probability and Wicked Messes**

The laws of probability also play a fundamental role in our understanding of Wicked Messes. Consider the following:

If one proposition A Implies another proposition B—in other words, “If A, then B”—then an important interpretation is that the occurrence of A is Sufficient for the

occurrence of B. In Formal Logic, symbolically this is written  $A \rightarrow B$ . It's also shown that the concept of Implication is equivalent to "Not-A or B".

Next consider the expression  $P(A \rightarrow B)$ , where we only know with some Probability P that A Implies B. In short, this represents the case of Probabilistic Causality. Given the Laws of Probability,  $P(\text{Not-A or B}) = P(\text{Not-A}) + P(B) - P(\text{Not-A and B})$ . It can be shown that this leads to:

$P(A) + P(A \rightarrow B) = P(B) + P(\text{Not-A} \rightarrow \text{Not-B})$ . The sum of the Probability of A plus the Probability that A Implies B is equal to the sum of the Probability of B plus the Probability that the nonoccurrence of A Implies the non-occurrence of B. Thus, if A Implies B stands for the case where A is Sufficient for the occurrence of B, then Not-A Implies Not-B stands for the case where A is Necessary for the occurrence of B. That is, if A doesn't occur, then B doesn't occur as well. In effect, we've arrived at a Conservation Theorem.

Consider the implications for Wicked Messes. If A and B constitute any two of the problems of a Wicked Mess, then as members, not only are the Probabilities of A and B high to begin with—effectively they are 1—but so are the Probabilities that A Implies B and in turn that B Implies A. In short, the existence of any of the problems of a Wicked Mess not only Implies the existence of the others, but even stronger, that they are highly interconnected.

There are other interpretations that are equally important. Thus, if A represents an assumption, then one possible interpretation is that  $P(A)$  is the Probability that assumption A is True. And,  $P(A \rightarrow B)$  represents the case where the Truth of A Implies the Truth of assumption B. If  $P(A)$  is high, then because of the Conservation Theorem,  $P(B)$  is taken to be necessarily high as well.

However, one needs to pay special attention to those cases where  $P(A)$  and  $P(A \rightarrow B)$  are presumed to be low, for if they turn out to be high, they can and will cause a crisis. Indeed, crises happen all the time by means of events that are presumed to be improbable.

In addition, A can be a crisis, Defense Mechanism, in short anything pertaining to a Wicked Mess. In a word, they are all interconnected, indeed, inseparable parts of a Wicked Mess.

### Appendix 3: What Is a System?

In a series of seminal books spanning a lifetime, no one has done a more commanding job than Russell Ackoff and his colleagues in identifying and laying out the precise definition and nature of Systems.<sup>1</sup> It is only fitting that we acknowledge the enormous impact his thinking has had on ours.

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<sup>1</sup>Ackoff, *Re-Creating the Corporation*, opcit; Ackoff, Russell L. and Rodin, Sheldon, *Redesigning Society*, Stanford University Press, 2003; Ackoff, Russell L. and Greenberg, Daniel, *Turning Learning Right Side Up, Putting Education Back On Track*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2003; Gharajedaghi Jamshid, *Systems Thinking, Managing Chaos and Complexity*,

Nonetheless, at the outset, we have to say that for all its brilliance, in terms of the Jungian Framework, it's a pure NT account. Accordingly, it needs to be modified to consider how the other Jungian Types view Systems.

Thus, from the perspective of NT, a System is an intentionally designed, systematically organized, whole entity (e.g., an automobile, computer, smart building, etc.) that has one or more essential functions so that an individual and/or groups of people are thereby able to realize a set of important purposes. Furthermore, the functions, not the parts, are critical in defining a System.

Notice immediately how the different Types define "purposes." For STs, purposes are akin to "measurable objectives" that one wishes to accomplish. For NFs, purposes are deep expressions of the fundamental feelings and values of an entire community. For SFs, they are the intensely personal values that both define and unite one's immediate families and friends. The point is that for Feeling Types, purposes are not impersonal aims and/or objectives.

From the perspective of NT, an automobile is defined primarily by its functions, not its parts. Of course, the parts are critical for without them, the functions cannot be realized

A car's function is to allow people to accomplish specific purposes, e.g., move to a desired set of locations by a preferred set of routes in specific times. Cars also have additional functions such as to enable people to engage in a form of entertainment and relaxation, thereby satisfying NF and SF concerns and needs. Driving a car also allows people to "blow off steam" under "semi-controlled conditions" even though it can very easily lead to road rage, which can be deadly.

By means of their functions, the parts exist to allow people to accomplish significant purposes, not the other way around. That is, people do not exist for the parts or the System in which they are embedded, although the parts can certainly give rise to new functions and purposes other than those that the System's designers anticipated or intended. As we've said, this is increasingly true of Technology where the unintended consequences produce effects that negate its positive benefits.

A critical distinction is that a System's parts have functions, while only humans as purposive individuals have purposes. Thus, a car has major functions (e.g., transportation, the ability to change direction and speed when directed by a purposeful individual, etc.) that allow humans to satisfy purposes in the form of desired outcomes.

Only humans purposefully create specific means to accomplish intended outcomes or ends. In brief, humans (and of course certain other animals) are purposeful beings and thus exhibit purposive behavior even if they are not completely self-contained, i.e., autonomous.

Individual humans are not autonomous because they only exist by virtue of being members of even larger Systems, e.g., families, organizations, and societies. For one, infants do not have the innate ability to survive on their own. In short, the lines

between individuals and the society of which they are members is thin at best. In fact, neither exists without the other. In a word, systems cannot exist without NF and SF.

To take another example, the heart and lungs have essential functions, but they don't have independent purposes, let alone an existence of their own apart from the entire human body. Similarly, the engine in a car obviously has an important function, but it doesn't have a purpose of its own independently of the combined human-machine System, i.e., NT. But once again, it wouldn't function without the necessary support of NF and SF. By themselves, wheels do not exhibit purposeful motion. They only carry out their intended function by being part of the car as a whole System that not only includes, but is directed by a purposeful being.

In addition, a System also consists of at least two or more essential parts that satisfy three conditions. If something only has one part, then it is not a system. In terms of NF, a system consists of at least two or more persons, not just impersonal parts alone.

The first condition is that a System cannot accomplish its defining function(s) without its essential parts, and persons. An engine is an essential part for locomotion but a cigarette lighter is not. Similarly, the brain, heart, and lungs are essential parts of humans, but as Ackoff notes, the appendix is not. This is in fact why it is termed an "appendix."

The second condition is that by itself an essential part cannot affect a System independently of at least one other essential part. The essential parts are not only interconnected, but they strongly interact. Thus, the heart affects the lungs and vice versa. Indeed, they don't exist without the other. In other words, without interactions and interdependencies, there is no System.

The third condition is that no group of a System's essential parts—that is, no subsystem—has an independent effect on the whole System. Once again, the nervous and metabolic subsystems of humans do not have independent effects on the whole human body as a System. And, while a single person can certainly have an important effect on a System, it usually requires a concerted group effort, especially if it's to be long-lasting.

These definitions and conditions have important consequences for the performance of Systems and thus illuminate additional properties.

Improvement in the parts taken separately does not improve a System overall. Indeed, it often leads to its failure and complete destruction. Merely improving an engine without the careful coordination of and simultaneous improvements in the suspension and transmission does not improve the overall performance of a car. If anything, it can cause a car to spin dangerously out of control.

Importantly, attempts to improve the overall costs of Medical Care by lowering the costs of the individual parts of the System have failed. In fact, they have done just the opposite.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Mitroff, Ian I., and Silvers, Abe, *Dirty Rotten Strategies: How We Trick Ourselves and Others into Solving the Wrong Problems Precisely*, Stanford University Press, Palo Alto, CA., 2009.

Lastly, a System has defining properties that none of its parts have. Thus, purposeful motion is a property of the combined (i.e., interactive) human-machine System that is a car. It is not a function of the engine or wheels alone. Indeed, without a driver or NF and SF human interaction of some kind, e.g., remote control, a car cannot exhibit purposeful motion. Similarly, no amount of analysis of the parts would reveal a car's property as a social status symbol, i.e., clearly NF and SF.

## Problems Versus Exercises

The concept of Systems has extremely important consequences for problems and especially what count as solutions.

As opposed to The Systems Age, textbooks were, and still are, one of the prime pedagogic devices of The Machine Age, i.e., the world in which problems supposedly exist and thus can be solved independently of one another. As we've indicated previously, "If  $400 - X = 20$ , then find X," is an exercise. It's not a problem.

Exercises and problems differ in every respect. Exercises are completely well-structured and bounded. Everything about them is known and defined precisely. First of all, the complete statement of the exercise is given to the student so that there is no ambiguity whatsoever as to what is expected of him or her. In the simple example above, the student is expected to find the single number X given its precise relationship to the other numbers in the initial statement of the exercise. Second, there is generally one and only one right answer to every exercise. In the example, Algebra and the laws of arithmetic guarantee that the answer is 380.

Problems have none of these characteristics. For one, context is everything. That is, problems are part of Systems. As such, they do not exist completely on their own. Stronger still, problems are abstractions from Messes, which as we have discussed are even more complex Systems. In slightly different terms, problems are carved out of Messes.

Thus, if Sandra is a single mother with two kids to feed and has only \$400 left at the end of the month, but needs at least \$20 to pay for medicine for one of her sick children, then how much money does she have to spend for food and rent? What now is the *solution* to the problem? It is not just the simple number 380. Indeed, if Sandra really needs \$500 to take proper care of herself and her children, what now is the *definition* of the problem? One of the places to look is in some other field such as Family Assistance and Counseling, not just Algebra. If anything, the mere fact of the number 380 is more likely to lead to Sandra's frustration and even depression than to any sense of her having solved the problem.

As opposed to exercises, there are likely to be as many different formulations (definitions) of the problem and potential solutions as there are different Stakeholders, for instance, Sandra's Parents, Siblings, Relatives, Significant Others, Welfare Agencies, and Potential Employers. There is no God-given right to expect everyone to have the same formulation of this or any other problem.

For this reason, as we discussed with regard to PMOs, Problem Negotiation is a basic part of problem solving. In fact, the initial definition or formulation of a problem is one of the most important factors in its solution. But since exercises are pre-formulated, they generally do not teach students how to grapple with real, complex problems. If anything, they generally turn students into “certainty junkies” so that if something is not pre-defined for them, then they experience noticeable discomfort and complain to the instructor. We know this personally from having taught many generations of students.

### **The Disposition of Problems**

There is another important aspect of problems. Ackoff makes a critical distinction between how problems are to be handled. There are at least four ways. They can be Absolved, Dissolved, Resolved, or Solved. An exercise, like a puzzle, can only be Solved, and one rarely questions the formulation and its accompanying solution. Furthermore, depending on the particular problem, its history, and its current state, all of the different ways can be used at different times. They are not necessarily exclusive although they can be depending upon the particular problem and its context.

When we “Absolve” a problem, in effect, we leave it alone in the hope that it will “right itself or go away on its own.” In most cases, this is nothing more than outright wishful thinking. It can also be a case of Denial. Or, we select a particular problem that we wish to focus our attention on, and thus divert our attention away from others, even though the particular problem we have selected may not be the most critical on which to work.

When we “Dissolve” a problem, we attempt to redesign the underlying System or systems that gave rise to the problem in the first place. Or, we say that some other problem in the System is more important and thus deserving of our attention. Therefore, we shift our attention, but only after looking at the whole System.

When we “Resolve” a problem, we accept a less than perfect state of affairs. For instance, we typically “accept” an unemployment rate of 4 to 6% as “normal.” Many Economists believe that attempts to go below these numbers would actually make things worse. For instance, we might achieve greater employment but only by lowering wages across the board.

Lastly, when we “Solve” a problem, we attempt to find the single best or optimal solution to a problem. For instance, we attempt to make unemployment exactly equal to zero if indeed this is truly “best.”

Single, perfect, and/or exact solutions rarely exist for complex Systems. In fact, so-called optimal solutions can make things worse as in the case of a car where a bigger and better engine without redesigning the entire system can literally “backfire.”

The notion that problems can rarely be Solved is so important that we cannot stress it enough. In fact, this is one of the cornerstones of Psychodynamics:

Freud...viewed suffering as inherent in the human condition and conflict as not only inescapable, but as basically irresolvable. To his mind, compromise solutions are all that can ever be had...For [the psychoanalyst] Mann, the ability to accept limitation and disappointment is the hallmark of the mature person. The hope that all problems can be solved and all goals achieved is what puts people at loggerheads with existence.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Alon, Nahi, and Omer, Haim, *The Psychology of Demonization: Promoting Acceptance and Reducing Conflict*, Routledge, New York, 2006, p. 30.