

Basic Equipment

So far in this book I have demonstrated the skills, abilities and equipment required to analyse and design development work through describing how some people did it and examining the processes by which they did it. This is the counterpart in the written word to watching people do something and being told why they are doing it in that particular way. Actually the written word allows us to “watch” what is done in slow motion and to stop and examine any stage at will. This approach is significantly different from that of listing generic skills that people need to have in order to analyse and design on their own and in groups, communities and organizations.¹

I have chosen this approach quite deliberately because it shows how, in analysing and designing, the personal and interpersonal processes, the tasks pursued, the skills and the abilities and equipment deployed are all of a piece. It illustrates how these things are embodied in reality and thus, to put it negatively, it avoids the separation of the parts. It is possible, of course, to list from what I have written the things people need in order to do this work. You might find it helpful to do so and to note those things you have acquired and those which you need to develop. There are things that can be drawn out which equip people to engage in every aspect of analysis and design. In this chapter I discuss the use of words, diagrams, questions and hypotheses or hunches.

My experience is that I and those with whom I work are most creative when we work at things through the spoken and written word and through depicting things in diagrams. These three activities—talking, writing things down and constructing diagrams—draw upon a wide range of our faculties through the left and right hemispheres of our brains and they “speak” to each other. A distinguished economist and Nobel Prize winner, Sir John Hicks, testifies to the same kind of experience. He is reported to have said that he always explains his propositions in words, in diagrams and in mathematics and that he only publishes when he can do all three.²

The combination of words, diagrams and formulae challenges the common belief “that ‘thinking’ is synonymous with verbal thinking”.³ “Often”, says Woodworth, “we have to get away from speech in order to think clearly”.⁴ And Koestler claims that the “distrust of words is a trait often found among those who create with their eyes” and he provides evidence that many scientists “distrust conceptual thought” and rely on “visual imagery”.⁵ All this illustrates different ways in which people think. The combined use in group work of these methods enables people who think in different ways to make their contributions

to better effect and it allows individuals to draw upon the different ways in which they think.

I am aware that by restricting myself to my own experience and concentrating on these four things that I have found helpful I am missing out other ways that help people to think, analyse and design. Omitting them is not to dismiss them; it is simply to acknowledge that I have not used, researched and tested them sufficiently to write about their use in the processes of analysis and design that I am examining.

Now to the four pieces of basic equipment.

I. WORDS: SPOKEN AND WRITTEN⁶

Church and community development is "talking work" (in contradistinction to manual or craft work)⁷ aimed at getting people thinking, working and growing together and giving a voice and say to all participants. It is putting words and language to work for human and spiritual development.

Words are the tools of thought and communication. They can be instruments of analysis, design, planning and carrying out work programmes with people. "Our ability to reflect on our experience", says David Smail, "is only as good as the linguistic tools available to us to do so".⁸ Qualitative verbal interaction of a unique kind is the key to the corporate application of the processes of analysis and design that we are considering. This interaction is open and free whilst being focused, disciplined, structured and purposeful. It aims to give a voice and say to all participants and to take all contributions seriously. (I am amazed at the effects of a worker's taking seriously the first verbal contribution by a member of a newly formed group. Repeatedly I sense surprise, if not shock, and a quietness as the group takes on a quite different attitude and ethos modelled on the worker's response.)

To promote this kind of interaction workers have to work as diligently with the words of others as with their own; they have to help people to find words to express themselves adequately; they have to help people to move from arguing, debating and using rhetoric to thinking things through together using all their resources and insights; they have to help people when words are being used in anger to hurt, to confront the issues constructively and to begin to care for each other; they have to act as translators and to find words to cross chasms of misunderstanding and disagreement as they help groups to find a *lingua franca*. (A large ecumenical team of well-educated professional people to whom I acted as consultant eventually came to the conclusion that to overcome the acute difficulties they were facing they needed a "more adequate working vocabulary".)

To do all this, people and workers have to engage in open unrehearsed verbal exchanges—apart, that is, from prepared opening pieces which are of great importance—in situations that can be supercharged with emotion, positively

and negatively. People and workers need considerable skills to work collectively with words in these ways, especially when they are working with people differing considerably in their verbal facility. They also need certain commitments, which we will consider later.

For me, a preacher, to become involved in this kind of talking work involved a conversion as shaking, painful and liberating as any I have experienced. It was *from* habitually using verbal facilities for my purposes and often, to my shame, unfairly against those of others *to* a commitment to use them for others, to put them, such as they were, at the service of others and their well-being and development. This means, for instance, making sure that all suggestions, whatever you might think of them, are equally well articulated so that the quality of the description is not confused with the quality of the idea. When this is done, people are more likely to select ideas on their merits; the better idea is not lost to another simply because it was badly described. This conversion took place in the late 1960s and I have been working out its implications ever since. (There are, of course, occasions when it is right to use verbal facilities against others.)

I am convinced that the quality and effectiveness of the work done in the church and in the community is directly proportional to the quality of the verbal exchanges that suffuse it. The adoption of the non-directive approach is an inevitable consequence of this conclusion. But I am not under any illusion about the difficulties of promoting this kind of talking work and adopting a non-directive approach. For one thing, in all walks of life, words and talking are widely used to sell, persuade, cajole, manipulate, threaten, impress, etc. Then again, those with the greatest facility with words in positions of authority may not have the deepest insights or the best ideas but they often have the will and the power to dominate and quash others: more perceptive, less articulate people can be marginalized by less perceptive, more articulate and powerful ones.

Sadly, words can also be weapons that undermine collaborative action, task groups and community. Opportunities to talk things out together have been so misused that meetings are often dismissed as talking shops, i.e. places where there is a free flow of words without commitment and action. This has to be avoided. It is the death of church and community development, just as talking to good effect is its life-blood. Meetings need to be talking workshops in which people use words and other means of communication constructively in the ways illustrated in Part One. The main point that I wish to make here is that for the Church (and other organizations) to become involved in promoting the kind of free-flowing open verbal exchanges described above, laity, ministers, priests and religious simply have to learn, as I had to, a mode of talking work so different from the one to which they are most accustomed that it is tantamount to acquiring another language, with its own vocabulary, grammar and syntax. What facility I have with this language I learnt first through experiential education⁹ and then through group and community work.

For the main part, in most churches in the liturgical context one or two people

preach to and speak for congregations whose verbal responses are strictly limited to those prescribed. This is the antithesis of the talking work we are considering. I am not suggesting, as I might have done some years ago, that this liturgical mode should be replaced by that necessary when people are analysing and designing church and community work together. Traditional services of worship are vitally important to me¹⁰—so much so that I find that discussion during services can detract from their value substantially. (Discussion afterwards is quite a different matter.) Nor am I arguing against debating and lecturing, they have their place. Worship, debating, lecturing and other forms of talking work can stimulate inner dialogues that promote human and spiritual development.¹¹ What I am arguing is that workers and organizations aiming to promote holistic development need to be taking the skills that I describe seriously and that such development is most likely to occur when the different ways of using words are used and experienced appropriately in concert, so that, for example, workers worship together and worshippers work together.

The verbal ability to preach does not necessarily mean the ability to lecture or work with people in groups. Preachers and lecturers share their thinking through projecting it; whilst workers promote shared thinking. Sermons are preached in situations designed for one person's thinking to be made overt whilst that of the congregation remains covert; community work is designed to make as much of each person's thinking as possible overt with due respect for privacy. Preachers and lecturers deal in set pieces, community workers work with many set pieces and those that are composed on the spot. Preaching is, amongst other things, declaring what needs to be done, how it should be done, challenging people to do it and leaving the doing to those who may. Church and community work helps people to decide for themselves what needs to be done *and* to talk out what they are going to do.

There are many ways of acquiring the ability to engage in non-directive talking work by reading about it, experiencing it and doing it. Fortunately, I have found that writing up this kind of talking work has been a way of learning in depth about how to do it (and not to do it!) and it has greatly enhanced the talking and group work. During the 1960s, when we were first using this mode of talking work, the late Dorothy Household and I developed a way of writing about it which we called "recording".¹² A record is a written structured account of a meeting between two or more people giving an orderly presentation of:

- the overt purposes, objectives, and tasks of a discussion;
- any relevant information about the way in which it was conducted;
- any decisions made or conclusions arrived at by the members;
- any of the underlying considerations, arguments, reasons and feelings which led the members to their decisions and conclusions;

- any information about the apparent group processes and the overt interaction of the members necessary for an understanding of whatever happened during the discussion;
- the worker's reflections and implications for future discussions.

In the first instance we started to write these records to avoid groups going over the same ground *ad nauseam*. Then we realized that they performed many functions and so I have used the method extensively in different ways ever since. What we found was that:

- records, by portraying the life and work of a group, help it to get to know itself and to build up its identity, to see how it is functioning and malfunctioning and provide common reference points and discussion building blocks;
- records provide opportunities for workers and people to learn about themselves, each other, their beliefs and their environment, through the linguistic exercises necessarily involved in achieving their purposes, solving their problems and meeting their needs—therefore they are educational and developmental tools;
- records stimulate people to express themselves more precisely and therefore to learn how to use language more critically and creatively;
- records enable people to realize they have a contribution to make;
- records aid efficiency, communication and self-evaluation;
- records are self-training and research tools.

Therefore recording and records greatly enhance the quality and effectiveness of talking work and, by causing everyone to think and reflect in greater depth than they would otherwise do, they help everyone—not only workers—to be better equipped to engage in this kind of talking work. And they enable those who are better at writing than speaking to make significant contributions.

II. DIAGRAMS

Diagrams play an important part in the work I do. They are a natural part of the way in which I communicate. Examples are to be found in this book but they are much tidier than working diagrams. People I meet find the diagrams I draw very helpful but few have used them previously in their church and community work. A large percentage soon start to draw their own diagrams and show considerable skill in doing so. All they needed to start them off was an experience of them. A small percentage say that they follow diagrams when used by others but that they do not add meaning to their thinking and that they

would never construct them or use them. A very small percentage tolerate them but do not like them. But for the majority they open up new and exciting worlds of thought and are tools for thinking.

Diagrams are line drawings showing the parts of things or how they work. They select, simplify and exaggerate aspects of reality seen to be significant for the purposes in hand and play down or ignore those that are not. Koestler compares them to cartoons:

Every drawing on the blackboard—whether it is meant to represent the wiring diagram of a radio set or the circulation of the blood, the structure of a molecule or the weather over the Atlantic—is based on the same method as the cartoonist's: selective emphasis on the relevant factors and omission of the rest. A map bears the same relation to a landscape as a character-sketch to a face; every chart, diagram, or model, every schematic or symbolic representation of physical or mental processes, is an unemotional caricature of reality.¹³

Some diagrams are what Ramsey calls "picturing" or scale models—a drawing of a building indicating how it is used or a map of an area showing where organizations and churches are located are examples of this kind of diagram. Other diagrams are what Ramsey calls "disclosure" models. They reveal something of the inner structure and essential shape of things; they disclose the connections between variables and processes of cause and effect; they show how things do or could fit together.¹⁴ Both kinds of diagrams are useful but it is the latter that are the creative tools of analysis and design in church and community development work. (Examples of disclosure diagrams are Figures 2:2, 3:2, 4:1&2, 5:2, 6:2&3, 8:1.) Other diagrams show the different stages, optimal phasing and timing of a series of inter-related tasks. Such diagrams are commonly referred to as "critical paths" or "flow charts". (Examples are Figures 2:3, 5:3; Displays 5:1 and 11:1.)

Just how and why, then, are diagrams useful? They help us to talk about things we find difficult or impossible to describe. Discussing theological models, Ramsey says that they can "enable us to make sense of discourse whose logical structure is so perplexing as to inhibit literacy"; they can "enable us to talk of what eludes us"; and they enable us to "map large-scale interpretations of phenomena".¹⁵ This applies to all kinds of diagrams. Moreover, once constructed, they are invaluable aids to discussion. People can identify unmistakably things to which they are referring by pointing to them and using a minimum number of words. Making points through verbal exchanges requires more time and more concentrated attention is required to follow precisely what is being said. The consequent economy in making points combined with the vividness with which they are made and the ease and clarity with which they are grasped, generates a dynamic in the exchanges between people which stimulates and facilitates creative thinking. Ideas flow freely. Diagrams objectify the discussion—there is a tangible output which people

have produced together. This keeps the momentum going not least because it tends to reduce defensiveness and people's being possessive about "their" ideas.

An important aspect of diagrams is that they represent positions that things occupy in the scheme of things and the relationships between them. This can bring descriptions of things and lists of points to life. (Cf. "The Diagrammatic Overview of The Book" in the "Purpose and Structure of The Book".) Above all, diagrams add non-verbal dimensions to our comprehension of things and our discourse about them. Thus they enhance participation in analysing and designing by enabling us to use the side of our brain that thinks in pictures rather than words—and that helps those who do their best thinking in this way to make their contributions. Finally, many people find diagrams easy to remember. It follows that diagrams are useful for conceptualizing, analysing and explaining things and for designing projects and programmes.

There are, however, disadvantages, limitations and dangers in using them. They are approximate; they represent some things but not others; they are not comprehensive statements of reality. Thus it is dangerous to read too much into them. They are most useful in highlighting key characteristics about complexly related entities; they are least useful in presenting subtle nuances. In fact, they can mask the need for accurate verbal descriptions of nuances that diagrams simply cannot convey. Diagrams that are really helpful are not always easy to construct, whilst ones that dysfunctionally misrepresent things come all too easily. Whilst some diagrams communicate widely, others do so only when people see them built up and the effectiveness of others is restricted to those involved in their construction—they simply do not travel!

As I have already said, by and large people readily use all types of diagrams that are provided. Most people are not as adept at producing disclosure diagrams as they are at producing the other forms. Consequently they are inclined to overwork and misuse the other types of diagrams and even to use them as though they were disclosure models.

How, then, do you draw diagrams? As far as analysis and design are concerned, the diagrams that I construct and use emerge from my interaction with people and the situations in which they are engaged.* They come from "reading" the situations. There are examples of this in Chapter Four. Professor Gareth Morgan, in an outstanding book about understanding organizations, says:

... the trick is to learn how to engage in a kind of conversation with the situation one is trying to understand. Rather than impose a viewpoint on a situation, one should allow the situation to reveal how it can be understood from other vantage points. In a way we can say that one should always be

*Some diagrams that result from studying the theory, theology and practice of a wide range of experience model underlying processes and become analytical tools. Figure 5:2 is an example.

sensitive to the fact that a situation 'has its own opinion' . . . as one develops the art of reading situations, critical analysis and evaluation become a way of thinking. One quickly learns to recognize important cues and to uncover crucial insights.¹⁶

Diagrams emerge from that kind of "conversation"—not always, but more often than not. To be more specific than this with certainty is not possible because I cannot discern all the inner conscious and unconscious processes and the part played by the left and right hemispheres of my brain. (I understand that the left is verbal, analytical, digital, abstract, rational, linear, temporal, and logical, and uses signs; whilst the right is non-verbal, synthetic, spatial, analogic, non-rational, holistic, non-temporal, intuitive and uses symbols.¹⁷) I glimpse three different and, I suspect, inter-related ways in which diagrams come to me.

The first is a conscious process. I listen and look for the principal features, reference points and entities in a situation and what people are saying about them. I do this with great attention and concentration. I focus on them in turn and lock them in my consciousness. Possibly I write them haphazardly on a piece of paper. (They could be key people or groups, events, issues, etc.) Then—but it is in parallel not in sequence because one is thinking about all the things at the same time—I look for connections, patterns of interactions, discontinuities, factions, etc. At this stage my questions will be directed towards clarifying any ideas or hunches about these things. In short, I am building up in my mind, and possibly jotting down on paper, a picture of the system or sub-system, the parts and their structure.

Now it is necessary to find some way of putting the emerging mental picture into diagrammatic form to facilitate further and deeper discussion. (At all stages it is essential to be tentative so that other insights emerge freely and become part of the emerging conceptual picture. Insights and hunches need to be tested and corrected.) More often than not this process has started on my jotting pad. I then attempt to set out the entities, their inter-relationship and the patterns of interaction and some representation of the key processes that constitute positive and negative aspects of the inner dynamic of the system(s) in diagrammatic form. (This helps us to see how clearly related this activity is to designing and why working diagrams are so important to designing.) In a summary form, therefore, the conceptualizing stages associated with diagrams are:

- listening and looking; and trying to look at things from different angles to see if other perspectives throw new light upon things;
- abstracting from the generalities what appear to be key factors;
- searching for connections between the key factors (how they fit or do not fit together, the interaction between them etc.);
- searching for ways to portray objectively and succinctly and clearly

whatever I have "seen" or found so that I and others can consider critically whatever it is.

This involves:

- observing
- extracting/isolating
- interpreting
- relating
- conceptualizing
- representing.

The second way in which diagrams come to me is a combination of conscious and subliminal processes. I read meditatively and critically what people write, I listen intently to what they say, and I look at them as they are saying it. Through this process verbal and non-verbal communications are picked up which inform and shape diagrams; partly as described above and partly in hidden ways. I know this through experiences where I have identified the effect of non-verbal communications. For example, I was once working with a group of people from the same area. They were talking about several churches. I drew one or two map-diagrams placing the churches. After some time they said that I obviously knew the area. I did not, and I asked them what led them to think that I did. They said it was because I had put all the churches in the right relationship to each other geographically. The complexities ruled out chance. Pondering this, I realized that I had picked up non-verbal signals they had made by the movement of their eyes and heads to indicate the direction in which one church after another was located. I read these signals without "knowing" I had done so. I was reminded of what Jonathan Miller said on a TV programme about the importance of doctors attending to the non-verbal communications of patients when diagnosing. He maintains that they provide vital clues. For example, stabbing pains are indicated by stabbing the fingers to show where this takes place, direction and frequency.¹⁸

The third way in which I produce diagrams is, I believe, through the activity of the right side or hemisphere of my brain. My evidence for saying so is this. Time and again when working with individuals and groups I start to draw diagrams without any conscious mental picture of what I am going to draw. As I start, I generally say what is now my party piece to cover my anxiety about the outcome: "I do not know whether I can do this, but may I try to draw a diagram?"—and I start without giving anyone the chance to say no! More often than not a useful diagram emerges, generally of the disclosure genre. As soon as I start to draw the diagram I begin to explain it, presumably the activity of the left side of my brain. I have seen others do the same. At various times

I have urged people who have said that they have a feeling about a situation but no clear idea “to draw without thinking”. More often than not they produce a diagram that illuminates things—sometimes it is their first diagram.

These are three ways of constructing diagrams inductively. Concentrated attention must be given to verbal and non-verbal communications. Some of this can be constructed into diagrams through the predominant use of the left side of the brain; some through the right side of the brain. Take courage into both hands and just start to draw without thinking in words. Once the diagrams are out, they lend themselves to analysis.

Some diagrams communicate their message immediately and unmistakably without much effort on the reader’s part. But, as we have seen, other diagrams speak only to those who study them carefully, and doing that calls for application. For me this is most difficult when a diagram is a complex of lines and arrows connecting several “boxes” or circles and when either there is too much or too little verbal explanation. One wonders where to start, just what the arrows mean and what is the distinction between full and dotted lines, etc., etc. These difficulties arise when people have to read a diagram they have not seen constructed, and since most published diagrams are the final product, the stages in their construction are rarely given. Questions that help to read diagrams are:

- what are the principal entities?
- why are they arranged as they are?
- what is the diagram saying about the relationship between the entities?
- what is the diagram as a whole saying to me?
- what do I think about it?

In fact, these and similar questions help to recapitulate stages in the construction of a completed diagram.

Building up diagrams in dialogue can be exciting and productive. The process is alive, vital and dynamic, but it can be disappointing when they are presented to others in their final state to find that they are dead and uninspiring, they have lost their dynamic and excitement. Examples of diagrams built up in a consultancy session are given in Figure 3:1.

Now look at the diagrams in this book!

III. QUESTIONS

Analysing and designing church and community work involves pursuing appropriate questions related to human affairs in specific situations and contexts. Questions are basic tools; using them is part of the craft of this work; questioning is a core process of analysis and design. What this means in

practice is illustrated in Chapter One, Working on a Problem. Those with questioning minds—workers and people—take to this quite naturally. But there are many workers and people in church and community work who need to analyse but who do not have questioning minds. Some of them actually feel uncomfortable in analysing problems, cases and situations because they feel it is being judgmental, hypercritical and uncharitable and therefore unchristian. Frequently people will opt out of diagnosing a case by springing to the defence of the worker. Before they can continue they have to be assured that it is necessary to diagnose rigorously to “prescribe” accurately. Practice and experience apart, two things have helped me and all kinds of other people to use and develop their ability to question: an understanding of different kinds of questions and sequences of basic questions.

1. Different Kinds of Questions

Unloaded questions (e.g. “What do you aim to achieve through this project?”) are more likely to promote direct, open, honest exchanges than loaded questions (“Do you agree that the aim of this project should be . . . ?”) which focus attention on the thinking of the questioner rather than that of the one being questioned and upon the implications of the invitation to agree or collude and on what kind of an answer to make. Unloaded questions facilitate qualitative exchanges between people and enable people to think and to think together. Loaded questions are manipulative devices which can lead to deviousness and insincere relationships.

Karl Tomm,¹⁹ writing about systemic family therapy, has usefully distinguished four types of questions.

1. “*Lineal*” questions, which have an “*investigative intent*”.

E.g. Who did what? Where? When? Why?

2. “*Circular*” questions, which have an “*exploratory intent*”.

Circular and “circularity” I find somewhat confusing terms, but the questioning activity it points to is important. I understand by this method the questioner “behaves like an explorer” on the assumption “that everything is somehow connected to everything else”. Questions are formulated to bring out the “patterns that connect” persons, objects, actions, perceptions, ideas, feelings, events, beliefs, contexts, and so on in systems.²⁰ Tomm illustrates this form of questioning in this way:

Thus, a more systemic therapist may begin the interview . . . : “How is it that we find ourselves together today?” (I called because I am worried about my husband’s depression), “Who else worries?” (The kids), “Who do you think worries the most?” (She does), “Who do you imagine worries the least?” (I guess I do), “What does she do when she worries?” (She complains a lot . . . mainly about money and bills), “What do you do when she shows you that

she is worrying?" (I don't bother her . . . just keep to myself), "Who sees your wife's worrying the most?" (The kids, they talk about it a lot), "Do your kids agree?" (Yes), "What does your father usually do when you and your mother talk?" (He usually goes to bed), "And when your father goes to bed, what does your mother do?" (She just gets more worried), and so on.²¹

This kind of questioning, which teases out the different ways in which different people are acting, reacting and relating, greatly helps me to get a much more comprehensive understanding of all kinds of groups, communities, churches and organizations and prevents me from getting fixed on what is happening to one individual in a group or one group in a church. It helps me to see things not from one but many perspectives.

3. "Strategic" questions, which have a corrective intent.

E.g. Why is it, do you think, that you do not try harder to get people to talk in committees?

4. "Reflexive" questions, which have a "facilitative" intent.

E.g. What do you think the committee would do if you told them just what you think? What do you think you would feel like if they did that? What do you think you would do? These kinds of questions cause people to reflect upon situations, actions, new options, beliefs etc. They can help people to "new perspectives, new directions and new options" and "to generate new connections and new solutions on their own". However, care must be exercised, because opening up a multiplicity of new possibilities can be confusing when purposes are not clear.

Ian MacKay²² gives another classification; the main categories are:

- **open questions;**
"Please tell me about . . .?" "What do you think about . . .?"
- **probe questions;**
"How do you mean?" "What would you do if . . .?"
- **closed questions;**
These are questions to establish facts: "How long did you work there?"
- **link questions;**
To effect the transition from one form of questioning to another. "You said you were interested in . . . what particularly interests you?" "Why?"
- **counter-productive questions;**
These questions are leading, trick, multiple, marathon, ambiguous, rhetorical and discriminatory.

MacKay considers these and subsidiary questions in relation to purpose, question form and illustrations.

2. Sequences of Questions

Sequences of questions I call "facilitating structures". The problem-tackling sequence given in Chapter One and the case study method in Chapter Two are such structures and there are sequences in the examples given above, whilst the method of working on situations and projects in Chapters Three and Four are facilitating structures made up of a sequence of tasks and questions. These facilitating structures have wide use but they do not fit all the work I do by any means. Sometimes they can be adapted; at other times new questions and sequences of questions and tasks have to be worked out. Sequences which I devised for people engaged in committee work illustrate this.

Preparing for Meetings

Why and What?

Why am I bringing this matter to the committee?

What do I want them to do or to decide?

Am I clear enough about the "why" and the "what" and the choices to be made?

Being Realistic

Can this committee deal with the subject in the time?

How can I save their time?

Homework

Have I got enough information?

Have I done all the work I can/must do beforehand?

Timing

Is this the best time to raise the subject?

Decision-Making in Meetings

What must be decided?

When must it be decided?

Who must decide?

Gather and share all relevant information

List choices

Choice 1 pros and cons

Choice 2 pros and cons, etc.

What is our decision?

Who is going to do what?

This all-too-brief introduction shows just how versatile a development tool the humble question really is and how interesting and absorbing using it can be.²³

IV. HYPOTHESES

Increasingly I am finding hypotheses very useful in the analysis and design of church and community work.

A hypothesis is a provisional supposition which accounts for the available information and which serves as a starting point and as a guide for further exploration. Hypotheses are hunches, ideas or theories which need to be stated clearly and adopted tentatively until they are disproved or proved.²⁴ Such an attitude towards them is as critical as their content because their value is lost when they are stated as hypotheses and treated as established theories or explanations. What matters is that they are useful in analysis and design.

What I am finding particularly useful are systemic hypotheses, an idea I got from a particular approach to family therapy and organizational behaviour.²⁵ Such hypotheses relate to human systems and the functional, structural and affective relationships between their parts. Consequently they are more about systemic and multiple causation than linear causation.* I have not found this easy to grasp and apply but my efforts to do so have given me a much more comprehensive perspective on situations and paid high dividends. The hypothesis I formulated in relation to the Bishop's work in Chapter 3 is one attempt that I made.

Dr Gillian Stamp's analysis of the place and function of Deaneries in the Church of England illustrates the nature of systemic hypotheses.²⁷ Her hypotheses are:

- The deanery has emerged as an attempted resolution of unresolved tensions in the theology and the policy of Church of England.
- The espousal of inappropriate images is adding confusion to the attempts to unravel and restore appropriate internal and external relationships.
- Inside the church there is a gap between the parish and the diocese. This is echoed by a gap in ministry between the domestic and the regional.
- Whether the deanery is a device or an entity, the single term is being stretched to cover, at least, two distinctly different institutional forms.
- The function of hierarchy is not subordination but supplementation.

Examples almost at random of the kind of hypotheses that I have established and used in studying work situation with principal workers are:

*Edwin H. Friedman differentiates between these kinds of causation through the diagrams in Figure 7: a opposite.²⁶

The movement from strong central control to shared control and openness in the diocese has disturbed its stability and made it volatile: it is essential to identify just what needs to be done to generate the homeostasis (or equilibrium) the system now needs.

Remedial action needs to be taken immediately in relation to the uneasy relationship between the informal, professional and apostolic aspects of the life of this religious congregation.

The diocesan system is not working as well as it might do because key figures are not able to work to both the parochial and diocesan sub-systems; they focus on one or the other but not on both.

I seem to formulate these by very much the same processes by which I construct diagrams and designs through an analytical dialogue with what I know of the workers and their situations. The great value of formulating these hypotheses is that they engender a perspective that attends to how the parts are working, or not working together for good, and thus they help to identify the action required to make a system work better.

Words, diagrams, questions and hypotheses are all tools that can be used for or against the best interests of people and workers. As I have presented them they equip people to promote human and spiritual development because they are shaped to be the executive instruments of action that is essentially non-directive. For them to be deployed consistently for these ends the ability to use them must be compounded with the commitments described in Chapters 8 and 10 and the appropriate personal and social skills described in this book.

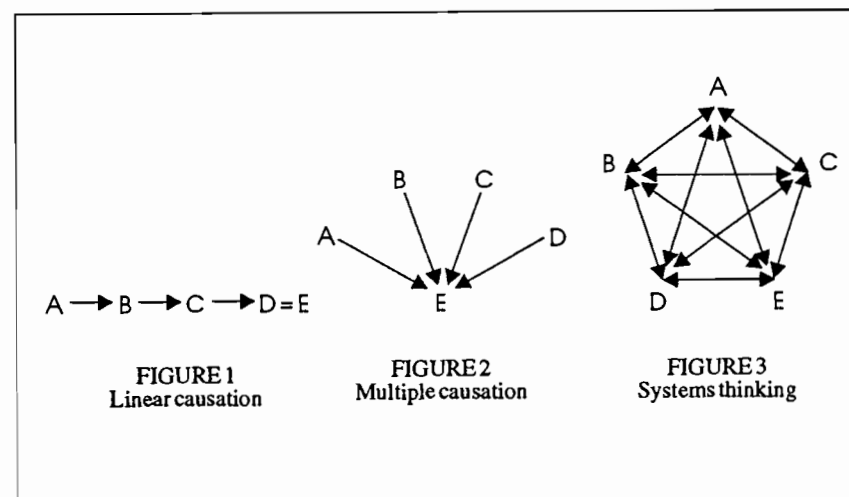


FIGURE 7.1. THREE FORMS OF CAUSATION

In figure 1: A causes B; B causes C; C causes D; D causes E. Figure 2 is also linear thinking. Figure 3 is different: A, B, C and D come together as interdependent forces to cause E through the complex interaction between them.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Many textbooks on community work and community development describe the skills required. See, for example, Batten, T.R. & M., *The Non-Directive Approach in Group and Community Work* (Avec Publication, 1988); Thomas, D.N., *The Making of Community Work* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983); The William Temple Foundation Occasional Paper, *Involvement in Community: A Christian Contribution* (William Temple Foundation, 1980).
2. I owe this information to Walter Eltis's contribution to an article on "The Experts' Expert: Market Forces" in the *Observer Magazine*, 12 March 1989. Ian T. Ramsey, *Models & Mystery* (London: OUP, 1964), says Lord Kelvin said "If I can make a mechanical model, I can understand it" (p. 2).
3. Cf. Koestler, Arthur, *The Act of Creation* (London: Hutchinson, 1964), p. 173. I find his chapter on "Thinking Aside" and particularly the sections on "The Word and The Vision" and "The Snares of Language" most illuminating in relation to the subject-matter of this chapter.
4. I owe this quotation to Koestler, *ibid.*, p. 173.
5. Koestler, *ibid.*, p. 171.
6. I wrote this section before reading David Deek's excellent chapter "Basic Resources: Words" in his book *Pastoral Theology: An Enquiry* (London: Epworth Press, 1987), pp. 9 ff.
7. The phrase "talking work" I owe to Argyle, Michael, *The Social Psychology of Work* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 129 ff.
8. Smail, David, *Illusion and Reality: The Meaning of Anxiety* (London & Melbourne: Dent, 1984), p. 64.
9. For an exposition of experiential education see Dewey, John, *Experience and Education* (London: Macmillan, 1983 reprinted 1968); Hubery, Douglas *The Experiential Approach to Christian Education* (National Sunday School Union, 1960); Goldman, Ronald *Readiness for Religion: A Basis for Developmental Religious Education* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965) *et al.*
10. Cf. Green, Robin, *Only Connect: Worship and Liturgy from the Perspective of Pastoral Care* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1987).
11. An extraordinary article on "Preaching & Counselling" by Dr W. Berger shows how ideally both preaching and counselling can promote an inner dialogue. The article was published in the Dutch *Journal voor Pastorale Psychologie* (Vol. IV No. 2, June 1972). Avec has an English translation.
12. Further information about recording can be obtained from Avec. See also my unpublished PhD thesis *An action research project to test the applicability of the non-directive concept in a church, youth and community centre setting* pp. 80-86, 126ff, 151, 202, 607ff.
13. Koestler, Arthur, *op. cit.* p. 72.
14. I discussed models and modelling in *Diagrammatic Modelling: An Aid to Theological Reflection in Church and Community Work* (The William Temple Foundation Occasional Paper Number 4, 1980). See pp. 15 ff in particular.
15. Cf. Ramsey, Ian, *Models and Mystery* (The Whidden Lecture for 1963) (Oxford: OUP, 1964), p. 14, 15: cf. pp. 5, 13, 48, 53.
16. Morgan, Gareth, *Images of Organization* (Sage Publications, 1986), p. 337.
17. Dr Han-Ruedi Weber gives an extremely helpful description of the respective functions of the left or right hemispheres of the brain in an article entitled "Thinking in Images". I am drawing upon a summary of the article by Margaret Dewey in the series *Thinking Mission*, No. 39, (Summer 1983), issued by The United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 15 Tufton Street, London SW1 3QR. The article first appeared in the July 1982 *Ecumenical*

Review under the title "Interpreting Biblical Images". For further discussion of this phenomena see: *The Intelligent Eye* by R.L. Gregory (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979); *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain: How to unlock your hidden artistic talent* by Betty Edwards (London: Fontana/Collins, 1979); *The Right Brain: A new understanding of the unconscious mind and its creative powers* by Thomas R. Blakeslee (London: Macmillan Press, 1980); *Writing the Natural Way* by Gabriele Lusser Rico (Los Angeles: J.P. Tarcher, 1983).

18. There are some interesting ideas about "visual access cues" by Bandler, Richard & Grinder, John in *Frogs Into Princes: Neuro Linguistic Programme*, edited by Steve Andreas (formerly John O. Stevens) (NLP, 1979), pp. 25-27.

19. I am drawing upon three unpublished articles by Karl Tomm: *Interventive Interviewing: Part I. Strategizing as a fourth guideline for the therapist; Interventive Interviewing: Part II. Reflexive questioning as a means to enable self healing; Interventive Interviewing: Part III. Intending to ask lineal, circular, strategic and reflexive questions*, but chiefly upon Part III.

20. There is an exposition of "circularity" in *Family Process*, Vol. 19 Number 1, (March 1980) "Hypothesizing—Circularity—Neutrality: Three Guidelines for the Conductor of the Session", by Mara Palazzoli, M.D., Luigi Boscolo, M.D., Gianfranco Cecchin, M.D., and Giuliana Prata, M.D.

21. Karl Tomm, *op. cit.* Part III, p. 8.

22. MacKay, Ian, *A Guide to Asking Questions* (British Association for Commercial & Industrial Education, 16 Park Crescent, London W1N 4AP).

23. There are some interesting illustrations of the use of questions and discussions about them in Day, Robin *Grand Inquisitor: Memoirs by Sir Robin Day* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989): see particularly pp. 45 ff, 50 ff, 56 ff, 106 ff, 114 ff, 173 ff, 180 ff, 198 f, 238, 244 ff, 248 ff.

24. I am told that, strictly speaking, hypotheses can be disproved but not proved.

25. The development and use of systemic hypotheses is well illustrated in *Family Process*, Vol. 19 Number 1 (March 1980), in an article entitled "Hypothesizing—Circularity—Neutrality: Three Guidelines for the Conductor of the Session", by Mara Selvini Palazzoli, Luigi Boscolo, Gianfranco Cecchin and Giuliana Prata, p. 5; an article by Mara Selvini Palazzoli and others already quoted; and in *The Hidden Games of Organizations* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), by Mara Selvini Palazzoli and Luigi Anolli, Paola di Blasio, Lucia Giossi, Innocenzo Pisano, Carolo Ricci, Marica Sacchi and Valeria Ugazio. This book contains some very interesting case studies. For the background to the development of these ideas by the "Milan Group" see: *Weekend Observer*, 27 March 1988, for an article on Mara Palazzoli entitled "Family Circles", p. 35 ff; *Journal of Family Therapy* 5:165-177 (1983), "The Emergence of a Comprehensive Systems Approach" by Mara Selvini Palazzoli; *Journal of Family Therapy* 6:299-307 (1984), "Behind the Scenes of the Organization: some guidelines for the expert in human relations", also by Palazzoli.

26. Friedman, Edwin H., *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York & London: The Guilford Press, 1985), p. 15 ff.

27. Stamp, Gillian, *Is Your Deanery Really Necessary?* (A Brunel Institute of Organisational and Social Studies, BIOS, Paper, 1986): cf. also *Crucible* (October-December 1985) an article by Professor Stamp entitled "Does the Deanery Make a Difference?"