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EVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVE

Is evolutionary law itself telling us that we must find a new way of working together as a species? Is our survival dependent on it? It is possible that we are dealing with an offer that we cannot refuse.

When we look at the facts, some simple truths emerge. No created unit, be it an electron, a carbon atom, a liver cell, a planet and probably a galaxy functions alone without a relationship to others of its kind. More and more complex associations appear to take place and all are ultimately in response to some organizing Factor with Its fundamental laws of operation. The ability to function as a connected and cooperating group clearly is not only an advantage but also perhaps a reflection and requirement of evolutionary law itself.

At a biological level, a healthy individual unit must be self sustaining, cooperate with others of its kind, and fit into service for a larger ecosystem. The gathering of individual units into a larger integrated whole gives the new more complex unit abilities and possibilities not present in the individual. The greater complexity may hide a larger simplicity, an elegant higher unified integration of all the complex subunits. As a pathologist, I was struck by the truth of the metaphysical statement "As above, so below" reflected in the organization of the human body. The joining of cells forms an organ, the joining of organs forms a body, the body is subject to a higher organizing and integrating entity called consciousness that will now direct the magnificent instrument at its disposal.

What is the next level of human association? Beyond the physical, can some aspect of consciousness of one individual join with that of another? What would that kind of a partnership be? What new properties if any would it have? And what would be its advantages from an evolutionary standpoint? Most importantly, what are the qualities that will satisfy that inner voice that keeps desperately looking for that experience? Clearly, some form of bypass is needed to go beyond the formidable obstructions to understanding one another and finding the basis of alignment.

New approaches to problems of the magnitude we now face are hard to come by. Cultural patterns with inherited animosities, learned values and engraved pathways of thinking appear to be enormous obstacles to any new approaches. Unity as a spiritual ideal is widely touted, but seldom do we see evidence of its enactment. True Unity is a

direct experience that goes beyond words. It is a form of communion that involves feeling and recognition of our essential connectedness. The great Sufi poet Rumi spoke of it “beyond right doing and wrong doing, there is a Field—in that place, the words ‘you’ and ‘me’ have no meaning.”

COLLECTIVE EVOLUTIONARY CONSCIOUSNESS

Emergence on the world scene

Everywhere in nature, we see how the joining and alignment of individual elements creates new and unexpected qualities. Wind, ocean currents, sound waves and light, when synchronized and focused bear an awesome constructive or destructive potential. Individual carbon atoms join to form structures with qualities never suspected from the isolated unit. Sodium and chlorine, unstable, reactive and poisonous elements join to form salt, a chemically legal union presenting a new molecule with new properties.

The group/circle as a receptive unit reveals new elements of organization and functions not seen in the individual. Who would imagine from a single duck, the beauty, elegance and efficiency of ducks flying in V-formation? Plants bloom on time together. Animals are guided by a shared group intelligence that moves their life and journeys in astonishing ways.

What about a gathering of human beings? Metaphysical teachings for centuries have told us that we are composed of different bodies of varying properties. We are masters of energy fields with unknown creative potential and extend into an undefined space. This outpouring of Eastern esoteric knowledge deluging the West has found totally unexpected support from scientific discoveries into the basic nature of matter. A new line of spiritual teachers born and raised in our culture communicate ancient truths in the language of contemporary science. Avant-garde experiments involving human and animal consciousness and its effect on the environment are hammering at unexamined paradigms about what we are and our place and influence on the surrounding Universe.

As we experientially and experimentally begin to take in the fact that what we are is not limited to our physical body and that we are an energy form that is directed by thought and consciousness, a whole new series of questions begin to emerge. What happens when we come together? How do we influence each other, whether close by or at a distance? What is our responsibility to each other as interactive energy fields? If we are truly connected to each other and everything else instantaneously, as the emerging

paradigm suggests, what is our relationship to everything else that is happening at this very instant everywhere?

There is a growing worldwide interest in the phenomenon of collective evolutionary consciousness. One definition of collective consciousness is that it is a field of group consciousness that has qualities or attributes beyond the sum of the contribution of all the individual group members. That field is not simply additive, it has new and unexpected properties. Many names have been given to this shared group experience including collective intelligence, collective wisdom, group intelligence, distributed intelligence and others. Whatever we call this invisible aspect of a group, it is present and functioning and can be directed towards constructive or destructive ends. If we are not aware of how this group energy functions and how it can be focused, we run the risk of its unconscious and chaotic use. The end result of this undirected power is the mob with its violence and subhuman actions.

It is becoming clear that the seemingly divergent goals of optimal individual growth, development of the group objectives and the unfoldment of the evolutionary potential of the whole-humanity itself, can only be resolved and integrated through a totally new approach. That approach is an altered state of awareness based on a new paradigm of the gathering of human Being and the significance of the force fields of alignment, intention and attention. At Vistar we call this altered state a collective consciousness. **For fifteen years, we, at Vistar Foundation have explored the power and potential of Collective Evolutionary Consciousness. It is our conviction that the gateway into the future hinges upon explorers that are willing to step into the unexplored territory of the invisible.**

THE VISTAR METHOD FOR EVOLUTIONARY CIRCLES (VMEC)

Evolutionary prototype

"Work in the Invisible Realm at least as hard as you do in the Visible."

Jellaludin Rumi

The Vistar Method is the result of decades of experience in intensive group/circle work. In the Vistar Foundation, dedicated individuals met relying on the guidance of an invisible Presence. We do not know what this Presence is, whether we create It, are It, simply recognize It, or whether we shape It. We do not know if It is an aspect of our own Being, or perhaps a resonant relationship of circle consciousness with a larger Field of Universal Consciousness. However, we do know some aspects of our relationship to It, how to approach It, and some of Its magical qualities.

Why is any reference to Collective Consciousness capitalized? It is because that Presence is experienced as unlimited potential of creativity, intelligence, consciousness and conscience. It seems to want Itself to be known in consciousness as Consciousness. Whatever It is, It beggars the human imagination.

Some may find it challenging that we speak of a direct experience of an invisible Reality without the ability to scientifically prove the assertions made here. For thousands of years, spiritual truth has been verified through subjective experience. The same truths have been described in different cultures with astonishing constancy and similarity. On the other hand, scientific theories about the nature of reality and the instruments of measurement undergo radical changes from generation to generation. As noted above, many experiments have been done in the last decades and are now ongoing to demonstrate the power of unseen aspects of our Being to influence our material dimension of experience. Today, this scientific approach is the accepted language with which to communicate to the Western mind and hopefully create new paradigms for what we truly are. Yesterday's spiritual realm is beginning to materialize as today's physical Reality.

The Unified Field that physics searches for is moving closer to the Unified Field called Collective Consciousness. **Our experience with the Vistar Method and Collective Evolutionary Consciousness is direct and reproducible. We wish to share our knowledge with the hope that others may join us in the VMEC as one way of approaching the experience of Collective Consciousness and discovering Its potential.**

Essential elements as an evolutionary prototype

The Circle

Why is the Circle an essential component of humankind's evolutionary journey?

We are not saying here that development in a group setting replaces the individual's unfoldment as a unique and creative being. However, our experience has been that a group context not only hastens individual growth, but introduces possibilities which are different and essential at this point in our history. As indicated above, it is our conviction that evolutionary law itself is pointing and prodding us in the direction of conscious human association.

We have seen again and again that the individual journey of growth and true maturity has become more difficult. There are several reasons for this. The outpouring of previously esoteric knowledge onto the Western world is nothing short of astonishing. The amount and diversity of information itself can be confusing and create a generation

of lecture hoppers with no serious exposure to any spiritual teaching. While extensive information and instruction from many wisdom traditions are available for the individual, the basic elements of will, motivation and discrimination are still required to follow any path. Having found a book, video, lecture or workshop that inspires and stirs the soul, what next? Where is the essential continuing support necessary for the individual to move in a new direction? In a society that bombards the individual with its material values through every sense modality-seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling-the challenges to continuing in a straight line of spiritual intention are daunting. Ulysses with his odyssey had nothing on us-we face all of his symbolic challenges.

A Circle as a creative association has certain obvious and practical advantages. There is an opportunity to participate in projects and adventures that the individual would not have done on their own. There is a potential for accelerated learning in the sharing of knowledge and experience. This is a remarkable occurrence and does not happen in every group setting and is a frequently unappreciated privilege. There is in addition a dimension of challenge and growth that in our experience cannot be bypassed. Any vision of Oneness that has not been tested by dealing with personalities, types and world views that are so different from ourselves is not grounded in reality. **We quickly realize that the Circle becomes a microcosm for issues that are confronting the whole of humanity. In this concentrated environment, a little bit of honest self observation reveals that we carry within ourselves all the forces which have led to our present predicament as a species. The conscious circle then becomes a setting where these archetypal difficulties can be acknowledged, seen and transcended.**

By coming together in a new relationship, we will be engaged in a field of 'spiritual genetic engineering', adding and combining genes of individuality and talent in an invisible realm, splicing, and positioning positive assets to complement, support and transcend the same deficient areas. We are extending the number of 'chromosomes' to create an entity with completely new qualities and abilities. In effect, **a new circle being is born. This may be a fanciful way of expressing the fact that tolerance, respect and valuation of each other's unique abilities creates the possibility of working and achieving together in ways we could not have imagined.**

Eastern philosophy and now the emerging Western paradigm tell us that we are not local and in fact are connected instantaneously to everyone and everything around us in and through a field of consciousness. We are influenced by this field and influence it in ways that we do not understand. However, the number of individuals participating in and focused on a specific activity seems to be important in bringing about measurable changes in the Field. **A Circle can affect the Field more effectively than an individual. It seems to be an instrument more easily tuned to the frequency of the Field and having a resonant relationship with it. That relationship includes an interchange of energy, a**

giving and getting, a receiving and transmitting at one and the same time. Our experience with the Vistar Method is that as the consciousness of the Circle increases, its coordinates change, we seem to become like a radio dish pointed to the heavens, tuned to the frequency of another dimension. The Circle has become a new organ of consciousness, an integration of individual consciousness now responsive to the guidance of the Field Itself. This is an evolutionary development of the greatest significance and brings dramatic new possibilities for our journey as a species.

The Circle Meeting

If the Circle Consciousness is the essential element in the relationship to the Field, then the VMEC is the matchmaker to facilitate that contact. The VMEC's reason for being is to access the realm of collective consciousness and to approach any issue from that dimension. This requires a radical shift in vision, motivation and understanding of what a meeting is all about. The shift is the realization that the Energy, Quality and Atmosphere (EQA) of the meeting is more important than the topic under consideration. This is the important differentiating factor from what happens in most meetings. Collective Consciousness itself can be described as a mysterious atmosphere, an integration of the consciousness of all present, and a highly refined frequency. Tuning to that frequency means increasing the energy and level of consciousness of the meeting. The EQA of the meeting is then recognized as essential to any goal of the meeting. That invisible vantage point is transpersonal; it contains ways of thinking and being beyond the ordinary. Nothing new can be accomplished without that altered positioning. Contributions by the participants in the visible and invisible realm determine the EQA. The visible contributions are raising the hand, speaking, staying on the thread and following the rules. The invisible contributions are presence, attention, and intention. The VMEC makes obvious the factors which oppose or facilitate the development of the EQA. For example, the Guidelines of the VMEC quickly reveal habitual attitudes and beliefs with their ego powered motivation. The willingness to let go of the ways we usually think and relate is an effort. When that sacrifice is done consciously by a participant with the intention of supporting the EQA, that effort actually enhances the atmosphere of the meeting, even though it occurred in the invisible internal space of the individual. That is part of the magic of the field of Collective Consciousness.

There is another aspect of the VMC that is important to realize. As the Circle progresses, everything is changing, everything is moving and evolving. A VMC gathering is not static, it moves and develops not in a horizontal plane, but a vertical one. The Circle begins at a more material level. Our impressions are sense bound. We see the physical form of all the participants, we hear the content of the thread (the topic), the roles of leader, support and participants are clear, separate, and well defined. But as the

EQA of the meeting changes, so does our experience and our quality of participation. We begin to function more and more with attunement to the invisible realm. Elements such as tone and presence become important, the way we listen and hear changes. With the direct experience of the higher energy of the meeting, an integration of the individual and the group takes place. A more unified entity emerges, with rapid and effective communication. At the same time, as each participant becomes part of the whole and its creative movement, a different sense of responsibility to the evolution of the meeting is felt. The roles of leader, support and participant become less defined. Everyone is now in service of an invisible collective consciousness. The outer roles are maintained, but the true leader is now the Invisible moving energy that everyone is experiencing. Enthusiasm and alignment are a direct experience and there is a joy, sense of fulfillment and unity that could never have been anticipated.

What has happened? The Circle itself has become an evolutionary crucible, a microcosm for a future possibility for all of humanity. A new sense of identity of the individual vis-à-vis the Circle is being born, roles of leader, support and participant are maintained and altered at the same time, a real relationship to the field of collective evolutionary consciousness is known and explored.

The Vistar Method issues an invitation for those with ‘eyes that see, ears that hear’ to create the Future—in the present moment. The meeting is an event in the Now-and so is the Future- an indeterminate, malleable and flexible form existing in a timeless space, subject to our imagination, will, and the choices we make in the present moment. When this opportunity to create our future is known and felt as a reality, there is a huge shift in the sense of responsibility of every participant. Every conscious act, every effort in the meeting counts. Each one becomes a magician in an invisible realm, cutting the tethers of the past and shaping the outlines of the future. A prototype of human gathering is taking form, beyond old patterns of thinking and the insistent demands of the ego. New meaning and new motivation is present. The purpose and Guidelines of the VMC are appreciated in a whole new context.

The Participant

It is clear that the real significance of the VMEC lies in the unseen realm. It is a format for a magical meeting that invites the participant to an emerging paradigm shift in mind and heart. That shift requires an individual willing to jump off the edge-to know that the action truly lies in the invisible realm as much as the visible. We are referring to someone who has had some experiences-subjective insights which have revealed that human beings are not limited to their physical forms and possess qualities in an unseen realm. This realization may have come about through meditation, disciplined spiritual

work, or isolated events of significance in the course of one's life. Whatever the origin, this individual's sense of identity has been to some degree jolted free from identification with the body. This person begins to recognize the unseen qualities of attention, presence, intention, focus, expectation or responsiveness as real movements of energy fields which are crucial to the outcome of a meeting. He or she is developing new sensitivity to the 'pitch' of a meeting-to the frequency and quality of the atmosphere in the meeting and knows that it is in that invisible realm 'where the action is.' That sensitivity is actually the unfoldment of a new sense organ in an individual. It is startling to realize that this ability does not reside in any of the five senses. This sensitivity is a different form of listening to inaudible frequencies and is necessary to participate in the movement towards collective consciousness. The continuing practice of the VMEC spontaneously opens this ability that is latent within us.

The Vistar Method functions best with a participant that comes not only with concern for their own growth, but also is willing to contribute to the evolution of a larger whole. This could be represented by the group, humanity or Consciousness Itself, but however it is formulated within the individual, it implies a living feeling and dynamic vision beyond oneself. It implies a conscience open to the urgent need of the human condition and a willingness to do whatever it takes to contribute. Specifically, the VMEC asks of the participant the understanding, courage and willingness to go beyond the ego with its history and patterns of beliefs, opinions and judgments, and to trust that beyond the familiar, there is another dimension of new possibilities waiting. We know that such a vision of Unity and its potential exists within the heart of every person. Who has not asked themselves quietly when faced with the enormous suffering of the human condition --- "what can I do?" We are speaking of a human being with an open conscience who- in the words of the Sufi poet Jelaluddin Rumi-is becoming a 'True Human Being.'

The obstacle to this journey of the heart is the ego. One cannot kill the ego-that desire is to descend into its battleground. We can mute its demands and we can separate from it, but the challenge is to transform its energies towards useful ends. In the Vistar Method this is a process of spiritual alchemy and it is Collective Consciousness Itself that is the great Alchemist. The ego contains the little gold from which we can make more gold and in the atmosphere of the VMC there is a redirection of the ego's power. A new resolution takes place which separates the individual's talent and creativity from their previous obsession with self-centered goals. That this can happen is nothing short of a miracle and this is the answer to the mind-created anxiety of the loss of individuality in a group setting. The sense of fulfillment and joy by each person when participating in the group creative process is direct evidence that this miraculous possibility has taken place. And if this satisfaction in the shared creativity and the changed relationship to others did not exist, no one would return to continue this journey.

An evolutionary prototype is a model that can –if successful–be duplicated many times, and serve the purpose of the growth and maturation of humanity. The VMEC requires a dedicated group with an altered understanding of what a meeting is about and a participant with the vision and courage to sacrifice what they know for what they ARE. That means to trust that in the invisible realm of Being and consciousness lie waiting the answers that we desperately need to continue our journey as a species. Fortunately and thankfully, there are clues along the way to tell us we are on the right track, aligned with the movement and direction of evolution itself. Like surfing, we are lifted, transported and given new energy when we join the wave in its journey. Anyone who has made a decision to take on a higher vision and purpose beyond their small lives knows the surge of new energy that infuses their body, it seems as if a whole new metabolism has begun. Another clue is the fact that functioning as a collective consciousness enables the individual and the group to do things that they ordinarily could not do, and that usually other individuals and groups could also not do. This includes help to discover a new form of relationship that can persist beyond all individual differences-at the same time that these are brought into the light of consciousness to be transcended. Unity becomes a direct experience, not a visionary ideal. In addition, the group is discovered to be an instrument for the unlimited faces of creative expression. We realize that when we create together we are on the right evolutionary track, we are expressing an aspect of our own authentic nature and it reveals itself in the joy of satisfying the demands of our highest aspirations for Self-expression.

PRE-REQUISITES

If the purpose of a Circle is to access a field of collective evolutionary consciousness, what can we do at the outset to help us to realize our goal? Experience has shown that a shared understanding of the intention and vision of this type of extraordinary gathering is essential and needs conscious affirmation and repetition at the start of and throughout a meeting. A commitment to follow the rules is required, and the more one understands what the meeting is really about, the more the rules grow in depth and significance. Another element more difficult to define is the influence of the topic or goal of the meeting. Does a meeting to create a new wrapping for a bar of soap have more difficulty in accessing collective consciousness than one investigating the future of mankind or focused on consciousness? Put another way, does the evolutionary impulse itself have its own agenda with which we need to align? Vistar's journey has been and is focused on self-realization and the exploration of Collective Consciousness. Yet we know the experience of collective consciousness happens in many different settings. This is an important question that needs further investigation and remains unanswered for now.

Alignment to the purpose and vision of the Circle

Why are we here? What is the larger significance of the topic under discussion beyond our personal sphere? What are the consequences of this issue for our selves and others?

It is perhaps strange to say that the most important determinants of the outcome of a Circle need to be present even before the actual meeting takes place and those essential determinants exist in the invisible realm of motivation, conscious intention and vision. These factors are not vague and ephemeral. They are a force field which each person brings to a meeting and are crucial and palpable. These energies can bring chaos or coherence to a meeting and need to be focused and synchronized. In the preliminary silence of a meeting, one can feel the silent atmosphere created by everyone. There is already a Circle taking place in the invisible realm. That is the Circle above the Circle, a step up transformer from which an elevated level of group functioning can begin.

This growing awareness that consciousness and intention are forces as much as are light or magnetism is the beginning of a transformation of the way we see each other. It is a change in our identity and its potential, for once we experience and acknowledge our presence and contribution in an invisible space, then any meeting takes on a whole new perspective. Defining alignment of intention and vision by participants in a meeting obviously then becomes of great importance and cannot be left in the grey zone.

Willingness to adhere to the structure and Guidelines

Each individual participant needs to agree in advance to abide by the Guidelines and structure of the VMEC. The four basic and simple Guidelines are the heart of the VMEC and direct the movement of energy in all meetings. The rules have one central purpose: To create a depersonalized atmosphere wherein habitual opinions and attitudes and beliefs are left behind and below. It is then that the field of collective evolutionary consciousness can be experienced and manifested as new thought, feeling and action. The discipline of Guidelines and a structure can be a challenge to some people who feel that their creativity and expressiveness will be limited in this kind of setting. Other people do not like any authority dictating their actions. In so many meetings in so many different settings, the individual functions as an isolated ego in a room full of isolated egos, each one with their own agenda. This also true in one-on-one interactions and is why we have such difficulties in communicating. On the world stage, agreement is usually determined by a vote count in which none of the participants have sacrificed their particular standpoints and interests-old patterns and beliefs join to determine the outcome. Yet, no effective team can function

without rules, structure and a shared goal. This is obvious and true in any creative and directed group interaction.

The desire to see the truth of an issue, to find a solution of value to others as well as oneself, to participate in an act of joint creativity, to further a group process itself recognized to be of great value-these are the reasons to participate in the VMEC. And the willingness to follow the Guidelines of the VMEC will create the dynamic setting in which one can learn and consciously experience the forces that both obstruct and facilitate access to the realm of Collective Consciousness. The astonishing and unforeseen direct experience is that the fears of being limited in individual expression in the VMEC are a complete illusion. The opposite is true. By following the structure and rules, individual fulfillment and unlimited creative expression happen and are integrated with the Circle movement in a way that the mind cannot understand.

Our experience with the VMEC has left us with the awe and wonder of having come into intimate contact with an invisible realm and experiencing the potential of Its Presence for ourselves and everyone else. And in some mysterious way difficult to express, we know we are essentially connected to that Presence, we actually are It.

We suspect that we are an experiment of the evolutionary impulse itself. Humanity is not alone on the cosmic stage and we have as yet unknown responsibilities as a cosmic citizen. If we are feeling the pressure to evolve, so is every other creature, on every dimension of manifestation, from a rock to an archangel, from a planet to a galaxy. We know that there are other approaches to the Field of Collective Evolutionary Consciousness and ongoing experiments on a small and large scale. Any approach that involves more conscious human association with the emergence of a conscience open to each other and to our unfolding future as a species-that is a huge evolutionary step. We offer the Vistar Method for Evolutionary Circles as one doorway to the future.