

# PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

by Patricia Shaw

The work that I love is usually called Organisation Development consulting, which for me means working with the processes of change in organisational settings as they affect the working lives of individuals, working groups and the organisation as a whole. I discovered **metanoia** seven years ago in my search for development that would equip me personally and professionally for that work. Although at that time the institute was not explicitly offering training in organisation consulting (as it now does), I soon found that my most profound insights and increasing sense of competence in my chosen field came from my involvement there. More than that, I have come to be engrossed in **metanoia**'s growth and development as an organisation itself, one that gave me a radically different model for organising than those in operation in the companies of my clients. I will mention just a few of the characteristics that I believe make **metanoia** an experiment in organising which many organisations of the future can learn from.

I remember the training workshop in which someone first spoke the phrase 'This is a culture of individual wants within the whole'. The speaker was capturing one of the crucial ways in which the founders of **metanoia** understand the issues of individual motivation and organisational productivity. No one has roles at **metanoia**, people choose tasks. The basis for choice is the capacity to contribute effectively, the desire to learn and their pleasure in the work, accepting there are always some difficult or less attractive parts to most tasks. Loyalty, gratitude, a wish to help others, a desire for advancement (although acknowledged), are not here deemed a sound enough basis for undertaking particular areas of work.

Another characteristic which sometimes people find very challenging in the initial stages is the endless 'betweenness' of **metanoia**. More than any organisation I have ever known, it is an organisation in flux. Most of my clients are struggling with how to lead and manage change in an ever more turbulent world. All still tend to focus on what they are changing from and what they are changing to, and view the transition between the two states as a difficult time to be managed and lived through, a distressing chaos to be minimised as much as possible. Guided by the fireworks of Petruska's vision, **metanoia** lives with transition as its ongoing state. The form of **metanoia** is forever emergent. If there is a common textbook, it is the *I Ching - The Book of Changes*.

Communication is another crucial factor in many of the organisations of the 1990s as they struggle to deal with interdependencies on a global scale. Although modern telecommunications and computer technology are providing us with the possibilities of amazingly rapid information exchange, the art of real communication remains little understood. **metanoia** is already an example of a loosely-coupled organic network, a kind of crystal, an organisational form at the far end of the conti-

num of organisational structures (with rigid bureaucracy at the other end). Communication occurs by a process akin to a kind of Brownian motion. Hanging about at **metanoia**, or with people involved with it at any other location, is the main way by which people learn what's going on. Most organisations know that their informal communications systems are faster than their formal ones, but most continue to rely on the latter for all important messages. **metanoia** uses the informal one. Everyone knows this and consciously contributes and listens to the network, not as a subversive, underground system but as the source of vital information. Also, because **metanoia** understands itself in holographic terms, where information about the whole is enfolded in all the parts, the information that is exchanged is not pieces of unrelated, functionally-specific data, but is information about the whole. One of the things that people learn to use fully at **metanoia** is our natural human capacity to create such meaningful wholes. This is what is really being communicated between members of the **metanoia** organisation.

These are some of the aspects of **metanoia** that inspire me with a living practical example of the emerging paradigm which some organisational theorists in my field are beginning to write about, and which so many managers, leaders and workers in organisations are intuitively grappling towards.



From left to right: Sue Fish, Founding Director; Patricia Shaw, Director in Organisations International; Maria Gilbert, Director of Clinical Training; Katherine Murphy, Director of Counselling Course; Phil Lapworth, Director of Clinical Services