

The DNA of The Human Element

The Path from Technician to Artistry to Mastery

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**The Human
Element
Community
is a school of
Aliveness.**

There are two main strands of thought and experience that went into the making of The Human Element. Within each of these two strands there are micro-strands.

The first strand of The Human Element consists of the social science research that Will Schutz conducted during his years as a PhD. student and later as a university professor. His dream to develop a unified theory of human personality began with his research on teamwork in the U.S. Navy during the Korean War (1952-1953). He continued to develop his FIRO (Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation) theory into the late 1990s.

The second strand of The Human Element has to do with the phenomenological research and experimentation that Will did during his years as a leader in the Human Potential movement.

The Human Element is a result of an artful weaving of these two strands.

Strand one consists of FIRO theory and the psychometric instruments that came from the theory, Elements B, F, S as well as the non-psychometric instruments, including Elements W, P, C, O, J and E.

Strand two consists of exercises Will and other people developed from Encounter, T-Groups and other methods, including psychodrama (Moreno), traditional Psychoanalysis, as well as many body methods. Some of these methods are directly part of The Human Element, such as the Arm Turn activity in the Choice module. Others are embedded in the work in its style and focus. It goes without saying (but should not) that, the sub-strand of Freudian theory pervades the intellectual and philosophical basis of The Human Element throughout.

Will started out as a scientist and was an avid researcher. Then later, as he abandoned "scientific impartiality," he became directly involved in his and others' experiments in human development and human relations in order to have a direct experience of the changes in consciousness that these methods provided. It is common knowledge today through research findings in quantum physics that there is no such thing as true scientific impartiality. Will spoke of this phenomenon early in his career. He was discovering the same truth as was being discovered by theoretical physicists: the experimenter or observer always affects the outcome or results of his or her research. This discovery had a big influence on his battle against self-deception in all aspects of life from research to interpersonal and intrapersonal relations.

The techniques of Encounter and the technologies from the fields of psychology developed in the 1960s and 70s, such as dance and art therapy to mention only a couple, as well as more ancient disciplines such as martial arts, meditation and spiritual methods, can also be seen in the underpinnings of The Human Element. These methods have all evolved over many years as people have used and elaborated them in their many applications to human development.

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Some of the most powerful of these methods that Will studied were the body methods. These methods include the theories and practice of the work of Wilhelm Reich, a student of Sigmund Freud's, whose work expanded Freudian theory with his discovery of the embodiment of character structure. After Reich came the neo-Reichians such as Alexander Lowen (bioenergetics), and John Pierrakos (core energetics), both students of Reich. Much of body oriented psychotherapy in the West today has been influenced by Reich. These body methods also include the work of Ida Rolf (Structural Integration or Rolfing), and Moshe Feldenkrais (Functional Integration). An interesting side note to the Feldenkrais story is that Will traveled to Tel Aviv in order to invite Feldenkrais to the United States to teach. This greatly helped spread Feldenkrais's work worldwide.

Will was also influenced by various sports psychologists and pioneers in the Human Potential movement such as George Leonard and Michael Murphy. They were holists like Will, and their work defies simple categorization like his. Using martial arts, meditation and sports they developed work now called Integral Practice. It was developed at the same time as Will's work when they were all together, pioneering their methods at the Esalen Institute on the Big Sur Coast in California.

The work from strand two is what gives The Human Element its powerful emotional impact for most people. Usually these techniques, more than the FIRO theory and psychometrics, take people beyond their often static mental view of themselves and their view of what is possible in their relationships, into the unknown territory of the body, mind, emotions, and spirit. This allows them, in a modern version of shamanic soul retrieval, to return to their lives with a greater knowledge of who they are and a profound renewed interest and wonder about their lives and the world. All of this work takes place in a powerful group experience where the artfully constructed techniques for giving and receiving feedback turbo charge the integration and impact of the learning. Thus the theory, the instrumentation, the group experience and the methods from the Human Potential movement woven artfully together produce a workshop of profound depth, breadth and elegance.

If you are new to Human Element work, you perhaps might not be aware of how it was made. I think that this history is important to know in order to appreciate the synergy of all of its facets. It is also useful to know this information and reflect on it personally to be able to assess your own strengths and weaknesses as a facilitator of the work. If you understand these methods, and if you have applied them to your own learning about yourself and your relationships and your work, you will be well on your way to being able to grow different embryos from this "DNA" to suit your own creative needs whatever they may be. This could be inventing an exercise on the spot to help a client understand something experientially, or it could be a powerful personal insight that comes from understanding the principles as they apply to your own life situation.

Will was proud of his creation and wanted it to be a living body of work. He often said that he wanted people to learn the theme (the text of the leader's manual) before they experimented with the variations. He was a tinkerer. The Human Element had hundreds, maybe over a thousand, revisions. Every plane ride on the way home from a workshop was an exercise in how to do it better the next time.

The point that I want to make is that The Human Element has a very complex yet simple *continued*



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DNA. It is beautiful; it is deep. To continue to comprehend its depth and breadth and its power as a transformational tool for individual and team growth it is important to immerse yourself in both of its strands, but especially the strand of the experiential. To be an Artist and Master of this work, the quickest way is to deeply explore your own internal universe and to take risks in your interactions with others using the ideas of The Human Element so that you can really try them and discover how they work for you. When you do this practice it will net you a few bruises but it will give you great gifts of self-trust, spontaneity, intuition, courage, wisdom and a fool's sense of humor to keep your head from getting too big. It will also give you a community of friends that few people on the planet get to experience, a community where you can be in all of your shadows of despair and shame one minute and then at the next moment shining in all of your magnificence. This is a rarified atmosphere that reduces the ego to its sweetest essence of humility as it hones the spirit to soar with the pure liberation of living with grace, the ordinary to the extraordinary. It is a school of aliveness.

Encounter is not the only way to do this. There are many workshops and other group experiences that can provide you mirrors and means on your path to self-development.

I hope the spirit moves you to come to an Encounter group to taste the thrill of being in the moment, to explore your truth in a group, to take emotional risks, including risking the possibility of feeling the all-too-familiar fears of being humiliated, ignored and rejected in order to find out what you are really made of and who you really are. 

