

ENERGY AND CHARACTER

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Edited by David Boadella

The discovery of inner and outer unity, the title of the leading paper in the current issue, is what it's all about. The various therapies are attempts to make regrowth possible. This journal is concerned to promote an approach to life and to people which does not get trapped in over-specialism, or in the strait jacket of any particular system. Although grounded in the work of Wilhelm Reich, and closely associated with 'bio-energetics' as developed by Alexander Lowen, **Energy and Character** does not follow any one school. Just as no living person can ever be reduced to a convenient text-book character-type, no school of therapy has a monopoly of truth, rather I believe that some of the most exciting work goes on when there is creative interchange between the more dynamic approaches.

Because neurosis is a mind-body problem it needs to be worked on both in terms of energetic release methods, and in terms of person to person encounter. Blocked energy has to be freed, and freed energy has also to be contained. Which are the most basic traumas? For Lake and Janov, the birth trauma is of dominant importance. For Lowen, the trauma of betrayal of trust, resulting in the loss of faith in the deep wisdom of one's own body, is as critical; and this is related to what Grossman calls 'the trauma of logic'. How far does a therapist pressurise a patient towards pre-determined goals, and how far is his task to help the person he works with to evolve towards a new kind of being in touch with himself and the world, towards achieving real identity as a person? These are some of the issues implicit or explicit in many of the papers in this journal.

When Janov spoke in London on 'Why there is only one cure for neurosis', he both excited people with his insights and angered them with his arrogance. But Janov is not the only one to have strong possessive feelings about who is 'authorised' to practise intensive therapy. Reich's fear that his therapy would get into the wrong hands led to a tight monopolistic control of those he licensed to practise, and after his death even this small group divided into two, each half denying the validity of the work of the other. How can psychiatrists have a monopoly on methods of emotional help, when as a professional group they have the highest suicide rate in the community? What qualifies one person to help another? **Time Out** published a feature on Janov called 'We've got the answer' - as though the answer lies in the cleverness of a particular technique.

Sexual repression is the trauma which both Freud and Reich focussed on particularly though this is not the only way in which parents can deny a child its identity. The liberal illusion that in pornography 'we have the answer' to repression is a deep way of preserving the splitting and confirming the false identities that contactless upbringings produce. The answer to pornography is not to be found in the censorship that the moralists call for, but in the therapeutic pathways which people can explore in helping each other to make true contact with their real feelings. A.S.Neill's paper also explores some of the distinctions between natural sexuality and its caricatures.

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Hans Lobstein

THE CALIFORNIAN SCENE

La Jolla, where Carl Rogers has his 'Centre for Studies of the Person' is a sunny, elegant, tropical, wealthy suburb of San Diego in Southern California - in sharp contrast to the cold, misty, rough wilderness of Big Sur in the north where Esalen has its rocky perch. There is an equal contrast between the smiling welcoming young man who runs the La Jolla Centre, and the surly, suspicious young woman who purposefully barred the entrance at Esalen. This is what publicity can do to you. Or is it? Perhaps this needs more serious consideration than in these random notes.

I had just spent a week at the University of Purdue in Indiana where there is a Ph.D. course in group work, and I was saddened by what I saw. It seemed to me that most of their studies were theoretical, writing long dissertations and producing the sort of material they assumed their professor expected of them. When they met in groups they gave me the distinct impression of being on their guard against each other, giving away as little as possible, making a good show, being clever. One woman had a problem with her husband who was also in the group and she brought this up and wanted to work on it. She started to attack her husband. He walked out. Other members of the group showed their disapproval of her attitude, and left her with that, going on to something else without further attention to her. In fact they carried this over into their feelings for her for the rest of the week and by Saturday she was weeping bitterly (Saturday evening when she talked to me privately, not at the group) that they were all giving her the cold shoulder because she had shown something of herself - or at least that was her view of it.

I discussed this with Carl Rogers and he confirmed that many psychology students treated the subject as something to be looked at and written about rather than experienced. Many of the professors who were brought up in the academic field are unhappy and suspicious about anything too personal. It reminded me very much of our own adult education departments who teach involvement learning methods - so long as the involvement doesn't go too far.