

Ideally nursery schools should be set up to provide children with enriching experiences every day of their lives. The relaxed atmosphere that allows for self-discovery in manipulative skills, gross motor activities, rhythmic music and art expression, can only add to the child's self-awareness. If he has success in his undertakings he will develop a willingness to try, a lack so evident in the child already exposed to criticism at an early age.

Children who are encouraged to help with all kinds of tasks gain self-confidence and a clearer understanding of their environment. Adults need to learn to be less organized and more willing to have children help prepare activities. Both in the home and the nursery school, encouragement to help with tasks adds to the child's feeling of self-worth. Only when we relax our rigid standards do we participate in the fulfillment of accomplishment we witness when a child achieves.

The Cecilia Smith Remedial Nursery School has been set up in Toronto with a staff of five teachers, a psychiatrist and a social worker. In addition there are always two or three volunteers per day, either students or interested citizens.

Jerome Liss

'Why are you shaking so?'

'It's my convulsive emotion'.

What is the nature of emotional discharge? In a sense I feel reluctant to comment on this point because of the danger that people might pick up one or two points and use them accusingly toward themselves and others. For example, 'That isn't a real emotional discharge. It didn't have such and such a quality'. The final criterion to my mind of whether there is emotional discharge is if a person simply reports, 'I felt emotional release through the experience'. Emotional discharge can occur in utter silence, or with lots of banging, screaming and gesticulating. However, I would like to raise one aspect of the nature of emotional discharge which disclosed itself to Wilhelm Reich and other body therapists since. Namely, that a central ingredient in deep, organic emotional discharge is some form of convulsion.

I will start off with my own experiences. Several years ago I began to undergo body-oriented psycho-therapy and to use body-oriented methods.

The epileptic convulsion and the emotional convulsion

The convulsive discharge pattern of emotions shows some resemblance to epileptic seizures, but there are important differences. The main similarity is in the picture of the body's convulsive movements. The brain centres which organise the involuntary movements are probably quite similar or inter-connected. Also, in epilepsy and emotional discharge the seizure pattern is triggered off by some degree of tension build-up, and results in tension release. However, the epileptic seizure is usually total, while emotional convulsion discharges can be of all grades of intensity from just a bit of trembling to full, to and fro, convulsive shaking. Also, an emotional convulsive discharge might involve a single body area such as the fingertips, jaw or abdomen, or could spread in varying degrees through the body until there is a final body take-over.

Before an epileptic seizure a person will often experience an 'aura' in which there may be visual changes and an altered state of consciousness. Sometimes the aura might include a blissful feeling which is so intense that it is taken to mean a transcendental religious experience and coming into contact with God. Dostoyevski himself was epileptic and his principal character in *'The Idiot'*, Prince Myshkin, underwent mystical and other strange states of consciousness before undergoing an epileptic attack. During the epileptic seizure itself the person is not conscious, and subsequent to the seizure is not able to remember what happened while he was in the throes of his convulsion. Also after the seizure, the epileptic is likely to be fatigued, weary and needing a great deal of rest.

When a person undergoes an emotional convulsive discharge, he is fully conscious during the discharge and can remember what happened afterwards. During the discharge there is some degree of altered states of consciousness; the greater the discharge, the more intense is the altered experience. The experience will vary greatly, depending very much on the person's attitude towards undergoing it. If the person feels trust in the experience, and in those who are helping him go through it, he will often feel some degree of pleasure and bliss, perhaps comparable to the epileptic in his 'aura' before the seizure. Also, although a person may seem out of control during an emotional discharge, this is actually a voluntary choice. In other words, it is the trust and support of those around him which allows a person to have such intense relief. A person can intentionally stop the convulsive movements and the attendant discharge of feeling at any moment and he might choose to do so for any reason, such as if he felt he was losing the support and compassion of the people with him.

After the discharge, the person might feel immediately refreshed and invigorated or, if he were physically depleted before the experience or underwent a long and very intense discharge, he could feel extremely fatigued, wiped out and needing rest. If rest is needed and fully obtained, then the feeling of renewal and a relaxed fresh energy will usually be felt upon waking up.

I don't want anybody to see me convulse, it's too private.

I believe it is noteworthy that I had never seen a convulsive emotional discharge before it happened in my own therapy and in my therapeutic work with others. In other words,

this very natural and profound mode of deep and total emotional release is rarely seen today. Why is that? A person undergoing deep emotional discharge with some form of convulsive movements, even if it is just shaking of the jaw, a panting breath or sporadic vocal moaning, is extremely vulnerable and aware of what is going on around him as well as within. If the person feels embarrassed or that he may be embarrassing others, and in today's world this is often the case, then he will not have the emotional openness needed to undergo the full emotional release even if he wanted to.

In the film, 'W.R. The Function of the Organism', we saw a number of people in a group setting undergoing various forms of convulsive emotional discharge. Actually it seemed to me that the people were not for the most part undergoing the genuine emotional relief itself but were doing exercises that invoked the emotional discharge body movements. This is a helpful therapeutic method for reclaiming lost ground. People who become more open to permitting convulsive emotional movements through guided therapeutic exercises will be more capable of undergoing the genuine emotional discharge when the provocative occasion arises. The group was conducted by Dr. Alexander Lowen, one of the foremost body therapists in the world and a pioneer in this field. However, because these film sequences were surrounded by other scenes that were mocking, unserious and sarcastic, I experienced these negative moods infecting the scenes of people undergoing convulsive movements. Thus I felt embarrassed and repulsed when viewing these scenes and felt others would also experience them negatively. Shame and repulsion is what our society trains people to feel upon exposure to one's own or other people's somewhat out of control emotional convulsive body movements. The film re-enforces these negative attitudes of today's civilisation and thus does a disservice to a new form of therapy which is trying to nurture the flower of sensitive vulnerability within each person.

Ron Shepherd

A personal look at the Gestalt 'Prayer'

I never had the privilege of meeting Fritz Perls in person, more's the pity, for I could have had a dialogue with him over his so-called 'Prayer' that bugs me so much right now. It comes at me, these days, from all directions - from A.H.P. and from Pelican books - all dressed up in red like a car sticker. (I wonder if that is how I am expected to use it?) It is also directed at me in a more intimate way in that it is frequently dangled before my eyes by persons struggling with problems of 'Identity', 'Meaning' and 'Purpose' in life, or who are otherwise seeking an encounter with me, for reasons best known to themselves, in evocative and

provocative correspondence. In this context the 'Prayer' is often quoted as a sort of ultimate ethos or aim.

Why did Perls regard it as a 'Prayer' I wonder? How can I relate his expression to my own understanding of Prayer as a spiritual centring; affirmation of being; Identification in Silent Joy; or 'the substance of things hoped for'? If Prayer be an experience of deep communion and fulfilment, why then does the 'Gestalt Prayer' jar so much, in its present form, on my sensitive nerve ends? Wherein lies this note of discordance?