

woman more Whole, more Alive, more Real, more of a True Person.

'If not, it can't be helped'. (i.e. if we don't 'find' each other). Can't it? Here is a fallacy for sure. By our very human existence we are related to the wholeness of experience - past, present and future - to each other and to all life. It can be helped - by further inward growth towards Wholeness of Being.

So, as I see it, the Gestalt Prayer is a prophesy in part only - a limited view of relationships that, albeit, takes us up to the point where personal 'I' awareness is

made secure and to a limited extent individuated, but to limit ourselves to this vision of achievement debases the greater fullness of therapeutic or learning experience about ourselves and each other.

Words - words - words. Don't they limit and cause division rather than open up the barriers to communication and understanding? For me then it is not the Gestalt Prayer but rather the Prayer of Silence through which one perceives new life in all, through all and around all - the Grand Synthesis.

Peter Wells

Some Notes on Encounter and Social Change

I'd like to start with a general statement and to see now and later whether it works out. A lot of twentieth century developmental and behavioural practice has been concerned with affective (emotional) factors, hence the dominant position of the psychodynamic model associated with Freud, Klein and others. The field of cognitive development, researched extensively by Jean Piaget, has been relatively neglected outside the field of education. Yet it is at the cognitive level that decisions are taken which determine the shape of social institutions, distribution of resources - the whole business of organising life.

Piaget's discovery was that to think is to act, that by the co-ordination of cortical process and physical process the former acquires its characteristic developmental patterns. (The whole concept anyway of distinguishing inner from outer world rests on awareness of body sensations, knowledge of where my body begins and where it ends - or rather does not end but extends into outer space and continues an enlarged existence there.) There is a link here with the concept that political

thought and political action are inseparable.

What is the relevance of all this to encounter groupwork? First of all, encounter is an experiential process and its techniques stay within 'the thin top layer of the immediate here and now'. It involves both verbal and non-verbal communication. It requires participants to 'stay in touch with their bodies', not to intellectualise but to concentrate on immediate experience. It requires certain methods of taking responsibility - 'I am responsible for myself, for all I do, say and think. You are likewise responsible for yourself. I am not responsible for you nor you for me. But you begin at the point where you perceive and experience what I am and what I am depends on the acknowledgement and experience of my existence by you.' (At some point where I extend my body into outer space by use and manipulation of my environment I come into contact with your extension of yourself into the outer world and of your actual physical body and at that point I experience the possibility of conflict or of union with you: that is the primary experience of social reality.)

The rule of honesty makes it necessary to express feelings and desires freely within the limits to behaviour imposed by the social reality, i.e. the group. The group also exists and what you do and what I do is experienced by the group as a whole; the dyad is contained by the group 'gestalt' or 'consciousness' or 'social system'. (Foulkes talks about a group 'matrix'.) Verbally the rules follow the same pattern - to say 'I', not 'one' or 'you', is to own what I say and experience it. Saying 'one' or more extremely 'you' is an unconscious device to disown a process which if allowed to go a little further ends up in my actually experiencing the other as having feelings which I experience. At the group level the process produces 'scapegoats' and 'victims'. The effort of the conscious mind, following encounter principles, is continuously towards its own body, its own actions and feelings, to allow them to stay within awareness.

One of the effects of encounter methods is that people begin to experience less alienation and that re-ification of others, of objects is diminished. The re-orientation of responsibility towards the existential 'I' revolutionises my perceptions of the world. At the same time, I am more open to life and to some extent more vulnerable. It seems to me that involved here is a primary change which has to occur before competitiveness can be replaced by co-operation. It is necessary to reclaim one's own alienated powers before it is possible to cease to be competitive. 'I am myself, therefore I do not need to outdo you - I have all I possess, perceiving you enriches my experience. I do not want more.' It is equally true that alienation arises from the work situation and the capitalist appropriation of resources - 'surplus value' - therefore I cannot fully take responsibility for myself within a capitalist economic system, whether state or private, because I must be fully responsible for the product of my own

labour. But if I understand that alienation of my powers is a total experience and requires a total commitment then every act taken in full responsibility is a threat to the system of exploitation.

It seems to me that encounter groupwork creates a social structure that respects the identity of people in a way which the present social system does not. As the present system breaks down, stronger and stronger leadership will be demanded, up to the point of military dictatorship where everything is subject to discipline and control. Carl Rogers expressed it more mildly, but had some inkling of the way things might go when he wrote his book *Encounter Groups* in 1970. *'The whole trend (towards encounter groups) might well be repressed by a society which seems increasingly antagonistic to change and definitely does not value the individual freedom of thought and expression, the spontaneity, the changingness, and other personal qualities which emerge from an encounter group. If there is a dictatorial takeover in this country (he means the U.S.A., but it could happen anywhere!) then the whole trend towards the intensive group experience would be one of the first developments to be crushed and obliterated.'*

It hasn't happened yet. It seems worthwhile getting on with the experience. No revolution will succeed unless it is based on a revolution of consciousness.

I hope this article will stimulate quite a few people to look at the I.P.M. It is a very interesting book. I believe it has a genuine and valuable part to play in relation to Encounter Group research. My project was only one such application of the method. No very general statements can be made about Encounter Groups, by way of results though I was able to conclude that considerable changes had occurred in the relationships during the

period in question. I felt there was strong evidence in many instances that changes were due to one of the partners having taken part in an Encounter Group. If a large number of people were to pursue researches into their own Encounter Group experiences using this method, the pooled results might begin to add up to a general statement even if it is only a general statement about a lot of

individuals' experiences and developments.

I would be glad to respond to any questions, queries or suggestions from people reading 'SELF AND SOCIETY'. This statement has had to be very concise. I hope there are not too many gaps in the sense, that need to be filled out.

THE CONSULTANT'S ROLE

What is the consultant's role in the Grubb/Tavistock study groups?

At the most superficial level his identity is a semantic problem - special member? observer? leader? conductor? guide? facilitator? Typically, group members speculate through this range of terms and the consultant sits smiling at everybody's guesses and agreeing with nobody.

I find it helpful to translate the question into Freudian terms. I.e. the consultant appears at set 'feeding' times and there he is - a breast to be looked at, played with, sucked from, accepted, rejected, thought to be good, thought to be bad.

It's a rather more persuasive picture from the anal point of view. Absolute punctuality is usually linked in psychoanalytic literature with anal compulsiveness and there is a sense in which at meeting times the consultant comes in like a mother and all the group are on their little thrones and mother sits down and doesn't say a word but the implied instruction or invitation is: 'O.K. - give'. And the reactions around the group cover the range of possible responses to that invitation.

I acknowledge that the study group technique is ultimately aimed towards genital group activity, genital play activity, constructive group work, the study of the group process as it occurs, an adult interaction within the group and between the group and the facilitator. These are its objectives, but the criticism must be made that the study group atmosphere of enforced, clock dominated feeding and defaecation is far more pregenital than genital. This may be constructive if it is necessary to work through the pregenital fixations, but if on the other hand the technique strengthens these fixations it correspondingly makes genital creative adult activity all the more difficult to attain.

My most serious reservations about the consultant's role in the Grubb/Tavistock study groups is that it tends to perpetuate the Kleinian view of the death instinct which has been dead for at least 20 years except in Grubb/Tavistock circles. These consultants in my experience put a great deal of stress on the need to mourn the death of the group before it occurs and this differs markedly from the technique of facilitators in encounter groups who insist that the work of the group is to live in the present and not to anticipate the future. In encounter groups the group is brought to its end deliberately - it kills itself, with dignity, when the time comes. Group members express