

God and the Group

Bad groups, organisations, arise, in my view, from man's relationship to other men and to nature, and it goes back a long way in history from the idea that God is authority and God will tell us what to do. Then we decided that God was dead, so we had the authority of kings. After a while we got fed up with kings so we pronounced kings to be dead. Every time a king was pronounced dead, someone would jump up and say, 'Long live the king!' or 'Long live God!' and that went on. We demolished the Victorian father figure and people kept saying 'Long live father!' and eventually it got round to organisations. People started getting concerned about the role, and saying it's terrible to get trapped in a role, a view with which I entirely agree, but at the same time we are constantly erecting new roles for ourselves and we do things like we do away with the authority leader role and replace it with the loving smothering group leader role, or the compliant group member role. They are just as much roles for many people as the ones they are supposed to be throwing off. In the same way we say that bureaucracy is dead and organisation is dead, and we either ignore the existing one or even destroy it in some cases, and immediately replace it with another one which seems to me in many instances to be just as totalitarian. So what you do in fact is create a new conformity. I know that's hardly a new argument either but as one spends time in groups one sees perhaps 10 per cent who are developing a

pluralistic way of working and perhaps ninety per cent which are monolithic, totalitarian and highly conforming. In both of them what you have is the situation where the individuals are very much pawns in someone else's game and what happens is that they simply swap one set of instrumental rewards for another. In the bad system they get rewarded for achievement and being pushing and hard-nosed and all this sort of traditional view of bureaucratic values. In the new system they get rewarded for love and inclusion and that sort of thing. It seems to me very strange, no not strange, sad and worrying that we are still stuck in that way. I mean the ultimate contradiction that struck me very forcibly the other day: I was reading a book of readings on motivation. There is a statement in it about the values of intrinsic motivation and extrinsic, and the writer was saying in all seriousness that what we must do is induce intrinsic motivation - and that was said with a straight face! The writer, incidentally is someone who is regarded as sort of pretty respectable academically and pretty humane in his outlook, although I don't think he counts himself a humanistic psychologist.

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