

Jacob Stattman talking

with Mona Lisa Boyesen, Clothilde and Vivian Milroy

(continued from last month)

But you didn't have to argue this because one can look at people who have been doing this thousands of years, the Tibetan yogis again, they talk about liberating the Kundalini, the locked in energy. There's the same thing in orthodox Hatha Yoga and breathing, if you go too fast or do it wrong it can kill you or drive you insane. And in the teaching of Don Juan he especially, when he's talking about opening the gap, opening the body centre, he says to Castaneda if you open the gap too quickly the external forces will rush in and kill you. Before you open the gap you have to be trained to cope with the energy that is going to be released within yourself. And that's why he has this constant emphasis on discipline and training and what he calls strategy, knowledge. So in a sense what these mystics are saying to me is 'Yes, you can take these short cuts, you can do it, but the question is whether you will be able to handle being all here' and in the two schools of Zen one sees the process as a gradual process that will inevitably lead you to enlightenment, the other one says it is a gradual process and when you are ready something may happen instantly and you'll be enlightened. And some people can do it in three weeks and some take 35 years and some never make it. But they both agree that if you don't make it appropriately the result at least will be a tremendous amount of self-delusion, so that one of the common stages in enlightenment practice, that the master is looking for, is the pseudo-enlightenment which occurs quite often. The master is the tester. Through his intervention you'll know whether this is a pseudo or a real process. So I'm not arguing about whether it can happen. It's like animals - the bird mother kicking the baby out of the nest when it can fly. I would guess that there is an earlier time when the bird could fly and it would survive, but it won't be an integrated bird. You'll see it fly but there will be problems. It's like, physiologically there are certain processes that are part of our organic structure, the flexibility of the muscles, the ability of the brain to process information, all of these require, a certain amount of time. For example, if I work with someone and bring him to a state of aggression too fast, what is basically a good experience is experienced by the person as terrifying. If I bring him to the same place more slowly, where he is constantly associating each step of the way, and he makes decisions every step of the way and I don't intervene with his resistances, and then finally he comes to this deep aggression, he can experience the pleasure of the infant. So both ways have the same goal and the same place, but one is experienced as terror and one as pleasure and this is really what we are talking about. Whether it is in a group or a one-to-one session, if appropriate change doesn't occur then you reinforce the experience negatively. If it occurs appropriately you experience it positively, and the most common area where this can occur is the area of sexuality and pleasure. In order for a person to accommodate pleasurable feelings, he has to be loose and

relaxed, decontracted. When Reich talks about the wave-like contractions that accompany a sexual movement it's involuntary. Obviously if there is a rigid element in the personality or the body, that wave will smash against the rigidity and feed back on itself and the result of that is to reinforce the initial neurotic fear of pleasure. It's like saying, 'My parents were right, I never should have allowed myself to have pleasure'. And this is again where the problem of responsibility comes in. If you can imagine yourself engaged in having sex and in the middle of it you are aware that I'm standing there demanding that you be responsible for your actions, it's going to be more than you can integrate if you are really into the sexual act. The better way I think is simply to let it happen and then evaluate it. But if you feel the whole time that you are doing it that you've got to be doing it right in terms of some norm, then you are going to feel involved in a contradiction. In order to do it right you've got to be completely spontaneous. But if you have a norm you can't be completely spontaneous. You are serving two masters, and the result is a kind of paralysis that results in pseudo behaviour. It's not quite spontaneous but it's not really restrictive. You go through the motions and that is rewarded. And the more clever you are the more easily you win without ever having experienced the conflict.

What do you think of Don Juan's 'not doing' philosophy.

I love it, because of the paradox. To me a paradox is an apparent contradiction. If one can go below that one finds that there is a harmony, a unity. The paradox is a symptom of underlying unity and it's manifested as a contradiction. And when he talks about not doing something, it's like the Zen thing that says 'Don't just do something, stand there'. Not doing is the way of permitting what you are, without a programme, to emerge. And by not doing, that which is spontaneous and natural can emerge. As long as you are doing something, the not-doing element of yourself can never come out.

It seems to me that wherever I get to, everything is saying the same thing, from yoga to transcendental meditation.

There's no contradiction in their organic nature.

But they all have a history of also supporting fallacies and rigidifying their goals.

This is why not doing is the most important thing of all. You can still do them and enjoy them but not take them seriously.

That's why I think it is incumbent on a group and a leader to let a person have a space, have a not-doing, even if it doesn't fit the norm. If the group or the leader can't tolerate that, then they are talking more about their insecurity than they are about this person's behaviour.

The way to undo the blocks is to get in touch with involuntary responses, autonomic vegetative responses. And by trying do something they have cut it off. They are in a

sympathetic response rather than a parasympathetic one. Therefore I am always emphasising relaxation, relax into the resistance.

Everything I've said up to now is saying that responsibility in the use of the techniques, with response to group dynamics, with relationship to the ideals of the humanistic psychology movement, I believe in and I accept. But I do believe that this kind of dialogue between friends is essential and that if some of the points I have made hurt you if you are a group leader or therapist, if they make you angry or upset you, at least consider that we all have limitations and some of the things I've said might apply.

I think you could say that group therapy can be constructive or destructive and it depends very much on the group and the leader's sensitivity.

Just as in the parent/child relation.

If you take the diagram that is used in Reichian and Gestalt literature which is a series of concentric circles with the core feelings at the centre, what Janov called the primal, the next layer out is the core feelings, the next layer is resistance and the next is defence. There comes a movement perhaps when the person is working when he might say that those circles which normally are closed to each other and support each other are all opened for a second. In other words the personality, the circles, are directly in contact with the core feelings, which know nothing about adjustment, social reality and so on. They are pure instinctual feelings. In that moment of openness the person is totally vulnerable and all talk about choice and responsibility is simply jargon. And what happens at that moment of openness, which might last ten seconds to five minutes at most, is the most critical moment in an individual's work.

If that is dealt with in the awareness from the people in the group or the leader then the whole session has been therapeutic and leads towards growth. If it has not been dealt with properly it is not therapeutic and only leads to a greater defence.

It's like in Zen, they say that the closer you get to reaching enlightenment the more difficult it becomes. Just before you reach enlightenment, what they call the seventh school of Zen, it feels like life or death, it doesn't get easier or less problematical. It's as if the whole process crystallises for a second, which is why there are Zen stories that explain how a person can get enlightened when he stumbles on a stick or see a leaf . . . that make sense in terms of what we are talking about, because the whole process has led up to that instantaneous or simultaneous opening up. Some people in Zen don't make it to that mark and they commit suicide, literally, or they leave Zen and they are depressed for the rest of their lives. Some people make it and that's what they call enlightenment.

You are both saying there is a risk in opening up in the group and in not being dealt with properly. Are you saying that this is a bigger risk in humanistic psychology and that professional therapists are less likely to be dangerous.

It's a double-edged sword precisely because the methods and attitudes of humanistic psychology are so effective and so potent that it follows that they are potentially more destructive. In other words what characterises humanistic psychology is its very effectiveness whereas what characterises traditional methods is that they are not as potent and potentially not as destructive so that the kind of common statement that humanistic psychology is more effective than orthodox therapy is true but it has to be accepted that it is more dangerous:

One can say that in Western psychology and psychiatry the more difficult task is to provoke into the core. In this kind of it is work it is more difficult to deal with what is being aroused because it is so easy to provoke the core with all our techniques.

*You were saying that there is no instant road to enlightenment, on the other hand it seems to me the fundamental message of Zen and of Don Juan is that the further you go and the **harder** you work, all you are doing is coming back home to yourself and there is a **short cut** if you just turn around and be yourself here at this moment.*

But they add that it might take 30 years to get there.

But you don't necessarily have to go out that way. You just stay in this way and you are there.

True.

If one merely opens as one is here and now to the cosmos you don't need 30 years.

Can I tell you something that actually happened to me - I took one of the short cuts and I went to something called Subud and definitely it was my cosmic energy and its cosmic energy which completely unites all . . . and I cried for half an hour and I couldn't stop. It was so beautiful for my cosmic energy took over, and I freaked for 2½ years and I was then operated by a psychic surgeon, and I know that short cuts don't exist whether you go this way or that way.

But you see that's a wrong short cut. It's a long cut a different way.

It wouldn't hurt if you put it in programmes advertising humanistic psychology that all those seeking growth are not welcome, because growth is a doing movement, it's 'I want to be enlightened' instead of 'I want to pay attention to what I'm doing right now'. It's like a couple who want to have a perfect sexual orgasm, a mutual complete orgasm. So they read all the books, they master all the techniques, and they get into bed, and both their minds are on the programme and how they ought to be and what they ought to be doing, and they fail every time. And it fails every time because neither one of them is ever fully present. That is the paradox, you have to have a goal which is a non-goal and I think in that sense the growth movement is involved in the same kind of dialectic of change.