

Will Grossman

Myths of the Growth Movement

When you scream at me in an encounter group, you only intimidate and frighten me. I may scream back at you or even fight with you, but that is only my way of reacting, of coping with a threat. As soon as I get scared and my adrenalin starts pumping, as soon as my fight-or-flight reaction is triggered, my inner core is closed and becomes inaccessible. When I experience your anger, my energy flows to the surface of my body and to my muscles, to mobilizing my body to flee or to fight; in either case my inner core is sealed off to you (and also to me).

You may say that your anger is due to a frustrated attempt to reach me. But, most of the time, it doesn't reach me. It only makes me hold on more tightly.

Your anger may impel me to get on my feet, to become stronger, and this may temporarily make me feel alive and capable, but my inner heart will be closed.

You might say, to justify yourself, 'But I *feel* angry!' You feel angry because you want to feel angry. We choose our feelings, or, to put in other words: feelings are a consequence of our conditioning. For the conditioning to trigger off, mental activity or thought is necessary. If you choose not to change your conditioning, of course you will get angry. (Anger, incidentally, isn't even a true feeling but is a pseudo-feeling, a mask for the core feelings, the flowing and fragile feelings of love, delight, hurt, grief and fear. Anger is a tape-loop that stops you from hearing the real message.)

I don't know how to prove this to you. If

you examine yourself deeply, you'll find it's true. We are what we want to be, we feel what we want to feel. Love is very threatening. We do everything to avoid feeling it. Love is threatening because if you love me, then I become as important to you as you yourself - in which case the 'I', in a sense, in the *old* sense, ceases to exist. As Sai Baba says, 'When you open your heart, you die.' (When I use the word love, I obviously mean something different from 'I love ice cream' or, 'I love you as long as I continue to be the most important thing in your life.')

Un-doing our conditioning is difficult. Learning not to put on the tape loops of anger, indifference, hatred, boredom, etc., is difficult because love is so threatening. So, if we want to encourage a person to un-do his conditioning, we ought to give him or her all the support we can, all the benevolence we're capable of.

Why get angry at another person, anyway? He is, in the divine scheme of things, doing the best he can at this particular moment. If he is defective in some way, wouldn't it be more appropriate to feel compassion than anger? If he has let us down in some way, wouldn't it be better to re-examine the maturity of our demands and expectations? Of course, there are times when anger *happens*, in which case it can become a deep unitive, *uniting* experience, but anger justified by reason is playing the devil's game: the ego-head aggressively maintaining control but hypocritically masquerading as 'feelings'.

The root idea behind the growth movement was, *is*, that we are alienated from ourselves, that we have deadened ourselves and stopped feeling. But this originated as a response to threats and intimidation, and unless this intimidation is removed or at least counter-balanced, awakening deep feelings risks plunging us into great terror and inner disorganization (in Reichian terms, the energy newly released furiously colliding against the old tenacious armouring). The threats and the fear of annihilation can be removed to some extent or counter-balanced by our affirming one another, by agreeing not to frighten the other, by loving the other as an evolving being.

In some therapies and in some groups the predominant idea is that the protective ego-armouring can be bludgeoned out of existence. The idea is to shatter all defenses; the underlying fantasy being that if a person's defenses are smashed, torn wide open, ripped, then the true core-person or essence will emerge. The approach is fallacious: What emerges is not the inner being but a scream of despair. Despair, of course, can lead to convulsion and re-birth, and this is the kernel of truth in the whole argument. But to the extent that such an approach is valuable - and this is controversial - it can be of value only if the defense-shattering therapy, whether individual or group, is done in a context of protection, affirmation, love and support. Flowers grow best when they receive sunshine; emotional release occurs optimally when the threatening forces are at least equally counter-balanced by light, warmth, acceptance and love.

There is still another consideration, that *feelings are the slaves of one's desires and consequently of one's values.*

Desires are grasping, ego. 'I desire what I think is good for me, satisfying, beneficial' - and if I can't get what I desire I feel upset, sad, full of grief, despair, etc. I may then begin to evaluate the objects of my desires according to new criteria, new values. In that case, what I was upset about not obtaining yesterday will no longer upset me today - for example, a red balloon. But today I get upset because I can't have a red Porsche or because my wife doesn't love me the way I want to be loved, or because others don't respect, appreciate and admire me as much as I would like them to. I don't get upset that Daddy didn't buy me a choo-choo train because choo-choo trains no longer interest me.

Feelings (and I am now going to say what in the growth movement is unforgivable), feelings are only a response to one's conception of one's self, one's idea about what one *is*, and one's conception regarding what one *is* is buttressed or rather permeated by an intricate and sometimes very rigid hierarchy of values - values which the ego perceives to be beneficial to IT and which may not be beneficial at all to our true essential Self, to the us that is in the heart-centre.

This does not mean that feelings are unreal or that they are unimportant. They are real and they are important, but they are like transitional objects (a choo-choo train) which are vital at one stage of one's development and irrelevant at another. Feelings are tremendously useful in directing us to a contemplation and comprehension of our inner ultimate reality. (If I feel jealous of you, I must in some way grapple with my pre-conceived notions of who 'I' am and what 'you' are and what we ultimately are as regards one another.) By opening the love channel in

us and between us, feelings bring us to a recognition of unity with one another and with all beings.

A distinction needs also to be made between superficial feelings and heart-feelings. *A heart-feeling wells up inside you with tremendous intensity.* This is probably always a consequence of recognising the deep unity between you and another, the love you feel toward another, the unity within yourself and the love you feel toward

yourself. Such a heart-feeling is a communion. A superficial feeling is, in comparison, not more than a scratch on one's skin or the bite of a mosquito. If you are in agreement with what I have written here, maybe we ought to know each other. I invite persons who are interested in a new way of inner working - in the yoga of love and in clearing - in a new way of perceiving ourselves, our relationship to others and to the universe - to contact me.

Will Grossman is a neo-Reichian and existentialist therapist, veteran group leader, and founder of Kaleidoscope/Community, he has just returned to Europe after six months in the U.S. and a year in India.

Mabel McGowan

Yours to Fill

'Yours to Fill' is an attempt to share a part of one of a sequence of six induced fantasy experiences which made considerable impact upon the small group involved.

The framework required each of us to 'be in a room' and describe that room, then to move outside and look again before returning and stepping out into a garden, describing it and bringing people into it.

My room refused at first to stabilise, swinging between two rooms where much of my effective time is lived, but eventually they came together as one, seen to that point as a combined prison. The transformation process produced by 'stepping outside and looking again' from the new angle was as illuminating in its impact as the sunlight shining through the bars in the poem, and when the walls faded and vanished completely all that remained was a light pagoda-shaped roof, almost taking flight, above the pleasing simplicity of a rush-matted floor.

With one exception all the figures who came to people the garden were identifiable. The one, a Chinese in a broad coolie hat, remains a tantalising mystery.

Because prose emerged singularly flat and unevocative as a means of communicating the experience it is offered as a poem.