

Michaela Baron

## Interview with Bill Solomon

*Would you introduce yourself to our readers.*

I was invited to England to give a workshop for a 9 month intensive group at Quaesitor. And I was very excited by the possibility of working with them and also seeing the development of the growth movement in England. My work is primarily geared to helping people to realize and recognise their potentiality by understanding the multiple aspects within their own personality and how certain negative aspects create blocks in their own expression. My own feeling about our ability to enjoy our lives, to express our lives, is guided by our ability to accept, to understand and change negative feelings and attitudes that we have towards life.

*In your experience, what are the main differences in present movements in England and America?*

First of all I have a very strong sense that many of the individuals in the workshop had separated their work in the groups from their work in life. They would come to the workshop, they would come to their own growth as a separate manifestation of their life. Like they go to the theatre they would go to the group. They did not have a sense that their work in the group was their life. Now in the U.S. various people who I work with are very committed to the process of their development and growth. It is a commitment they want to make for their whole life, to continue to grow, to expand and to develop. I feel that perhaps the growth movement here is less developed in the respect that people do not yet feel that they can make that commitment.

*Could you say something about your own growth and about your work with people in groups? Is growth a continuous movement, something one needs to work on all the time?*

I was attracted to working with people because of my work on myself. I achieved in my own therapy a sense that I was able to really expand the barriers that I have placed around myself, areas where I felt caught or trapped by my inadequacies, by my family, my society, which I realised in the course of my therapy, were self-created entrapments. The more I began to expand my own self-potentiality, the more exciting it really seemed and I felt blessed that I could extend that to help others. The more ability I have to perceive myself accurately, to perceive others accurately the more I can live in this life. The more I can function in a real state, the less anxiety I have about the unknown. Freud postulated a death instinct in human beings. My own thoughts are that we are terrified of the inner space, that we are frightened at possessing the knowledge of ourselves, our irrational feelings, our aggressiveness, our hostilities, our negative feelings! The more we can know them, see the effects that they have on our lives, the more able we are to move out, to have fun.

In a group, my primary concern is helping someone to take a step inside themselves, not to just come away with an intellectual abstraction about themselves in the past, but to achieve a sense of who they are as people so they begin to sense their bodies. They begin to become aware that their attitudes affect the situation they are in, that they are not victims of the other person, society or life. That they have multilevels of good feelings of inner excitement, physical pleasure and of hope. They want to take that outside into their day-to-day lives with their families, in business, in their work. To me this is the most exciting prospect of helping someone to take a look inside. My sense is that of all the work that we do with one another, therapists, psychologists or whatever, it does not really amount to a can of beans unless it has practical applications in their lives. The greatest pleasure that I have received in this work is in seeing people being able to actually change the circumstances of their lives and have relationships with people, to do work, to have money, to enjoy themselves and in turn to be able to care about other people. It is a movement and a flow of giving and taking, expansion and contraction. That I personally feel is our greatest task on earth.

*This sounds beautiful. I participated in the workshop you led here and I've seen you working practically and it was as beautiful as it sounds. We all got a lot out of it. Could you say something about your therapeutic methods, e.g., how do you help people to centre themselves, to be more in touch with their feelings and more integrated and alive?*

I approach a person with a feeling in me. A person I'm approaching has within himself even though he may not know it the capability and the actual possibility of knowing himself, knowing what a real relationship to other people is. There's a place in him that has a real knowledge of himself in the world and also has some awareness of how he has created the difficulties in his life. At the same time, looking at a person at physical level, it's possible to see the outer crust, the defences a person has erected between himself and other people. You can look at a person's neck, for instance, and see in its overextension or elongation a pride and a level to which a person puts himself above other people. Or in the squatness of the neck and the holding of a voice bitterness and spite. There are areas in the body which are counterparts to attitudes we have as people, you can see a person's back muscles holding back, you see areas in the body that are withholding aggression, you can see areas in the body that are collapsed, that possess a lot of despair, hopelessness. You can see suspicion in their facial structures, in the deep set of the eye sockets. You can see in their eyes their statements about being there, whether they want to be there, whether they are terrified to be there. There are so many physical manifestations of attitudes. Basically I try to avoid dealing just with words, explanations or discussions but deal with those attitudes directly by helping the person to move his body and to express a certain attitude about himself. He himself is aware of certain feelings and attitudes in himself although he does not like to admit it. He fears that if he expressed those attitudes and feelings in public it may be disastrous and as the English say he puts on a stiff upper lip and further cuts himself off from himself and his awareness of his own feelings. It's very often in workshops a relief for people to be helped to admit and to acknowledge the defensive postures which they have. Then through the movement and expression of those postures they are able to let them go and achieve a different sense of themselves.

*It is very difficult in our society to express negative feelings and so the therapy really goes very much against conditioning, socialisation and against what people have been through right from their childhood. So, they really have great resistance against the therapeutic procedure. I feel it does take a very long time before one can let go of the conditioning and resistance. So how do you deal with this problem of resistance, Bill?*

Then I point out that they come here because they are aware that there are difficulties in their lives. My purpose is to help them to achieve their own purpose. The only way that we can work on it is by putting the resistant attitudes into the actual work process. If a person says, I do not feel like it, I do not like to do this, then my feeling is you do not have to. But in terms of your own coming here, aren't you really defeating yourself? Aren't you defeating the part of you that is aware that there are real problems and that there is a real need to work on those problems? And if the answer is no as I've had the occasions to experience them I had told them O.K. you are going to have to accept responsibility for staying where you are and for not changing. And if the answer is yes, then we can work on the resistance itself.

*Could you talk about your notion of life in relation to therapy? Has therapy changed somehow your notion of life?*

I do not really like to use the word therapy because therapist and patient denote a certain norm of health, which I do not really think fits with my own feelings about life or the growth process. I see myself as a man with unlimited potential to be happy, to express himself, to have relationships with friends, I think that where I am now and where I will allow myself to develop in 5 or 10 years is really within my own scope. Very often people say that in life they want fulfilment. My feeling is that I want a fulfilling life but I'm quite content at not having fulfilment. I don't believe that I can achieve a place where there is no further movement. I really do feel that in the biophysical structure of the universe and the biophysical construction of ourselves, that we inevitably change, move, grow, develop. Even in our own organisms with the death and birth of millions of molecules every day we are in the process of growth. We also have the capabilities of being self destructive, self defeating. To me whatever enhances the growth process, the life flow, is positive and whatever constricts the movement of life, the movement of ourselves to express, to give and to receive, is negative.

*The last statement would lead us into your conception of morality - whatever enhances the growth process is positive and whatever constricts it is negative. Could you relate this to morality?*

What I said in terms of expression can be very easily misunderstood. Anything that expresses ourselves is good could mean 'if you feel like hitting somebody it's O.K. to hit them'. I do not feel that, and perhaps I should make it clear here, that expression does not relate to another person. When I speak of the freedom to express, I speak of the individual's ability to have his own feelings, to allow himself to move his feelings, to allow himself to move his feelings outward. To be able to express anger without having necessarily to feel that he is self-righteous about his anger, that he has the right to attack someone. But that he can accept in himself that he is angry. And look at that

from an inner point of view. Does the anger in him perhaps protect him from feeling hurt? Is the anger really an expression of indignation? I think that a place where we get very often trapped is when we take a self-righteous position. You know, that we are the good ones and they are the bad ones and that we are blind to the areas of ourselves which are also aggressive and hostile. I think that the whole European political system in the first and second world war was also an example of one country expressing its negative feelings to another one but diplomatically. And then when all hell broke loose and people said *how did that happen, we did not do anything, what did we do? We are victims of this whole thing.* No one really wanted to own the superior attitudes and the arrogance that they have towards other people and how that itself is aggression, no matter how politely it's expressed. You asked me about morality, and I can't really answer you in terms of a system. I do not take a position that there is some supreme authority outside in the sky who makes a statement that dictates to us what we should be like. Each of us has in ourselves a place that knows a difference between constructive and destructive. It is only by opening up ourselves to the knowledge and place of the godhead in us that we can ever achieve a sense of reality which is not just to be good or the absence of evil but which commits itself to becoming what we can become and commits itself to developing ourselves, growing and achieving beauty, love and pleasure in our lives.

*Could you say something more about God and spirituality?*

Let me make a couple of distinctions between spirituality, psychic phenomena and God. The name God, Jehova, Jesus, Mohamed is the result of attempts by men to create a symbolic representation of the best part of themselves. To me a spiritual life is a commitment of a human being to further the development of those parts of himself, to allow himself the ability to be aware of his human potential, his potential goodness and his potential evil and to make a choice between the two from his own inner place of knowledge.

*Are you concerned with making known the knowledge you have got - the sense of life in you? Only a minority of people are involved in the growth movement. Would political action help?*

I don't believe in political action with regard to the things I have expressed. First of all I do not think it does any good. I do not think that you can tell a person that his life is a mess and that he should change. I do not think that you can tell a person that he should be more aware of himself. I think each of us who has got involved to the degree that we have been involved in the growth movement have got involved because we have needed it, because we were aware of it, because we were troubled and we were concerned. I am much more concerned on concentrating my energies on people who really-want help, rather than helping people to want help. I do not think that necessarily the growth movement can reach anyone who does not want help. I think it is simple as that.

*Obviously there are a lot of people who do need help, who may not know how and where they can find it and who may be helped to become aware that there is a more satisfying way of being and living.*

Let me say this: anything that I have said so far, is certainly not new or original. Philosophers have talked about these concepts for thousands and thousands of years. There are millions of books written on the types of things I expressed today. Why is it that some people come into contact with that knowledge and others do not? Why is it that some people feel moved to let themselves be moved? Or who let themselves be involved when the opportunity is to be involved. Who question, who doubt, who want to extend themselves. A person like this will find himself in a situation where he can grow and move. A Person who does not, will not. How can you create a desire in a person who has no desire? It is not possible.

*It seems that one should just trust life and what it brings to people rather than trying to impose new ideas on others who may not be ready for it. So your views concerning individual and social change are in my opinion rather individualistic, everybody for himself. On the other hand, there are people who want to go to other people to raise their consciousness, make them more aware of their situation and in this way to help them. Could you say something about this.*

Have you ever seen a parent forcing a child to have a good time? I think that the mother who says to her son smile and enjoy yourself, it is good for you, is completely unaware how she is really superimposing her feelings on someone else. In the crusades we experienced a great international attitude where actually people believed that the Christians were helping the heathen by killing them. To my way of thinking we can rationalise any action. But I think that we are not concerned with the other person and how they feel about our movement towards them then we are really expressing contempt, arrogance and hostility.

*My mind boggles a bit. It seems to me that I as an individual am a part of a whole community. To a certain extent my growth depends on the family I live in, on my friends, people I come in contact with, on the whole community. How can I grow fully and free myself if there are many people around me who are not free and who resist my efforts to free myself and where the society is structured in such a way that goes against my freedom.*

After World War 2, a man who I knew in New York, Dr. David Wudowinsky, one of the leaders of the Warsaw ghetto uprising went to Denmark to commemorate the Danish fisherman who organised and led his fellow fishermen in rescue attempts to Poland to free Jewish children. Dr. Wudowinsky asked the man's wife, I do not know his name, why he risked his life. He responded that he preferred to die with the Jews than live with the Nazis. In that statement he exhibited a choice and a sense of himself as a man, as a person in relationship to what he felt was right in his life. He did it and he accepted the consequences of it. His wife did not blame the Germans; she was well aware of the risk he was taking, and they both essentially as people had good feelings about it though she was very sad when he was captured and killed.

*Could you describe a system which in your opinion would support the emotional needs of people?*

I think such a system would be when people or voters in a country are really willing to accept the faults in the leaders that they themselves have. If we are not willing to accept the multiplicity of the self in a politician, then we have to take the responsibility of getting the men who only show one side of their face. You do not have much opportunity to have a government which is responsive to various aspects of people.

*Do you have any message you could give to our readers and people involved in the growth movement in England?*

Western man has a history and even a pride in segmenting his different aspects and perfecting them individually. We take a great pride, e.g. in our mental achievements. We take pride in our physical achievements. We have the Olympics to prove our strength and our prowess. We have the gross national product to prove our success financially. We have split off ourselves and attempt to achieve a sense of balance and harmony through competition, through putting ourselves against each other. I think our past history together shows how unsuccessful we have been. My own feelings about the future, ourselves as people, in the world of all nations, is that we should be willing to open up the parts of ourselves which want to be here, to do the best we can do, to give the most that we can give. To contribute what we have to contribute. I think that even though we may know intellectually that to be best at everything does not give one happiness, that somewhere we still act on this basic misconception of life. And that to the degree that we think that we are going to get the respect and the fellowships and the regard of the other persons by being better than them, we continue to be separate people fighting to get from each other what we can only give ourselves. To my way of thinking, to really have our own self-respect, our own self-esteem, our own self-acceptance will be the way we can change all life and help it to grow.

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## The Sannyasin trip

Divya Velie

Going to India, now, in the Growth Movement has almost begun to mean going to Bhagwan. Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh is the exponent of Dynamic Meditation methods, only one of which is the chaotic breathing-freaking-hooing working out of tensions and repressions through what feels like the redistribution and transmutation of emotional and/or to physical Energy. It is a sound, effective method of emotional discharge and increased physical/psychical awareness. Bhagwan is a beautiful Being and everything that God should have been, but if He (God) ever is or was is not my concern here. I only want to share with you a few of my experiences and insights on the whole sannyasin trip, in the hope that some of my old/new/future orange-friends will Come Back into the world and work with us again: We Need You!