

I would suggest that a stronger infra-structure may be necessary, that is the first programmes to go on the air may need to ask for volunteers who are then willing to build a network of users of volunteers, that is a network of voluntary volunteer bureaux, possibly based in a relatively small geographical area and co-ordinated centrally. Without such a willing network of neighbourhood contact points the influx of new volunteers could be largely wasted and may lead to a backlash against such media meddling.

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Some Observations of Self

When I was in my teens there was a popular song that began, 'O me, myself and I are all in love with you', the 'you' in that instance, one assumes, being a member of the opposite sex. When I was thinking about relationship to self these words popped back into my mind, not in terms of 'in love' as it is commonly understood but in thinking of self and how we should feel about it. Not in love with self in the narcissistic sense of self love but giving self the honest attention, the sincerity of intention and the openness one would offer and expect from a caring friend.

What am I? Am I what I could be, should be, is expected of me? These questions occur to all of us from time to time, usually when we are feeling least able to deal with them, and our picture with often be a jaundiced one because of the circumstances that prompt the question. When life is progressing fairly smoothly, and is busy and reasonably satisfying, we are not nearly so inclined to ask ourselves these questions as we are when new demands are being made of us that we do not know whether we shall be able to meet, or when we are facing rejection of overtures of friendship, decisions that need to be made, readjustment to loss, and so on. Does this imply that we only look critically at ourselves at these times? I do not think that this is necessarily true but that in such situations we are looking for 'reasons for' and often tend to 'take stock' more during these periods. Probably the reason the stronger minded among us tend to say that crisis and adversity have strengthened them and have been instrumental in giving them a more single-mindedness of purpose is because they have looked at the 'reasons for', been able to be honest with themselves about their part in the situation and made use of what they have found. Sadly, part of the reason for being unable to weather such situations, and opting out into a state of emotional imbalance, is the inability to examine the situation and, more importantly, one's own part in it and so be unable not only to deal with it but also effect any growth as a result of it.

We each have a picture of ourselves in our mind. Some so dislike looking at it that it is seldom, if ever, fetched out. Others look at it ceaselessly, polishing it daily with loving care. In both cases it remains the same, unchanging with the years. Both such attitudes

are not designed to improve our acquaintance with ourselves which is a basic requirement to having an adjusted, growing personality that can open itself to all the experiences that will come our way.

Why do the two opposing attitudes of self neglect or constant appraisal stand in the way of this? Put at its simplest, the ability to push out of the mind all examination of oneself means that formed habits, attitudes, prejudices, likes and dislikes are not going to be questioned but upheld at all costs. This, without further amplification, obviously and immediately limits one's ability to accept and test wider experience. The ability to discuss opposing views to one's own without feeling the opposition to be attacking one personally is something that a lot of us have to learn how to do and it cannot be 'got down to' without some self examination. We are what we can allow ourselves to be.

Once we have grasped this fact it helps us to look at why we are as we are, what led us to have the ideals, prejudices, likes, dislikes and so on that have grown along with us. To some people the idea of looking at these things is frightening because there is always a fear of what we shall find to put in the place of long cherished ideas and the security sameness brings. Awareness of self does not, of course, mean throwing overboard all one's preconceived notions and attitudes, it can lead to the strengthening of some which will lead to added confidence, poise and growth of self; all allowing and encouraging greater interchange with others.

On the other hand over self-preoccupation will also preclude our ability to take of, and use, the world about us because it is constantly inward looking. If we look at the self almost exclusively we are repeatedly going over the same ground but without productiveness. This uses up one's mental and emotional powers to such a degree that taken to its extreme it can become a severe mental illness and/or seriously affect one's physical health.

The preoccupation can be with self justification, a drive to perfectionism, an imagined illness or a real one magnified. Whatever it is, its purpose is to so occupy the mind that others matters that lead to self growth, but that would undoubtedly be painful in the process, are excluded. Unfortunately, this method of attempting to exclude the painful so often does avoid the discomfort that leads to greater fulfillment but sets up other less productive, and equally painful situations. One of these is a feeling of isolation which, again, can be both real or imagined. We may be surrounded by people with whom we have frequent contact and an acquaintanceship but if we are afraid to make an offering of ourselves, or let others get close to us because we are afraid that on closer acquaintance they may not like what they see, then we are denying self the chance of growth, in fact, not only denying it but struggling to subdue it. An exhausting and not satisfying process.

We may, of course, withdraw more and more from life, 'keep ourselves to ourselves', and say this is the kind of living we want. Many of us may know of cases where this has been carried to extremes, the person has gradually become more and more out of touch with reality, more suspicious of their fellow human beings and has eventually been unable to take up again former contacts and ways of life. The people who appear

to have been successful in deliberate self-withdrawal from the main-stream of life, monks, nuns, hermits are, in the truest sense, those who have first of all come to terms with self and determined why that kind of life is for them. They have been able to offer themselves to it and have been enriched, and have enriched life by it.

‘This is all very well’, you may say, ‘We have been made what we are by our upbringing, our environment, by the treatment we have received from others, by our lack of this or too much of that. Violence as a result of violence, love as a result of being loved, softness as a result of being over-indulged and hardness as a result of harsh treatment. Much of this is so and I would be the last one to deny the proper amount of truth in each of these statements, but is that all there is to it? Have all the people who show violence been reared upon it, are all those who later on in life can offer love from loving beginnings? More important, do all those who start in any of these ways necessarily have to go on perpetuating them? I would certainly subscribe to the idea that what is learned in the early years of childhood forms the basis of characteristics that will remain as part of us probably for life but I would prefer to think of the possibility of their being harnessed and used rather than that they should control and dominate. ‘How can this be’? Perhaps if we say to ourselves not too often, not too rarely, ‘Who am I, why am I as I am’? The questions may often pop almost unbidden into our minds but if we are to be able to look at them we need to be in a situation that is supportive, that will help us to be honest with ourselves, that will allow us the movement for growth. It is not only ourselves that can stand in the way of our being able to do this. There are many external factors that encourage us to be as we are; at least we can argue this with ourselves. We say that our friends expect such and such of us, we have always been this way, our attitudes are largely imposed on us by our way of life, our work, what is required of us by others, and so on. Some of this is of course true, and necessarily so, we all need a structure or frame work within which to operate and its total, or wanton, destruction would be disastrous. The fact that our friends expect something of us has something to say about our worth, our dependability our capacity for self-giving. What honesty demands is for us to look occasionally at what it is we give and what we are willing to receive. Does what we give come from what we really are and what we are striving to be or merely a gesture to placate, because we feel it is expected of us How do we receive? Wondering about the motive behind the gift, word or gesture; feeling that we shall have to reply in kind, and so on. A generous spirit, free of all the above, can receive as generously as it can give because it is wholeheartedly taking part in the acts and feels itself worthy enough both to give and to receive.

Nowadays we are assaulted on every side by suggestions of what will make us worthy, acceptable, sweet smelling, financially viable, intelligent, looked up to and so on and it is not easy to sort out fact from fantasy. Must we really have a colour television or a deep freeze to be ‘in’ with the neighbours? Do we really need to use that particular type of deodorant to be wholesome enough to attract the opposite sex? Of course it is good to be able to have labour saving devices, be sweet and wholesmme, and whatever, if all other things are equal but it is surely more important to have contentment and serenity.

We have come a long way from the idea of 'The rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate. God made them high and lowly and ordered their estate', but, as yet, we hardly seem to have realised that it is no fun to be either if one is not feeling a person of dignity and joy and that such feelings are not the prerogative of castle or cottage. Of course enough money is necessary but what is enough, and for whom - and what? For some, little is enough, for others enough is never enough. What are the elements that go to making what one has enough? Endless debates are heard on the subject of financial management and mis-management and no doubt they are helpful to those who can, or wish, to understand them. My experience has led me to conclude this mis-management is nearly always tied up with personality or emotional difficulties. Spending can be a comfort habit in just the same way that eating may be to a deprived child and the numerous club-books and H.P. facilities have made this kind of drug fairly freely available. Both of these facilities in themselves, as with other addictives, are not harmful in the hands of those who can control their use of them, indeed reasonable use of them can be therapeutic. The thought that if they were not there the weaker among us could not use them is, I feel, a fallacy. If it was not them it would be something else. They, and other things like them, are so often an escape from circumstances and self.

I suppose what I have written could probably be summed up, or interpreted, as a plea for self discipline. The ability to be able to say 'Yes' when one should and 'No' when appropriate, the ability to accept the unacceptable until one can alter it, the ability to be able to say 'sorry', to take the blame, if that is where it lies, and a host of other self imposed acts that lead to freedom from things that bind and limit the self. It is not easy but it enables one to offer oneself to others and take, or withstand, what the other can give. I think, on reflection, it is what a learned friend of mine would call a socializing function, I prefer to think of it as the way that me, myself and I can take on the life long task of searching for growth, human potential and enjoyment of life.

Newsletter from the Icelandic Chapter

One of the pioneers of humanistic psychology, A. Maslow, said that he saw great possibilities for change and growth in the individual. He said that people keep these possibilities within themselves and that the fundamental thing is to give them ample facilities. People who study humanistic psychology want to work towards the growth of creativity and peak-experiences. Peak-experiences include a deeper and a more effective realization of reality than people in general are conscious of. The aims include the desire for a fuller life and an increased awareness about man's potentials. Recently methods and aims have been investigated in various ways in order to call forth increased personal growth. In Scandinavia, Britain, Italy and USA there are active AHP-groups. We are in connexion with them and feel they are of importance to us. Our aims are twofold: