

Vivian Milroy

Arica Rides Again

After an eighteen months pause, due to financial problems, the Arica movement is recommencing activities. In the meantime they have revised and renewed their programme which now includes more Tai Chi and a somewhat different approach to what they call 'Karma Cleaning'. I was invited to a six hour workshop to see what they were doing.

The day's work produced a lot of shared energy and a moderate degree of intimacy at a fairly superficial level. There was very little touching and very little emotion. But most people seemed to enjoy it and to have learned something from it.

In the preliminary hourlong work-out there was quite a lot of yoga - which to a purist seemed to be taken much too fast and also for a relatively inexperienced class, using much too advanced postures. For example, almost the first exercise was a head-stand. In Iyengar training this is never done before at least eighteen months of fairly serious work in order to develop the neck and back muscles. However, nobody appeared to put their necks out and maybe the class was more experienced than they appeared. There were also several bioenergetic exercises and these were very effective in getting the energy flowing although of course there was no follow through.

The bulk of the time was taken with the 'Karma cleaning' exercises which consisted of a series of low level Encounter Groups with a specified theme each time and a kind of sharing of experience. Typical questions dealt with were 'how was my mother smothering me' and 'what do I do when I feel jealous'. These were led by different people, each of whom read a text and then followed with a personal witness. There was an air of healthy honesty about it all, rather like the moral re-armament people, or even the Salvation Army. Nobody lost their temper; nobody used foul language; nobody exposed more than the tips of their icebergs. For me this was a little tame. I wanted to flash my iceberg but there was no opportunity. However, a friend to whom this was all quite new and strange, reported that she found the exercises exhausting, but very good as a starting point. She got very little out of the Karma cleaning bit but did say that for fairly introverted people - or I suppose fairly respectable people - this would be a very good way of trying to unbend a little and get in touch with other people without the unknown dangers of hand clasping and bear hugs and uninhibited emotional discharge which might melt too much of their icebergs at one go.

For anyone who has problems in relating to people, or in trying to get in touch with their real self, and who is prepared to fit in to a very structured programme, Arica could well be the answer.

I liked the combination of body exercises, breathing, and some of the personal inter-changes. One particularly powerful exercise was working in twos, gazing each into the left eye of the other and repeating 'we are one'. I got two very enjoyable eyes for this exercise one somewhat mystical, one with a nice sense of humour. I liked that game.

I feel I am being a little bit superior about all this. So let me try to empty my mind of my 'know all' analytical prodding and just go over what is in this particular programme for people who haven't done a lot of it before. First of all, it's safe. No one seems to be forced to reveal more than of themselves than they want to, or to go further than they need to. They are well within the philosophy of the unity of mind and body and use practical exercises to put this over. The actual codification of ideas using numbers and a certain amount of mystical jargon doesn't seem to be too forced. You can either take it or leave it. If you want to think about the psyche in terms of a number of labelled levels, 9 is as good a number as any and to divide human experience into such areas as self-preservation, relationships, harmony, need for love, self expression, coordination, and sex seems a workable model. Much better than the doctrine of original sin.

Arnold Abramovitz

The 'Power - Knowledge' of Newtonian Technology and its Psychosocial Antidote*

It is difficult to dispute a now widely held interpretation concerning the present cul-de-sac of western technology: that it is a product of the 300-year-old Newtonian world-view; that this view has been upheld by established English scientific, religious and political institutions; and that its powerful thrust has been tantamount to a cultural imperialism of planetary dimensions. This is not to dump our technological plagues on the shoulders of Isaac Newton. We must distinguish between Newton the man and Newton the archetypal scientist. Towering genius he may have been, but he has also been called the greatest neurotic in the history of science. As a man he remains an enigma, but the paradigm which he eponymised has become more transparent.

What, we have to ask, is the essence of Newtonianism? Two things: the solving of conceptual riddles by the abolition of subjectivity, and (simultaneously) the devising of formularies which permit us to act on nature and eventually dominate her.

Several things flow from this interpretation. All of them are pertinent to the character of the technological ethos in which we have all grown up and which we find so hard to shake off. The Newtonian's decalogue can be formulated thus:-

1. The Universe is a machine, not an organism.

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