

Book Reviews

Pauline Long and Mary Coghill *"Is it worthwhile Working in a Mixed Group?"*
30p plus postage from 'Beyond Patriarchy Publications', 31 Dalmeny Road,
London N7.

Since the days of SCUM (Society for Cutting Up Men) the Women's movement has rapidly spread to numerous countries and cultures. Through mutual support women have been able to validate their experience, appreciate their own value, and assert their rights and needs. In solidarity with their sisters women have challenged conventional attitudes to health and sexuality, reformed laws, set up refuges and developed new life-styles.

With raised consciousness and increased self-confidence some women have chosen to share their experience in mixed groups i.e. women and men meeting together with the specific common aim of countering patriarchy. Thus the mixed group does not see its problems in terms of female versus male, but exists to tackle the social conditioning which leads men to retain power and the benefits of oppression.

Pauline and Mary tell of their experience in such a mixed group. They found it extremely painful, for example, to project themselves - seemingly at the expense of caring for others. They saw that even when men had some understanding of patriarchy, they did not feel the pain of it because they were so brutalised by their conditioning. The women in the group found that as well as having to overcome male oppression, they were being asked to cope with the repressed feelings of the men and to tell them what to do! Pauline and Mary conclude that mixed groups are very important but **must** be accompanied by single sex consciousness raising and support groups.

In marked contrast to the women's movement, men's groups have never got off the ground. They have floundered looking for an identity, generally on a political/organisational level e.g. marxism or babysitting. (An exception is the men's gay movement which has an identity as an oppressed group).

Some men - myself included - have thought that they had the right attitudes and put their energy into other directions.

Maybe the future for men's groups lies in our caring for one another, exploring our feelings, experiencing the grief of oppressing people we love, and accepting our diminishing importance to women.

I strongly recommend this pamphlet to Self and Society readers, both men and women. It is inexpensive, well produced and a land-mark in the development of sexual consciousness.

Bill Walton

Hart, Corriere, & Binder *GOING SANE: An Introduction To Feeling Therapy*
Dell, New York 1976.

After a glance at the cover of this book, you may well exclaim, "Oh no, not another new American therapy for the psychologically disturbed". Well this book certainly is about a new therapy and corresponding set of theories regarding the cause and 'cure' of insanity. However there is one striking difference between the basis of this therapy and the basis of most other therapies; and that is that the Feeling Therapists formulated Feeling Therapy for themselves in order to solve their **own** life problems. They openly declare that they themselves were "insane" prior to having this therapy, even though they were practicing professional psychotherapists at that time. Further, they say that they still now periodically revert back to "insane" states and as such they continue to need the odd therapy sessions themselves in order to keep on the path of sanity.

"Insane therapists"! Well I always used to think "insane" people were those who are patients in mental hospitals. Hart and his co-authors have a different view, and through a series of brilliant discoveries and insights they seem to induce a different perception of the condition of human life. They perceive that virtually everyone who is brought up in today's society enters adulthood in a state of "insanity". The Feeling Therapists describe the "insanity" of normal everyday people in this manner:

"If we could broadcast the conversations that are going on in people's heads, it would be clear that everyone is leading a 'double-life'. They lie to themselves and to the people around them about what is happening inside them. They think and feel one way and act another. That is insanity."

It is interesting to note that the Feeling Therapists equate the descriptions 'neurotic' and 'psychotic'. They say that the only difference between patients in mental hospitals and people in the street is that we can see and hear what the hospitalized people are thinking, while people in the street spend all of their time patching themselves up, holding themselves together, and trying to look good. They appear sane on the outside, but are insane on the inside. And everyone is like that.

Hart & Co. regard the process of going sane to begin when a person faces the way his life really is, the way it has turned out; it no longer matters whether he has 'succeeded' or 'failed'. All that matters is that there is an awareness that something is missing in his life and he wants to do something about it. The essence of the therapist's work is summarised as:

"A Feeling Therapist stops all the lying. He stops the outright lies and the unsaid lies; the crazy lies and smart lies; the sexy lies and the dumb lies. He stops the patient from doing anything but being himself. He traps the patient inside himself and then gives him the choice to feel and express who he really is."

COMMUNITY

Hart & Co. regard the process of Feeling Therapy to achieve much more than an outward change in a person, but rather a transformation or metamorphosis which is to become who you are, not who you think you are, or who you think you should be, or who anyone else thinks you should be. They go on to describe how a sane person (a person who acts according to inner feelings) would find himself a stranger in this world, and as such it is necessary for the people in Feeling Therapy to form their own social community where they can work and play and relate together on a level of closeness and honesty not found in society at large.

Historically, Feeling Therapy began in 1970 when a group of nine psychotherapists left Arthur Janov's Primal Institute after they had failed to experience Janov's 'Primal Cure' in themselves. They say they set out knowing that they felt dissatisfied with their lives, knowing that they needed help from each other, and knowing that they could help each other. The therapy and way of life that they subsequently discovered for themselves eventually evolved into what they now call Feeling Therapy.

'Going Sane' was written for the professional and the lay person. Being a lay person myself, I have found one or two chapters fairly difficult to understand due to the technical complexity of the psychological models used. However as a whole I have found it an excellent book which has the power to radically transform the perception of human life.

Wilfred Baron

In The Wake of Reich. 422pp. £5.75. **Boadella.** Coventure.

This book, edited by David Boadella, carries papers from 30 contributors. Its stated aim is to show how the foremost Reichian workers have developed since Reich's death in 1957. Taken as a whole the book is interesting and varied. The main weakness is a lack of excitement and forcefulness. The insights are intellectual 'clicks' rather than emotional 'pows'.

In reviewing this work I think it is important to make my own position and attitudes clear. For example, while I have completed a three year research

project on belief and communication, I have limited experience of body therapies. My opinion of Reich is that he was a great man. He had insight, courage and honesty. I believe that his fear of the emotional plague led him to a tactical error in his final orgone phase. I think he tried to create a bridge between conventional truth and higher truth during this period.

To understand this period and the development of his ideas demanded a 'spiritual' essence or blind faith. The 'little men' in power had neither, and he was persecuted. In consequence the mass lost their faith and his message reached the very few. I am convinced that he knew what he was doing and that the risk he took was taken consciously and without selfish motives. As a tribute to his work I think there should be declared a public holiday called Reichsday. As a first step perhaps others would join with me in sponsoring a competition to find the most suitable rituals ceremonies and symbols that would mark the celebrations. Reich understood social dynamics and would have approved. Love, work and knowledge was his theme and there is nothing wrong with it from almost any cultural view.

The book is divided into four parts, the first of which is called 'Love-Life and Society' with six papers and an introduction. The editors opening points are clearly made. He stresses that Reich's interest in sexuality was due to it being a basic life function which, when experienced fully, gave a deep sense of unity. He further stresses that Reich considered love and sex to be equally important. Reich was never interested in pornography or the institutionalised conjugal rights of marriage.

The first chapter by Myron Sharaf explains in some detail exactly why orgasmic potency is important and what it means, the capacity to surrender one's control to the bodily responses. This is followed by clear explanations of character armour and the three levels. Conditioned politeness and obedience, the angry disruptive layer and the core layer of true feeling. The relationship of these ideas to our present day is also attempted.

The chapter by Alexander Lowen is very disappointing. His aim, to clarify the importance of 'grounding' as the necessary balance to orgasmic potency, makes sense but the clarity is missing. The concept of orgasmic potency is clear, I know I experience what is described. The concept of grounding is hazy, I do not know whether I am grounded or not. It reaches absurdity when the significance of the fact that most sexual activity is carried out laying down rather than standing is questioned. As an ex-serviceman I am well aware that a 'knee trembler' is possible but to suggest that most people preference for comfort has psychological implications is bizarre.

I also find the lack of any mention of sensual love play worrying. I believe this over concern with potency and 'the ecstasy of cosmic union' is wrong. To then quote animals is stupid. They are potent but I doubt if cosmic is involved. Culture and nature are not opposed in fact. Loving sexual activity is an art form for civilised people. A theme on which I am writing a book called 'The Sensual Artist'.

The next chapter by George Frankl is excellent and relates the sexual revolution to the cultural transformation. The way in which the social and personal

developments are similar and practical advice for parents is clearly explained. This is followed by an interesting chapter on Life and Religion by Ola Raknes. She argues convincingly that the joy of religion is the sense of being alive. Having met a few of the 'saved' I think they also get a lot from saving sinners. It is equally true that the joy of many psychotherapists arises from their ability to save the sick rather than the sense of aliveness which is emotional health.

The final chapter in this section is by Gerda Boyesen and I like it. There is a heavy 'spiritual' overtone, a development of the idea of the primary personality and an overwhelming feeling of optimism. The biggest weakness is a them and us perspective. Us being good and alive; them being rigid and mechanical.

The second section concentrates on Birth, Infancy and Childbirth. Seven chapters cover every aspect. Lacking much direct experience of the area I will refrain from much comment. Most of the chapters are positive in attitude, though there is induced a feeling of awe at the expectations on parents. I find myself quite unable to envisage the sort of behaviour that is suggested as producing self regulated persons. And even if there are the paragons of virtue required then the rest of us will soon have to be faced. As an extreme position the message is highly relevant but to this neurotic reviewer the ideas might produce even more guilt in adults than currently exists.

The third section concerning Emotional Expression and Therapeutic contact comprises 11 chapters. The first chapter is by Alexander Lowen and again I find myself in a critical attitude. Compared with the following chapter by Stanley Kekeman I find his explanations cultish rather than practical. It is not that I doubt his integrity or his ability to work in a relationship; it is his explanations which are to my mind vague. He is not a D.I.Y. encourager. In fact the first three chapters appear over complicated and elaborate. I understand the need of professional people to develop their tools but as a layman I do not see the need in real terms. Hence I see it as a supportive function, a professional prop.

The following three chapters deal with touching, pulsation and a case history of a heroin addict. The next chapter 'The Psych-Diagnosis of the Body' starts in a most exciting way. The author Nic Waal makes the point that if the body expresses in physical ways the equivalent of mental problems then it should be possible to do a diagnosis on the body alone. Following three pages of waffle four specific experiments are quoted where body diagnosis was compared with psychiatric diagnosis with almost complete agreement.

Unfortunately the rest of the paper only specifies the type of diagnosis and the system of classification. In all 114 individual features are recorded, with activity and tension as the focal points in the various muscles and movements. The meaning of all this information is not explained. At the start of the paper I expected to be told that a specific tension in the right forearm or back probably meant something quite specific. In point of fact I learnt nothing except Nic Waal has a system. Don't we all.

The final section deals with Bio-Energy in Health and Disease. It has chapters on Sexual Repression and Individual Pathology, Vision Improvement, Bio-Energy and Cancer and the treatment of a cancer with Orgone energy. The final chapter by John Pierrakos is called The case of the Broken Heart and deserves comment.

Pierrakos is the man who claims he can see the aura surrounding the body. He states that it has three layers, is coloured and shows energy malfunction. It is my personal conviction that he is using this description to make clear and justify something much simpler. Is the difference between us that his eyes have a special sensitivity or that he uses different words? I accept completely that his experience and specialisation will make him more sensitive but I cannot accept that, if the aura is an objective fact, I have never seen it.

In one sense it does not matter. If he can heal or even diagnose that is a sufficient justification. Faith harnesses powers in the organism which are not reached by logic, and are not normally available to the individual. On the other hand if he is introducing a concept which alienates true scientists and misleads the masses the few benefits may not be worthwhile. An individual can only work at the human level, their ideas work at the social or citizen level. John Lilley in his book 'The Human biocomputer' gets closest to offering a new framework in this area. The healing that is possible in personal dynamics is of a different order to that in social dynamics.

While this review is rather critical I still believe that the book is good reading for those who are interested or unfamiliar with Reichian thought. I do however find it rather sad that the book will largely be appreciated by the converted and does not in any way strengthen the bridge to the mass, or suggest a new design, which Reich attempted. Perhaps a Reichsday will provide a focus. It must be worth exploring.

Mark Matthews