

The pain of denial must be the next most common pain. To deny the "truth" about oneself and to discover that one's facade has been seen for what it is, is a very public humiliation. Most therapy is concerned with the discovery of the self and in our society true selves are incredibly overlaid with one's own or social expectations. It is not just that discovery is painful; acceptance may also be almost an admission of guilt. Discovering one's true personality, for example, may be to move from an area of social security to social exposure. Finding that one is homosexual is not enough, one must additionally cope with the social consequences. Pain is added to pain.

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## **Anne**

### **REFLECTIONS ON A LEARNING EXPERIENCE**

*This account of a particularly important learning experience - certainly a piece of experiential learning - is written in a style similar to Virginia Axeline's Dibs - In Search of Self (Penguin). It recounts "Anne's" reactions to holidaying briefly with her counsellor and family. The holiday location was a large house in the country with a large fruit and vegetable garden, a dozen hens and a couple of horses.*

It was like being in a different sort of playroom. This was a bigger one, with more people in it, and I stayed for longer. It had lots of space, different shapes and sizes, variations of light and shade, brightness and darkness; and the shapes and the shades kept changing.

And now the playroom has gone: there are tears in its place. So many tears. They keep welling up again and again. It seems to be a spring that never dries up, a spring of much accumulated unhappiness.

The playroom has hens in it, hungry nattering hens, and tomatoes, and beans, and blackberries, and elderberries, and a cat. There was grass there and flowers and trees and birds, and buzzing flies, and flies that bit, and nettles that stung. There were bookshops there, lots of them, and trains, and pubs with children and a slide and a climbing frame and drinks, and there were cows and sheep and horses, and views of rolling countryside and steep

hills. And there was a large house there, and a tricycle and bicycles and deck-chairs and balls and toys.

There was the scent of flowers, and damp grass, and the smell of manured fields, and perspiring bodies, and of food cooking. And the taste of the food was there - cooked food, raw food, food of many different kinds. There was a sound of children laughing and crying, shouting and chattering, falling, jumping, pulling and pushing, stroking and patting; there were the sounds of the birds and the wind in the trees, and of adults talking and shouting and laughing, and running and walking and drinking, and of the "Laughing Policeman". There was the feel of warmth, of the sun and breeze, the cold night air, of hot and cold running water, the gritty hen feed, the soft grass, the hard beans, the soft blackberries, the tiny elderberries, and there was the touch of other human beings.

And I want to remember - that's new. Can I learn how to remember. It isn't just the sights and the sounds and the smells and the feelings and the tastings. There was more than that. It isn't that I idealise the playroom - it wasn't all sweetness and light. What was important was that it was real and living and moving and varied and changing. I want to remember the freedom there, the freedom to be me, experiencing and taking part in all this.

I sensed other people's feelings; those of the children came bubbling to the surface; those of the adults were less overt but no less real. And there was happiness and sadness, pleasure and displeasure, satisfaction and frustration, amusement and anger. And I experienced all of these and more. And my feelings too must have been available to others, and there were many of them. But that was alright. There were passing irritations and misunderstandings, but there was acceptance, acceptance of one another; we each had permission to be ourselves.

At last, like a freely working radio receiver and transmitter, I was able to pick up and give off visible and invisible signals, and there were so many of them everywhere around. And I wasn't so continually being jammed, from inside, from outside - oh, such relief!

But there was also much pain and conflict inside me. I couldn't enter fully into the experience of the playroom. For it was such a contrast to the family life I have known. Gone were the heavy obligations to do things and say things and react in ways which

conformed to certain expectations to which everyone ought to subscribe. Gone were the fears of being jeered at, being made to look stupid, being embarrassed. Gone were the fears of receiving irritation and anger. Gone was the necessity of always trying to please. Gone was the fear of somehow being the cause of displeasure. Gone was the need to always remember my "please and thank you's", to be polite, to show my gratitude (whether I felt it or not), to keep saying how kind people were, and how they shouldn't have gone to so much trouble. Gone was the need to sit up straight, not to put my elbows on the table, not to eat too quickly or talk with my mouth full, to hold my knife and fork properly, to sit at the table until everyone had finished, to eat a fixed number of slices of bread and butter before I could have my cake. Gone were the constant remarks on what I did, how I did it, what my mood appeared to be. Gone was the need to fuss/be fussed - have you had enough to eat? to drink? surely another cup? do you feel comfortable? warm enough? cold enough?

How I hated all this show of fussiness to 'prove' how caring and concerned we all were. How hypocritical it could be. What a waste of time and energy. Where were the real people?

There weren't any real people, not in my family life. The conversations were full of sentences beginning with "it . . ." and not "I . . ." or "you . . ."; the conversations were full of platitudes which explained everything so neat and tidy, and abounded with the phrase "of course". No room here for those different shapes and sizes, for those variations in light and shade, brightness and darkness, for changing scents and sounds. No feelings. No freedom. Large high dark walls all around us hemming us in, in our prison.

And all that activity inside this prison, what was it? It was empty, passive, half living. There has to be acceptance and permission and freedom, with no walls, before truly active living is possible, living that involves relating as people, real caring, being alive to ourselves, being alive to the selves of others. There are risks in this living, risks in letting others see and feel us as we are, risks in being willing to feel and see others as they really are. It can be difficult; there may be mistakes and misunderstandings, and tears and anguish. But here lies the potential for richness and true deep living.

At times it was very hard being in that playroom. Such bitterness welled up inside me - bitterness at having being cheated out of so much of life, at having been shackled by so many rules and regulations, oughts and ought not's, hung on me from every

limb until they became a part of me. Bitterness at having to fight so hard to prevent them destroying me completely. There was no energy left to develop me, to find myself. Bitterness when I saw how it is possible for people living with each other in the same house to laugh and have a joke together and tease each other. Why can't I experience all this? Anger wells up inside me at the sterility of my existence. But I selected it, didn't I? I have only myself to blame.

But I didn't know then that anything else existed. How could I know? I longed for deeper and richer living, but thought I longed for phantasy. Now I begin to understand that I wasn't crying for the moon, now that I have been in this playroom.

How can I carry on? You can't have those things, they aren't for you - so you'd better stop moaning and make do without them. That parental message was given so often to me. I still fiercely give it to myself at times, but it doesn't work for long; it's short term repression only.

Sometimes in the playroom I felt very relaxed. I've never felt like that before with any group of people. A paradox here: in prison they all get worn out working so hard to show their concern; in the open they don't appear to work hard, yet they use their whole selves in giving and taking, in positive, not negative, activity. "Doing" in the prison leads to nervous exhaustion; "being" in the open leads to a different sort of tiredness, a pleasant tiredness. "Being" is free from that tension which wastes so much precious energy.

When I refused to play the prison games, or didn't play them properly, they told me I was bad. But was I? Fundamentally different, perhaps, but was I fundamentally bad?

New sensations can be confusing. I welcomed the new sensations in the playroom, yet felt bewildered. For the first time in my life I was really happy relating to others over a period longer than just a few hours. Perhaps I do have the capacity to live with others; perhaps I am fundamentally different from those I have lived with before; perhaps I am not fundamentally deficient in some way, not so rude, impolite, bad-tempered, sulky, ungrateful, over-emotional, impatient, as I have been led to believe. And I do feel the need to relate to others, to find some meaning in life, to find me.

To find me? Can the life, the vitality, the warmth, the freedom in the playroom penetrate inside me, wake up that part of me deep within me which lies there dormant, which has never had a chance to grow? Can I even hope to find myself, my real self, my complete self? Is that possible?

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**John Dann**

### **THE PERSON AS PRODUCT IN PROCESS: AN ART EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

The process/product debate is still commonly encountered in the field of art education. 'Of course', it is said, 'the process is more important than the product'. Perhaps the most recent skit on this vulgar dichotomy is that offered by an anonymous writer in the first issue of J.A.D.E. (1982). Poor Alice, raring to go, asks Mr. Fellow, art teacher extraordinary: 'But what is the subject we have to do . . . ?' Fellow retorts:

Paint! Canvas! We are involved in rethinking - rethinking

'Paint! Canvas! We are involved in rethinking - rethinking the visio-plastic process. Finished canvases are products for dealers. Art is experience - the process, not property. Property is theft . . . '

Surely, assert those in the 'process' camp, it is not what the pupil makes, but how he makes it that really matters. The process is all. Whatever the shape of the palace of art education, process is King.

In the field of assessment, however, it is not too difficult to understand why assessors have tended to focus on the artefact. After all they can be packaged, stored, exhibited and observed at leisure. The process, however, may be inclined to resist such convenient capture! Rowntree's (1977) picture of the ecologist examining regurgitated owl pellets rather than waiting to observe what the bird eats, vividly portrays an understandable preference for the relatively accessible product.