

client's basement to examine and acknowledge the stored objects down there, and then help to transport them to the light of the penthouse. Hell, they don't know how to get into their own basements. The doors are locked.

As a client/patient I welcome appropriate interaction, though clearly not exploitative, as in the experience with Dr

U. A self-disclosing intervention can give the client a new, creative, transformational way to view the therapeutic relationship. The unhappy, angry person is nurtured in mutuality and it's in this exchange that learning begins. Therapy is after all a learning relationship and a relationship by definition means connecting — one to the other.

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## ***Quaesitor — How Humanistic Therapy Got Going in Britain***

*Tom Feldberg interviewed by David Jones*

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**David:** How did you get involved in Quaesitor?

**Tom:** I was dragged into one of the introductory workshops run by Paul Lowe, reluctantly curious because I wasn't into any of these things. I was a lecturer in mathematics and a Marxist at that time — 1970. Nothing could have been further from where I finished up. In the workshop we did exercises where you had to walk around and touch somebody. I found it absolutely terrifying, and revealing. It blew my mind and from then on I went to every group I could.

**David:** Who started it?

**Tom:** Alan Watts, Bill Schutz and others came over from the Esalen Institute in California. They held a weekend workshop at The Inn On The Park hotel in London in about 1970. Paul Lowe took over after that weekend and started a programme in his basement flat in Avenue Road, St John's Wood. After a year or two of this Paul set up a nine month intensive; three evenings a week, a weekend each month and three five-day groups. Many of the weekends were run by Americans who came over, people like Bill Schutz, Jay

*Quaesitor was the first growth centre in Britain — part of the Encounter Movement that came from California in the late 1960s. The Encounter Movement faded away, giving rise to the Rajneesh 'cult'; the IDHP (Institute for the Development of Human Potential); the AHPP; and to many of the humanistic and integrative trainings now grouped in the HIPS section of the UKCP. Tom Feldberg, a UKCP psychotherapist, was an encounter group leader at Quaesitor and one of the people who started the IDHP diploma course. David Jones, commissioning editor for S&S and also a UKCP psychotherapist, took the IDHP diploma course at Guildford.*

Stattman, Jeff Love . . . This intensive made us the first breed of humanistic group leaders in Europe.

**David:** The groups were entirely experiential?

**Tom:** Yes. It was the existential, here and now, approach. At that time the theory was 'there is no theory', a reaction to psychoanalysis and head stuff which had made therapy nothing but an intellectual exercise. We went to the other extreme, where 'analysis', 'therapist' and 'professional' were dirty words; our intensive was deliberately not called a training. Encounter was the umbrella term which contained elements of gestalt, bodywork, psychodrama, etc.

**David:** How did people establish themselves as group leaders?

**Tom:** You established yourself in a number of ways; by being more open and honest than anyone else in the group; feelings were the only thing that counted and the more people you succeeded in 'catharting' the more successful you were. The bigger your feeling the more strokes you got. And people survived as group leaders if they took more risks than anybody else. That was it. There was no supervision or follow up or anything of that kind.

**David:** How about boundaries?

**Tom:** The idea was not to have boundaries. Boundaries were part of the establishment, part of society. You have to remember that the humanistic psychology of that time was part of the movement for change that swept America and Europe in the late 1960s and was characterised by question-

ing traditional values, rejecting artificially imposed values or boundaries on human behaviour and recognising that feelings complement thought in providing guides to action. One of the slogans was 'it is forbidden to forbid'. You explored all boundaries and pushed them to extremes. It was a time of great experimentation. Paul Lowe's thing was that if you were afraid of something you should do it. He used to do crazy things like going to the toilet with the door open and exposing himself in many other ways, simply because it was embarrassing to do so.

**David:** Did this lead to the sort of violation that David Boadella has written about where arms were broken and someone was rolled up in a carpet and suffocated?

**Tom:** These are exaggerated stories, but violence did happen in India in Poonah among the Rajneeshes, where people really got beaten up. Sex and violence was almost institutionalised there, as part of the group culture, till they were dropped due to adverse publicity. What happened there was an extreme logical extension of the ethos of that time: 'Take a risk, communicate your feelings as openly as possible', even if this meant beating somebody up! I was once almost suffocated in a leaderless group because I was not 'getting into it', a terrifying experience. Since that time I resolved I would always give people a choice in my groups. However, I always tried to extend the boundaries to make the groups as real as possible. For instance, there used to be wrestling in many of my groups; but there were certain ground rules: no slapping, punching or pulling of hair. If you wanted to stop whatever you were involved in you

simply said something like 'Stop it — I mean it' and that was respected.

**David:** Was there covert sexism, in which it was assumed men are prime movers and women are followers, which can easily lead to feelings of abuse?

**Tom:** Oh I think that's true, but there was nothing sinister about it. Because the theory was that there was no theory, you were discouraged from reflecting. The thing was to act, to just act what you feel. You were told to 'say what you feel and feel what you say'. Thought did not come into it, certainly not of the sort that looks at prejudice. In some ways the early humanistic and human potential people were part of a very unconscious movement. It claimed to have no ideological base, which meant the current ideology was the base and unconscious at the same time. So if you happened to have a sexist therapist he would just act it out. Both male and female group leaders used to get off with participants in their groups. It was quite blatant. It was probably what was supposed to happen. And if you had a leader with more of a feminist approach there would be that too. There were some abuses, but it was not like the press made out.

**David:** What did the press say?

**Tom:** I remember a reporter from the *News of The World* coming incognito to a 48-hour marathon. The leader, Denny Yuson, now called Veeresh, came from Synanon where very heavy encounter was used to help people come off drugs. At one stage in the marathon we had to take off our clothes and shout insults at one another for over an hour. The *News of the World* headline the next Sunday was

'Starkers in the House of Screams'. The result was we got even more people coming to Quaesitor.

**David:** How long did that go on for?

**Tom:** Two strands developed. There were those who were interested in blowing their minds and experiencing 'everything' (they went Orange) and there were those who wanted to become respectable institutional therapists. About half the UK group leaders went Orange and quite a few of these became respectable therapists later on! Paul Lowe went to India to join Bhagwan Shri Rajneesh, the founder of the Orange people, who practised a mixture of eastern religion and encounter. Paul, as Teertha, became their main encounter group leader. Patricia Lowe, as Poonam, was the organisational head of the Orange people in Britain.

Paul passed Quaesitor on to David Blagden. He was an actor, had been in the Merchant Navy, and was a straight character. He was very much into growth but he was not hippy or anything like that. Gestalt therapy and various kinds of body work became respectable. The spiritual side took off as well with Diana Bechetti (now Diana Whitmore) who got psychosynthesis going and Jeff Love who brought enlightenment intensives to Europe.

A number of us got together, Frank Lake, David Boadella, David Blagdon, John Heron, Kate Hopkinson and myself, and decided that it was time we put some order into this, so we founded the IDHP (Institute for the Development of Human Potential). The aim was to put a package together, market it and then give people a diploma at the end. There was a big fight about this because a lot of people were

against diplomas of any kind. Their idea was that people should do it for its own sake and not get corrupted as they do when things become institutionalised. Eventually (and inevitably!) we began to get people who came to the courses at least as much to get a piece of paper as they did for growth.

I ran the first IDHP course in London in the Quaesitor premises. We did have a set of lectures and all courses ended with comprehensive 'self, peer, and facilitator assessment' sessions (brilliantly conceived by John Heron). So that is the way things moved. That is what came out of the ashes of Quaesitor.

**David:** I did the 1982-84 IDHP diploma course at Guildford, (not for the piece of paper, I hasten to add, but for the experiential work!). I got a lot from the encounter weekend you ran for us. And I found the reading list useful too. But back to Quaesitor. How did it end?

**Tom:** The local council did not like two or three hundred people coming every weekend to a business run from a residential premises and they closed it down. Maureen Yeomans was the administrator of Quaesitor and she became the administrator of IDHP. She also started the Human Potential Resources group in London, and the *Human Potential* magazine which is still going, so that too is a child of Quaesitor.

**David:** How did the IDHP diploma courses get along?

**Tom:** Encounter as a basic model for IDHP courses gradually gave way to the co-counselling model.

**David:** I wonder if the shift was due to the

explosive nature of the encounter model, rather than with the people involved. The co-counselling model which we used at Guildford seemed to give rise to fewer difficulties.

**Tom:** I think the encounter model is a very tricky one. You have really got to know what you are doing. Although there are no stated boundaries, as a therapist you have got to know exactly what the boundaries are to keep things contained. Otherwise things go out of control. The boundaries have to be there tacitly. That is why hardly anyone runs encounter groups any more. I think they were great but you really needed a large amount of experience because it appears to be a free-for-all but actually it isn't. I was very clear how far I would go with someone, where I would stop.

When I ran the first IDHP two-year course I was going into uncharted territory. I had previously run weekend and six-month intensives and somehow assumed that two years would be more of the same. The first year was pretty good. Everybody blew their minds and thought they would soon get cured and/or enlightened; we all had a great time! That did not happen. Instead, we had to deal with issues such as transference, power, etc. (Note that transference was not supposed to exist; it was just another piece of psychoanalytic bullshit . . .). I had to deal with issues in a long course that you don't get to deal with when you are running a weekend. One of the great things about the encounter model is that issues like transference and power get very much heightened and so have to be dealt with for real. Whereas in a more structured academic model they can more easily be by-passed.

**David:** How long did you stay with the IDHP?

**Tom:** By 1982 I was on the way out. I carried on as a therapist to about 1992. I spent many summers working at the Skyros Centre; became a trainer with IPSS (Institute for Psychotherapy and Social Studies, which is a member organisation of UKCP in the Psychoanalytic and Psychodynamic section). I tried to keep the humanistic flag going there. But what I found was that people became uneasy; they wanted an approach that had a clear theoretical base. Alan Watts' 'wisdom of insecurity' and Krishnamurti's dictum 'Truth is a pathless land' no longer seemed to have the same appeal.

**David:** So the theory that there is no theory is not enough?

**Tom:** For me the theory that there is no theory was underpinned by an existential approach. I was lucky to have this philosophical base. Not everyone had that. I was fortunate to be associated with R.D. Laing and be at Quaesitor at the same time.

**David:** Where did you train with Ronnie Laing?

**Tom:** At the Philadelphia Association. Sadly, they could not sustain the existential approach either and seem to have gone over to a variant of psychoanalysis.

Fritz Perls was one of the people who wrote intelligently about the humanistic/encounter approach. You know he was one of the people who said 'Stop this bullshit, there is no theory'. But he did have a whole theoretical underpinning himself. It was not enough, though, as a theoretical base for psychotherapy, so

many people sought refuge in something else: Jungian, Freudian psychoanalysis, whatever. What we used to say in those days was drop all your ideas, just see what is happening. Be completely open. The thing was to let it go. If you could do that, it could be very liberating, but some people found it terrifying.

Basically I feel very positive about that period and it is a shame that a lot of it has been lost. Times have changed as well. It is not only the therapists who have become careful. For many, the world out there is frightening and frightened.

**David:** The spiritual side seems to be going quite well at Karuna and with the psychosynthesis people.

**Tom:** There is a plus and minus about that. I have been involved in spiritual groups as well for several years now and what I have noticed is a lot of people get in there as a way of avoiding relationship. Psychosynthesis mixes therapy and spirituality, but it does not get properly into either as it is not attached to any spiritual tradition, or to any psychotherapy school either. It does not really deal with your shit.

**David:** Would you say that is also true of Buddhist-based psychotherapy?

**Tom:** Buddhism is an established spiritual tradition with a clearly defined philosophy, methodology and goals. Enlightenment is what Buddhism wants you to realise. If you achieve this your therapy has been completed!

**David:** Any final comment?

**Tom:** Yes, be happy and let the good times roll . . .