

## ***Self and Society. AGM and Workshop***

### **Being and Becoming 20th May 2006**

#### **A Personal Review of the Workshop Glynes X Jacques**

*How do we find a common denominator in a value system of diversity? Should we have commonality? Does this contradict the philosophy of individuality and personal difference?*

I went to the AGM because of the workshop title 'Being and Becoming: a celebration'. Any AGM launching the day with a promising workshop, will get written into my diary.

In this workshop led by AHP(B) member Els van Ooijen we were asked to put our names on a sticker and say how we were feeling. We mingle and introduce ourselves. I discover only a handful know each other. Our workshop leader breaks us up and we return to the circle. I focus on the central theme of how we work as humanistic therapists.

We are guided through a body relaxation meditation. I am given a brief space to settle into my own private world. Just as I am getting into myself, I am asked to focus on my clients. I balk, I am not the slightest bit interested in my clients. I am much more interested in the

people in this room. Who are this group of AHP(B) people? Where do they all come from?

Els gives us our next instruction. We are going to make a collage. 'Make a visual representation of what being humanistic means to you.' We take magazines. Glue and felt tips. The room becomes a buzz of intense tearing and snipping. I'm not sure how long I ripped and pasted but it was all too brief. I reluctantly join a small group to discuss my groping abstractions. We are to find 'one word themes' in our creations.

Four heads stare at the colourful images that lay on the floor. 'This is the dark and the light.' 'This is my humour.' 'This is me struggling for potential.' I scribe a few of the key words, trying to balance compliance and a desire for rebellion. Desire for space to explore our personal images the way we want to, (client led)



## *The AGM Photo Album*



against complying with the leader's instructions to 'find one word' Now we must call them out. Which words could be grouped together? Els collected in the word stickers, grouping them by similarity, energy, movement, etc.

Now we are asked to find a collective noun, which sum up these random words. What is the collective noun for, seeing, witness, view? What seems to matter here is the mutual collaboration of identifying themes. At this point I am conducting an inner philosophical debate about how groups conform to instructions with enormous trust and good will. We allow external process to be imposed without explanation. How interesting that we can find our own private reasons for going along with suggestions. At the same time, there is a quiet body of active thought. I wonder if these are qualities of the humanistic position, a willingness to explore and experiment without sacrificing the ability to reflect and assess.

Now we have a list of words described as collective nouns

Actualisation. Spiritual Dimension. Amazement. Witness. Now. Energy and Being. Interpretation. Acceptance. Love of Life.

Now we have to grade them by placing stickers beside the qualities we feel to be the most important. As a random slice of time, it is quite interesting to watch who chooses which words. None of my words actually appear. They were all lost in the fictional translation called

collective nouns, which were neither nouns, nor collective. No matter. I am actually enjoying myself. There is a kind of enjoyable anarchy, a critical mass, which is forming its own momentum. The rebel is loose and part of the field. Participation is a central, important experience, rather than believing we are conducting objective research.

I reflect on the nature of this participation. In the spirit of humanistic practice participation does not have to be active. And not everyone in this little group is active. For those who are doers, it is sometimes hard to learn from the quieter reflective sections and give up the driven part of themselves. 'But who would write the reports, be the Chair etc?' I hear you shout. Perhaps it is our own shadow, that while we support clients to take a step back occasionally, we don't trust our own organisation to thrive if we give up our established identities. I am looking at something of a microcosm in this room.

Next we are asked to place our collages on the ground, moving them near to, or away from others according to their degree of relationship. Then we stand in positions which represent where we feel we belong in the organisation. We are going at a gallop. A web of bodies emerges from a central figure. Perhaps, needless to say, I am on the outer boundaries, a 'one-foot out and one in' kind of position. Connected and observing.

Something else is forming here. There is an atmosphere being created in the very process of

participation. A sense of belonging to something important, even from the edges.

From this position I experience palpable warmth, which fills the room. This collective quality is not easily accountable on paper. It is a field created by the phenomenon of group process. A holding energy is formed by a

sense of presence, moments created by being part of a collective. I feel moved and look out into the leafy London square. I feel a sense of looking at a past and a future. That all groups change is a phenomenological truth. This seemed to be a moment readying for new change.

### **Recording History. A digital film**

This brings me to an offer to take this idea further. That much of our collective and individual experience is not accessible is a fact. Few of us write books or papers. I would like to invite participants to share their feelings, thoughts and philosophies about humanistic practice in a documentary film.

This is a wide definition, which includes how you apply your humanistic belief to your loves, life and politics. There are many creative ways you can do this. Be interviewed, do a voice over, write a letter, a questionnaire, or other piece that someone else reads or answers, participate in a discussion. Any inventive way to communicate which reflects your relationship to humanistic practice will be considered for contribution.

**A loose initial deadline for all submissions is Sept 30<sup>th</sup> 2006.**

I hope to begin filming for this in the Autumn. Anyone who would like to take other roles, like organising the shooting schedule (this means ringing people up) will be welcome.

Glynes X Jacques

Please email or phone me for more information.

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