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Résumé

Des femmes enceintes furent soumises à des stimuli auditifs ("speech noise", voix de femme disant "bébé pleure", et des pleurs de bébé) durant le stade 2, le stade REM et les stades 3 et 4 (SWS) de sommeil, avant l'accouchement (phase I) et après (phase II). L'intensité des stimuli allait de 10 décibels à 70 décibels. Selon les résultats, le seuil auditif s'élève graduellement du stade 2 au stade REM, puis aux stades 3 et 4. En ne considérant que les stimuli, ce seuil est minimum pour les pleurs de nourisson; il est plus élevé pour la voix humaine et encore plus élevé pour le "speech noise". Il y a une diminution globale du seuil auditif après l'accouchement.

Toutes ces différences sont significatives à l'exception de la différence entre le stimulus voix de femme disant "bébé pleure" et le stimulus "pleurs de bébé".

Les implications théoriques de ces résultats font l'objet de la discussion.

Nature's loving proxy, the watchful mother.

Edward George Bulwer-Lytton
1803-1873

ON THE PSYCHIATRIC AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF SENSITIVITY TRAINING*

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*The pot calling the kettle black.
Keeping the whole stove to itself*

The Human Potential Movement (HPM)

From its very beginnings the HPM has been characterized by fragmentation. Some of its numerous directions have been guided by responsible and learned men, and the benefits to individual people, to psychiatry and to society in general have been apparent. Unfortunately the flight into Utopia which has typified a great many of its explosive fragments has by now become a more present and persisting menace. And a consideration of this great diversity of techniques and ideas is most emphatically within the field of competence of the Canadian Psychiatric Association.

Even people working in human growth centres acknowledge the fact that effective professional organizations which might insist on minimal standards of training and conduct do not exist in their field, although there have been a few trainer programs in this country, notably at: the Centre for Human Relations and Community Studies at Sir George Williams University, at York University and at the regional human relations councils in a few provinces. However, the matter of trainer certification is far from adequately settled, and a number of people in the HPM are actually opposed to the very idea of such restraints.

In the meantime this field (as every responsible worker in it knows perfectly well) is extraordinarily vulnerable to the entry of

untrained if well-meaning enthusiasts, egotistical power seekers, and outright quacks (2). Indeed this is now an era of 'pop psych' just as certainly as the 19th century was the era of 'pop physick', and the field is wide open for the enterprising entrepreneur. The private citizen of today can buy the Optokinetic Learning Device, the Altered State of Consciousness Induction Device and the Bio-Feedback Device; he may engage in any number of half-revived oriental techniques such as *Yoga*, *Transcendental Meditation*, *Tai-Chi Chuan*, and *Aikido*; he may apply to a variety of human growth centres for *Gestalt* therapy, basic group encounters, structural integration, weekend marathons, nude encounters and a great diversity of personal growth, personal awareness and human potential groups. Yet there is still no legislation in Canada to prevent anyone from calling himself a 'trainer' and accepting hopeful clients. In fact, whether a person can be certified or not as an encounter leader in Canada today is not the point. The point is that anyone may legally counsel people or operate as a therapist without training, experience or even an ethical intent.

The Deficiencies of the Growth Centres

In the human growth centres there is no adequate screening of the candidates who are not told what behaviour control techniques will be used; there is no provision for the handling of the acute psychiatric crises which occasionally occur; there is no follow-up after discharge from the centre; and no

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ministered to only by a certified nurse

research of any consequence is ever contemplated by these centres. Yet these healers, expeditors, facilitators, group leaders, or whatever they may be called, are in fact practising some variant of the art of healing. In order to protect themselves from malpractice suits they usually claim to be merely normal people interacting with other normal people in the interests of human growth and awareness; yet to many of the patient-clients they undoubtedly act in the role of healer.

The Humanist and the Magic Humanist

The humanist, while recognizing and appreciating the diversity found in any group of people, and while admiring the accidental and the spontaneous in man and nature, is nevertheless convinced that man's conscious mind can effect transactions with what it conceives to be reality, and that it is this exercise of the conscious, thinking mind which must provide the greatest satisfactions in life and, at the same time, ensure the survival of the whole person. This is not to deny the significance of feeling but it is to suggest that man's capacity to be rational is of primary importance if his fullest potential is to be realized.

By contrast the magic humanist, whose re-emergence has been much applauded in recent years, contends that the real or authentic man has freed himself from the inhibitory activity of his cerebrum. Thus, feeling is especially honoured, and it is the experience of feeling in the immediate present which is promoted.

In the T-group, and especially in the encounter group, everything is done to facilitate the unrestrained expression of emotion and, concomitantly, to inhibit the cognitive aspects of mental functioning. The emphasis is on frankness and openness, and this is best accomplished through direct, affective confrontation between the participants.

Practitioners of these techniques often refer to themselves as 'humanistic psychologists' or 'radical humanists'. The name may not matter very much. In fact there is a large and decidedly irrational periphery around a few responsible people who are genuinely attempting to respond to a num-

ber of the vital needs of modern man. And it is especially in this periphery that the tendency to celebrate the fabulous, the exotic, the merely novel, and the magical may be discerned. It is as though these seekers after enlightenment have rediscovered the ancient belief that knowledge gained through the mind is illusory and unhelpful, but that knowledge gained through the suspension of the rational mind leads to rejuvenation and even to rebirth. And this, of course, has always been the ultimate secret of the mysteries, both ancient and modern.

The Old Culture and the New Culture

This is why the proponents of the encounter movement often contrast the old culture and the 'wholly liberated' new culture. The latter is said to emphasize personal rights rather than property rights, co-operation instead of competition, communal ownership rather than private ownership, sexuality and love rather than violence and hate, openness instead of privacy, and immediate gratification rather than postponement and further striving. Variations on all these goals have been characteristic of millennial cults for many centuries, and this has been exhaustively documented (1,5). It is fascinating that these goals are commonly expressed by advocates of the encounter movement today and, moreover, this movement has adopted a behaviour control technique (the T-group and its many successors) which is a most effective instrument for the teaching of the values of this most recent revival of the myth of the new culture.

With these techniques the peak experience is possible and sometimes occurs. The sudden suspension of the intellect and the massive discharge of emotion both tend to engender the belief that something crucially important has happened; and it may easily be seen that this resembles closely the moment of enlightenment which has always been characteristic of the intense religious experience. It also resembles the euphoric 'high' frequently experienced by the users of certain drugs (3) and, indeed, the encounter has often been advanced as an

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alternative to the use of such drugs. Both experiences are based on the suspension of the rational mind and a temporary departure from the perception of ordinary reality.

Consider the remarkable example afforded by the experience of the Addiction Research Foundation of Ontario (ARF) — this large organization began to implement its Organization Development Program over three years ago, and since that time this process has been inexorable and every further step predictable. A culmination of sorts occurred on February 28, 1972 in a most extraordinary incident that is worth describing in some detail because it illustrates that the ideas of the human potential movement, however benign they may seem to be, contain a considerable potential for social and psychological harm when they are untrainedly applied.

The event was the Annual Staff Conference of the Foundation which was held that year at the YMCA establishment at Geneva Park. The Conference was introduced under the title 'Perspectives 72'; but it was generally understood to be an event bearing a direct historical relationship to previous staff conferences of the Foundation. About one hundred people came from all parts of the province to attend the Conference, and they were told that the theme would be 'change'. The organizers of the Conference had been persuaded that this was a topic highly relevant to the work of the ARF. Therefore, the participants were innocent in the sense that they were not given any information regarding the actual intentions of the organizers. On the other hand, the organizers were secretive because their real intent was to conduct an unscientific experiment, and for this they were determined to use the staff members who had come voluntarily and in good faith to Geneva Park.

On the first morning of the Conference it was announced that breakfast was to be in a new location; and the participants gathered there for that purpose, but breakfast did not appear. Instead, they were invited to enter an adjoining room where they were seated as though to hear a prepared speech by one of the organizers. A number

of participants subsequently described this speech as being intentionally disjointed and tiresome, but of particular interest is the fact that during the delivery of this material the temperature of the room was raised to about 90 degrees. Following his speech the leader remained at the microphone, and from this position he instructed the people to move the chairs to the sides of the room. One chair, he said, would remain in the centre. The participants were instructed to mill about this chair, the lights became very dim and loud music and traffic noises were heard. The leader continued to speak but now his voice was actually emanating from a tape recorder on the other side of the room.

Any one familiar with the encounter literature will have already recognized that the 'expediter' was conducting a variety of the behaviour control technique developed by William C. Schutz several years ago in California, although the real origins of the technique are, of course, very ancient. What was interesting about it in this context was its application primarily as a demonstration of its power.

Some of the participants moved to the side of the room and a few left the scene altogether. However, most were obedient to the commands of the leader and milled about the centre of the room; they followed his orders unquestioningly; they confirmed the hypothesis that any designated authority can, should he so desire, control the behaviour of his subjects even to the point of causing them to act in an absurd and child-like manner.

Finally the tape recorder was switched off and the participants were instructed to sit on the floor a few feet away from each other. The lights rose and soft music was heard. In this crude and unsophisticated display there was the application of a basic technique of behaviour control — sensory overstimulation was alternated with a period of relative sensory deprivation in a setting in which there was a strong leader and much encouragement to be conformist and compliant.

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The leader now assured the participants that he had intentionally humiliated them. He had denied them food, made them listen to a confusing address in an overheated room, caused them to mill about like simple and obedient subjects while cacaphony proceeded from a tape recorder in a corner of the darkness; and finally he caused them to rest quietly. He now instructed them to go to small groups so that they might discuss, in purely affective terms, how they felt about the events of that morning.

The organizers of this experiment had, presumably, achieved their purpose. They had demonstrated that men and women can be abused by authority even when they are educated, intelligent and free people who are members of both a helping agency and a liberal democratic society. It should not be difficult to recognize that if similar techniques are applied in an essentially authoritarian society then total conformity and obedience is facilitated through the agency of existential fear.

Informed Consent

This small example is presented because it illustrates the related issues of informed consent and voluntariness. Before any person joins any variation of the encounter experience he should be told precisely what techniques will be used, who will use them, what hazards may attend their use and what provisions are available for the handling of untoward reactions consequent upon their use. Further, some indication of the ideological position of the trainers, as well as their identity, their training and their professional affiliations, should be revealed. They are, after all, quite influential people, and they are commonly concerned in modifying the attitudes and behaviour of their subjects. These trainers are often convinced that the institutions of the larger society are no longer relevant and may even be injurious, and that the new culture, however Utopian it may be, and however great its potential for authoritarianism, is a creation of inestimable value (4).

In the case of Organization Development (OD) which is the application of a number

of techniques (often including sensitivity training) to the employees of corporations and branches of government, it should be essential that there be a written code guaranteeing the right of every employee to refuse to participate and to withdraw from the program at any time. No person should ever be dismissed or be caused any anxiety regarding the possibility of dismissal because of his rejection of the principles and practices of OD. Yet it is still true that OD is not voluntary nor is informed consent ever seriously considered by the managers who implement such programs. Total conformity is essential to the success of the program, and therefore no screening of the participants is done; and 'follow-up' takes the form of additional training at the usually isolated growth centre.

The Responsibility of the Canadian Psychiatric Association

The validity of the claims of sensitivity training, the encounter movement and Organization Development has never been either confirmed or disproved by the application of properly designed, controlled research.

In spite of this the continual spread of the use of the T-group and its many successors is observed. The Canadian Psychiatric Association must not take it for granted that these techniques are either universally applicable or wholly free of risk, and it is proposed that it should be the responsibility of the C.P.A. to show a primary interest in what may well be a basic public hygiene problem. *kinda vague - eh?*

By the end of the 19th century it was decided that the private citizen did not have the right to set himself up as a healer of the physical ills of man. It is certainly time for a further decision to the effect that the private citizen does not have the right to set himself up as a healer of the psychic ills of man. The mind is no better defended against the excesses of the charlatan than is the body. And the C.P.A., an organization whose primary interest must always be the protection of the mental health of the people of this country, must recognize that the

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proliferation of quackery within its undoubted field of competence will rebound to the advantage of neither the profession nor the people.

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Résumé

Le Mouvement du Potentiel Humain ne peut que difficilement se défendre contre l'entrée de personnes non entraînées mais animées de bonnes intentions, et de francs charlatans. En vue de se protéger contre les

poursuites du chef d'incurie, les organisateurs des rencontres protestent qu'ils sont simplement des personnes normales, engagées dans une action réciproque avec d'autres personnes normales, et n'ayant d'autre but que le développement et la prise de conscience de l'homme. Aux yeux de beaucoup de leurs clients, par contre, ils agissent incontestablement comme guérisseurs. Dans le Groupe T, et spécialement à l'occasion des rencontres, on souligne l'importance qu'il y a à exprimer les émotions sans aucune restriction, et on considère que la méthode la meilleure pour obtenir ce résultat consiste dans la confrontation directe entre les participants.

L'Association Canadienne de Psychiatrie ne doit pas considérer comme acquis que ces techniques peuvent être universellement appliquées ou ne présentent aucun danger. Elle doit également se rendre compte que la prolifération de charlatans dans son domaine indiscutable de compétence ne présente d'avantages ni pour la profession ni pour le public.

Nay we see [the] weakness and credulity of man is such, as they will often prefer a montabank [sic] or witch before a learned physician. And therefore the poets were clear-sighted in discerning this extreme folly, when they made Aesculapius and Circe brother and sister, both children of the sun.

Advancement of Learning, Bk. II

Sir Francis Bacon
1561 - 1626