

EUROPEAN NETWORK MEMOIRS

Winter, 1981

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A man who is being delivered from the danger of a fierce lion does not object, whether this service is performed by an unknown or an illustrious individual. Why, therefore, do people seek knowledge from celebrities?

Al-Ghazali



NAISSANCE

...This is as much as to say that we must renounce all preconceived opinions, however knowing they make us feel, and try to discover the meaning of things for the patient...

C.G. Jung

There was not yet enough light to cast the dreary, though noble, shadows of Invalides onto wet Paris streets when the frantic drone of a garbage truck (the urban cock-crow of New York City, Rio, London), crushing yesterday's junk, signaled the approaching day. Still drowsy from nine hours of jet lag, I left the Hotel du Grand Palais and my cramped, flower lined, two-star room and made my way through a light rain and icy wind to number 139 Boulevard Montparnasse. Though no plaque announces the fact, this neat, modest, building is the *École de Service Social*, the center for preparing French social workers.

An aluminum wine chiller, sprouting seven freshly cut grand red tulips (I continue to wonder where they came from in the middle of January) and a flawless pink rose in a J&B bottle are placed in the center of a crude circle fashioned by the placement of student writing tables. Our "informal" discussions are elegantly called to order by Brian Thorne, director of counseling at East Anglia University and freshly appointed vice-president of the newly formed *Institut de Développement et de Formation Centrés sur la Personne* (or, referred to in English: The Institute for Person Centered Approach and Training). Other members of the Institut present are: Christiane, chief social worker for Air France; Ann, a teacher of yoga; Monique de Verdilhac, coordinator of education for the Institut and professor of social work; Michel Bois, president of the Institut and personnel director

for an electrical construction firm; Ann, a professor of social work specializing in adolescent education; Paul, a social worker in education in the provinces; Claudestam, who recently retired from 30 years in psychiatric social work; Marie Alice (Lali), a tutor in the school of social service; and Claude Viel, a vice-president in the Institut and a professor of social work. Also present for these discussions are André de Peretti, Elke Mearns, Chuck Devonshire, and, of course, myself.

"It all began ten years ago," Monique recalls, when Ann (the social work professor), Claude, and she were "called" by Gilbert (Mourre?) Murray, an exponent of Rogers's writings, "to apply the person centered approach to the education and training of social workers in France." After two years, or so, Murray died, "brutally" (under what circumstances we were not told, and no one asked) and Monique, Claude, and Ann then recruited André, of whom they had heard through Murray, to consult with them and advise them on their work. André became their philosophical and spiritual teacher and counselor.

"How to be a trainer and remain a person!" was the "major problem" they addressed themselves to in the beginning. After two years they were accepted "as persons" by their students in social work and, "with André's help," they were able to accomplish, using person centered approaches and still maintaining high educational standards, many remarkable things in the realm of social work education and training.

Two accomplishments were considered worthy of mentioning in the meeting. First, to replace the traditional authoritarian supervision of social worker trainees, an "information group", consisting of 5 or 6 persons (in training) and a "trainer" was constituted. The "information group" met together throughout the training program. During the course of their work the role of the trainer, or staff person, became

more that of a "person" and the group became, really, a self-directed support system. It must be understood, Monique stressed, that this was a very revolutionary innovation in the context of French education.

The second accomplishment regarded as worthy of comment (in telling their own story to themselves, and to us) regards the confrontation with the institution. The school of social service was, at that time, reluctant to give diplomas to graduates trained by these "liberal" methods. The entire student community (which, incidentally, was drawn closer together through this process) applied itself to a solution of this problem. They searched for, but could not find, suggestions in Carl's writings for how to change a system, such as they found themselves in, from the inside. The solution they found, on their own, for dealing with the problem of maintaining both a self-directed learning process and standards established from the outside was to contact more or less sympathetic (though not un-critical) members from both within and without the educational system to debate and discuss with the students the nature of their learning experiences rather than to judge or evaluate the students. This assembly, this community forum for learning, students together with consultants, as I understand it, met together at the end of each school year and was "facilitated" by André de Peretti. Not only did this meeting provide a forum for students and an educational function for the institution but also, without a doubt, provided valuable suggestions for improving the quality of the educational experience for students. These innovations were initiated in 1975 and continue to this day.

These persons, who are now formalizing the Institut de Développement et de Formation Centrés sur la Personne, began as a support group for Monique, Claude, and Ann during the period when they were

creating student-centered approaches to learning within their school of social service. The three teachers invited other people who had the "smell" of person centered approaches to their work or living (regardless of their formal training or background), to join them in a mutually supportive learning experience. Through the years they have "done a lot of work on themselves" as well as continuing to develop student-centered education in the field of social work. The mark of their influence has been left on this very school of social service where we are, this moment, meeting. This building is tastefully decorated and informally furnished in the spirit of an artist's studio rather than a school. As a matter of fact, Lali tells us, these high-ceilinged, warm, quarters once belonged to a chief disciple of the French painter Corot and creativity is still its favorite tenant.

The efforts of this group have been felt in other aspects of the wider society as well. Christiane, who is a supervisor of 25 social workers at Air France, was a graduate of the first class to finish under the person centered learning program. Air France, to this day, continues to send its social workers through the course of the social service school. Just begun is the new two-year program of training in person centered groups for physicians. Admittedly, these 20 doctors, all interested in homeopathy and natural healing approaches, are not entirely in the traditional "medical establishment", but the tremendous significance of "lowly social workers" teaching "doctors" cannot be overlooked.

Though this support group, now the Institut, has already accomplished much together (stressing that their work has always been approached with the greatest discipline and professional attitude by them) in their own personal development (they have attended all

of the "person centered workshops in France") and participated in many encounters, they wish to go a step further in acquiring proficiencies in the practice of person centered individual and group therapy. Specifically, they want to acquire "truth", not credentials, and want to be in contact with the "La Jolla Center" while, at the same time, being "themselves". The purpose of this new Institut is: "...to offer its members and other interested parties the necessary opportunities and activities for personal and professional development" and their first undertaking is to constitute a training program (for themselves and others) in person centered therapy.

At this point André, feeling the necessity to protect the Rogerian reputation in France (which he has built up almost single-handedly) did not want the person centered approach associated (exclusively) with social workers who, by their own assessment, are held in low social esteem in France but would rather like the educational resources of the Institut to benefit French psychologists, psychiatrists, physicians, and so forth and, presumably, for Rogerian approaches to be associated with the highest professional aspirations. If consultants come from La Jolla, for instance, they should be available to a population beyond this group of founders of the Institut.

As an aside to the general discussion André drew a chorus of loud opposition from the group when he said he doesn't feel the social workers are esteemed as lowly as they portray themselves and he urged them to take a more positive attitude by associating themselves (in an equal footing) with psychologists, psychiatrists, and other professionals. Monique replied that she felt in André's emphasis on medical professions (without including social work) a continuation of the "weight" already placed on her shoulders by the medically-oriented professionals. She and André agreed that there

existed a "trench" between them which has been difficult (and remains difficult) to bridge but they remain with good will and respect toward each other.

At this point chuck proposed a three year training program in the person centered therapy for three levels of student: "beginning, intermediate, and advanced." The model he suggested would follow, generally, the training program in Rome and the program designed by Carl in Lugano with two "intensive", ten-day, meetings each year, along with weekend workshops, and "supervision" meetings. Chuck proposed that FDI-France be "re-activated" (André and Ann Alifat, who now joins our meeting, are the principle FDI officials in France and have not met together for two years) as the institutional vehicle for staging such a program. Chuck, Brian, and Andre are the "board of directors" of FDI-France. The social work group, naturally, suggested this newly constituted Institut organize the training program. André suggested an organization called IFEPP, to which Andre belongs and presumably has the support of medical professions, be used. It was agreed that these three institutions would jointly sponsor and cooperate in organizing the "training program" which would tentatively begin in January of 1982. Between now and January the Institut will have meetings with André and Ann Alifat, with Brian coming for an "intensive" weekend in September, to work out the details of organizing and managing the program.

Tentatively, it was agreed to have about 50 participants (whose level: beginning, intermediate, or advanced, would be determined jointly, at the January meeting, by participants and staff). Consultants from outside France (members of CSP and FDI-Britain) would be paid \$250 per day plus expenses.

The group was enthusiastic with the prospects of beginning such

a program and Monique added that, from their experience, there sometimes exists in a trainee a "lust for power" which spoils their ability to develop as a competent person centered therapist and, therefore, after this three year period some people may still not be prepared to practice as therapists. This possibility, she suggested, should be acknowledged and be part of every "contract" with participants.

In reflecting on the day and a half of meetings Monique summed up what she regarded (after speaking with several members) as the sentiments of the Institut: What they wanted from these meetings and what they feel they received, was an encouragement to take (and taking) the first positive steps toward preserving and developing further the on-going learning integrity of the group of founding members and the integration of their work and studies (it should be repeated here that the group of 13 or so will be among the students in the "training program") into a something greater for the benefit of French education and toward the improvement of the esteem of social workers in France.

Monique's concluding reflection (a hope for the future, really) is a reminder of her desire for their learning program to include her impression of Carl's work which has always been so attractive to her. It is this: the "marriage of tenderness and rigor." This group seems to me to have this very quality woven into the fabric of their work already. To her, the person centered approach means, "...to have at each moment a sensitivity to oneself and a sensitivity to the other person -- as persons. This sensitivity, at times, may be more toward the other. This I try to maintain every day." Claude, after a moment's reflection, added: "The concentration on myself or on the other person is not so important as allowing the flow to take place between the two." Michel ends our discussions by saying, quietly to me, "I

think the baby is being born."

It is snowing as I write this account. As you can guess, everyone says it is very unusual to have snow in Paris. Only the daily garbage truck's strained cry betrays the arrival of another day. When I was a child growing up in Los Angeles the wistful, yearning, sighs of distant trains announced the morning. In Manila Bay a day is greeted by the smell of pigs being roasted in the earth. While, in those lonely beaches in northeastern Brazil hot light from a fiery sun's first rays is loud enough to arouse the soundest sleeper. I write these words not with the insulted outrage of one disappointed by decadent civilization in a chaotic cosmos but rather, at this moment, as one astonished by the variety of crescendo Time employs in announcing the dawn of new events.

Paris, 12 January 1981

FRENCH CONNECTIONS

A man was painting a wall. He was in such a frantic, flurry of haste, that a passer-by was moved to inquire as to the nature of the man's urgency. "Well," replied the distressed painter, "I have only a very little paint remaining and I must hurry so I will finish the job before I run out of paint."

Snow continues to lightly fall and just as these flakes (the same color as the week-old moon) slowly drift to settle on icy paris streets many thoughts and impressions are settling in my mind from last night's meeting. In a little bar on Avenue La Motte Picquet a small group gathered for café and an "informal meeting". Surrounding two cramped tables were Chuck Devonshire, Benedict, an encounter group leader; Barbard Nacmias; Raymond, a university teacher and encounter group leader; George, an editor of a proposed humanistic newsletter; Elie Nacmias, the principle convenor of our meeting and the "chairman" of our discussions; myself; and Marie Jose, a Parisian physician.

Elie filled his barrel chest with a deep breath, straightened his puffed up body (slightly pale and weakened by a recent heart-attack) and layed out his plan for convening a "person centered workshop (like the one in Evry)" in France next September. Passing over sighes, the nervous fidgeting of listeners, demolishing every (occasional) question with two answers, he holds forth for a good two and one half hours.

Brian Thorne, during the rare break in the action, invited other members of the "team" (Barbara, Benedict, Raymond, George) to share their feelings about each other and working together on this project. Each one spoke a few words (with Elie's continuous editorial interruptions) about his or her relation to the project and added a tangential comment, or two, to the effect that he or she did not exactly

agree with Elie's plan.

Brian and Raymond objected to the notion of creating another "person centered institute in France." Chuck suggested that Elie and the other four could convene their workshop under the auspices of FDI-FRANCE. Of course, this would mean that FDI would specify or approve the staff, he added, in order to insure the "philosophical consistency" of events with FDI's name on them. Brian and Raymond are executives for FDI and Chuck, the other FDI official present, gave their tentative agreement to this plan. Elie seemed to accept this idea though he pointed out that John Thomas Wood, from CSP, was conducting a "person centered training program" in Europe and he did not need FDI approval.

My concern, which I shared with Elie, was not whether an existing institution was used or whether a new one was brought into being but rather the way he related to the other staff members: he did not seem to really "hear" them; he seemed to be "open" to "change" in order to achieve his goals (though he continually denied any investment in the project's outcome), but not open to acknowledging the other's feelings or ideas and did not appear to stand ready to changing his as a result of the other's influence. I urged the group to take as their goal, not the creation of new careers, not the crash-deadline of putting on a program by September, nor the promotion of the person centered "movement" in Europe, but, simply, listening to each other and groping, reaching, together to know themselves and their motives and to then see if a workshop really represented their "truth."

I do not pretend to know Elie or his behavior apart from the few moments I have spent with him. However, and this I also shared with him, in this instance I had the impression of being as a not-unexceptional wine, aged, you could perhaps say, mature (being from

California, of course, I was not superior to the French vintage) and contained in an ordinary bottle. Elie, in my metaphorical description, tapped the bottle and hearing an interesting "ring" decided to content himself with this "musical" aspect of our relation instead of pouring the wine and tasting it. I am afraid (and they as much as agreed by vigorous nodding of the heads and excited words which never completely rolled from the tip of the tongues before Elie gave his two answers to my "objection") that he is approaching his colleagues in a similar way.

Our meeting was concluded with the suggestion that Elie, Benedict, Barbara, Raymond, George, have an all-day "Encounter" to come to terms with their relations and decide the nature of a workshop which the group desires. Also, they will then meet with André de Peretti and contact the other FDI officials in France for permission to produce the workshop under FDI.

I think with Norm and Gay (whom Elie has invited to the workshop already) as part of a staff this project could be a very good workshop. There appears, from the testimony and enthusiasm of the persons I met here, to be interest in a workshop of a person centered approach in France at this time. Many have benefited here from similar workshops .

Paris, 14 January 1981

PIOVE GOVERNO LADRO

... "Those who were not my people
I will call 'my people,'
and her who was not beloved
I will call 'my beloved.'
And in the very place where it was
said to them, 'You are not my people,'
they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"

... For as we have many members in one body,
and all members have not the same office:
So we, being many, are one body...
and every one members one of another.

Paul's letter to Rome

It is an honor (and I have to admit a not unpleasant burden) to follow a legendary staff from CSP: Carl Rogers, Valerie Henderson, Nat Raskin, and Arlene Wiltberger in consulting to the Rome training program in person centered therapy. The course participants seem genuinely fond of their "American staff" and never cease from recounting warm memories of their visits.

Opening their fourth ten-day "intensive" were stirring readings from the letters of Carl, Valerie, and Nat and a quieting note from Teo Speekman who wrote to say he would not be present for this "intensive", explaining that he was withdrawing from the training program. Teo's reasons were given as follows:

(1) The San Francisco State "credit" is no more than a certificate of attendance and no "professional notice" is given of completion of the course of training.

(2) Businessmen, journalists, and others who have no intention of practicing therapy do not take part in the program in a "serious" manner and thereby dilute the training for others.

(3) Chuck, who had promised to be at every "intensive" did not

attend the October meeting.

(4) The northern Italian "supervisor" who is supposed to meet with participants in the Milano region (between intensives) was not available to meet with him and Teo had to work alone.

In a chaotic, but not unfocused, mood the people discussed Teo's withdrawal (vowing to send letters, audio cassettes, and to ignore him), the constitution of small groups (for encounter and supervision of facilitators), details of scheduling, and proceeded to lively, but uneventful small group meetings.

After 9 P.M. the family training program (said to be promoting the techniques of Bandler and Grindler) was interrupted in their seminar one floor below as the dancing Rogerianos of the Rome Institute of Facilitator Development (the name was changed from FDI because it sounded too much like FBI) celebrated their first year anniversary.

Earlier in the evening I did a "demonstration" interview, teaching participants (by my natural style) how to make mistakes, admit them, and also laugh (if something is funny) in therapy (and also to be very serious). For my side I was very touched by the groping, searching for truth of a 60 year old priest (who, by the way, happens to be a respected "moonshiner" with quite a collection of les apéritifs) and who desires with all his heart to overcome the barriers which stand in the way of his being a "person".

On Saturday the three time blocks of our (official) seven hour work day was divided into: Community meeting, small group, demonstration session with the staff. Sunday I lectured on group therapy (they had my chapter on group therapy translated into Italian) in the morning session, small groups with volunteer facilitators and "supervisors" were convened in the afternoon session; in another period students re-

ported on their study of the first three chapters of Rogers's book: *Psicoterapia di Consultazione - Nuove idee nella pratica clinica e sociale*.

For some reason (perhaps the remnants of jet lag) I am awakening at 6 AM each morning (the thought occurs to me that I am functioning on Brazilian time but I do not take the time to make the necessary calculation to see if this is sensible), I use the time before breakfast for meditation. I did not become enlightened but I did write this "poem" after a long morning of sitting in darkness:

Long, deep, groans of January thunder
Contrast the curious whine of
Icy rain-filled winds that cleverly
Force their way through any opening
With a fresh, stinging, scent
Like...sperm spilled from love
Between crisp, clean, summer sheets
Or that first whiff of Autumn ocean spray
Or wild flowers on a dewy spring morning
Cold marble reflects the hot,
Stacotto song of 50 voices,
Clashing, bouncing, sliding, to fill
The expected gaps of silence,
From ancient time the groaning,
Whinnying memory of Roman dialects
Are kept alive in the echoes from
These monostary walls
Vitality, a yearning for what-could-be
Is the clear, cold, winter soul
That pulsates Domus Pacis.

"In the small group last night," a tall moustached psychiatrist opens the morning meeting; "I had an incredible, unbelievable really, experience. It was like opening all the doors and letting in the fresh air. In the beginning of the course, you know, I had many bad things to say about Georgio. Now I am pleased, and surprised, to say I see the world new and I would like to thank you, Georgio, for your help."

"I don't trust what you are saying completely," replies an elderly man warmly dressed in various shades of grey. He is not

Georgio.

A slight, dark haired, woman takes a deep breath and says that in this course she is trusting the "feeling comments" of people (in the moment she trusts them) but that she is growing less and less trusting of people in social interactions. "You cannot trust people's contracts. They say they will help you to organize or work on projects and then they don't."

"Yes, " says a woman with large glasses and a fresh hairdo, "we have agreed repeatedly not to smoke in this meeting room. My eyes are very sensitive with this allergy I have...and still, even now, the room is filled with smoke."

The schedule is stabilized now: each day in the morning (10 AM to 11 AM) Chuck or I give presentations or answer questions or focus discussions on various aspects of therapy, from 11 AM to 1 PM there are four small groups where Chuck, Alberto, George, and I "supervise" the facilitators.

From 3:30 to 5:30 PM we supervise individual therapy sessions (also conducted in small groups, though different from the others), and from 5:30 to 7:30 PM there are varying thematic meetings and occasionally community meetings, the on-going encounter groups (which are the same composition for the entire year) alternate from day to day with the "supervision" groups. The schedule is exhausting, mentally and physically. I feel the lack of exercise and sufficient community meetings. Also, at first, I feel lonely. It is difficult to deepen any contacts (beyond non-verbal relations) without speaking Italian. In one of the supervision groups I share what I am experiencing in my halting Italian. The people in my group really seemed to understand and gave me a lot of support and, I was surprised to hear, shared their own inhibitions for coming close to what they imagined to be

an authority (that is, a leader, like Alberto and Chuck) or an expert or teacher and so on. This meeting gave me a lot of energy for the rest of the day and, I might add, great encouragement to continue to speak in Italian and my ability improved a great deal (of course, when you are starting from the bottom, everywhere is up).

Today the dollar is worth 946 lire; the American hostages have been freed; Reagan has been inaugurated as president of the United States; the Oakland Raiders have crushed the Chargers' Superbowl hopes. In meetings and hallway conferences there are restless plans to expand the boundaries of the training program: "We could start a Rogerian Society, we don't need FDI." "The costs are too high. I am giving up a lot to come to this program," relates a person who is receiving a scholarship to come to the program. Most of the people in training want to be self-directed and they also want support from the staff. Some persons who have never before spoken in the large group meeting are beginning to speak (after one year). In the small group meetings many profound experiences are being lived. A plan is proposed to extend the training program for two more years. To cut costs they suggest that the Americans (not Chuck) not be used in the next two years.

In the final meeting several thoughtful suggestions are given in addition to the "feedback" to the staff (Chuck was seen as "serious", George they love, I was "Mr. Simpatico", and Alberto was recognized as doing a lot of work and upholding the professional standards of the program). The suggestions were these:

(1) A lot of attention is needed to adopt person centered approaches to the Italian culture. They say, "Piove governo ladro" (When it rains, the government is a thief, or the government is to blame); this consciousness has to be recognized and accounted for in the application

of person centered approaches.

(2) There needs to be a study of contrasts between the group therapy and the encounter group regarding the role of the facilitator or therapist.

(3) An "adult" group was proposed. Now they have a "young persons group" (which is somewhat of an elite group) and some wanted to have this adult group which would work on serious problems of therapy.

(4) It was suggested that a critical study of the (chaotic) process of arriving at group-directed decisions (scheduling, etc.). I think this is a very important study and will look forward, interestingly, to their findings. However, I did not find them so impotent in arriving at decisions; I've seen a lot of groups in North and South America create more chaos.

(5) They want to concentrate more on this supervision aspect which was stressed in this intensive.

I found these persons to be sweet, serious, bright, hardy, and loving and I left with my heart filled and my soul refreshed and feeling the bittersweet effects of hard work. Also, I came away with a new appreciation of Alberto's work: he really combines idealism, practicalness, love, strength, wisdom, and humor into a very professional work. He is respected and loved by the people in this program. Chuck, by the way, though lower in profile than Alberto, is also highly respected and loved by the people.

Rome, 25 January 1981

LE FOND EST BON

Our wine existed before what you call
the grape and the vine.

Ibn el-Farid
(12th century)

The lake's blueness only just now begins to win against the greyness of the morning sky. The mirror is coursed with tiny wrinkles as the pale January sun stretches to the farside drawing from the mist the familiar Geneva lakeshore skyline. Ducks who, an hour earlier, glided easily in the solid grey of water and air are retreating to beaches lined with orange and brown leafless trees.

Every three or four months, following the El Escorial workshop, a small group of 15 or so persons (at times as many as 60 are involved, despite the practice of never using anonymous mailings or advertisements) have met in this refurbished Napoleon-era boathouse, in a chalet, or retreat settings to deepen their personal lives, their relations, and to energize their various professional endeavors. Two of this group, Elizabeth Dominice-Johnson and Christoph Muller, upon returning from the August Learning program in San Diego and inspired by their series of experiences in person centered workshops initiated, with the support and enthusiasm of the "groupe suisse", an exciting experiment.

This project (which you will read about in a moment) did not just spring into existence but has grown slowly, with periods of germination, steadily developing over more than three years into a

forceful dream and now a fragile reality (the strength of Mont Blanc emerges from the haze and I notice the blue has deepened; Lake Geneva is once again a lake). Members of the groupe suisse have thoughtfully and deliberately, following a "golden thread" of essence, grown together, uniquely and intuitively. Hesitantly, though firmly, they have built the idea of a workshop for the summer of 1981. More significantly, they have found a way of being together...personally and professionally...which is, like a fresh deep breath, swelling person centered approaches with new life. Their work is not founded on person centered therapy or approaches to community (though it is the natural "next step", as I see it, in this "approach") ; no, not an extension of anything, their work is drawn from the fountain of origin and flowering something new and fresh.

Though I am excited by this development I will not try (and could not, if I did) attempt to improve on their own statement which is enclosed in the following envelope. Your statement is in English but you should know that it also appears in French and German, reflecting in language-consciousness the global scope of the work. Idealistic, though solidly practical (like the swiss), the workshop is not only international in nature but also non-commercial, without staff/participant distinctions, self-regulating, includes children, and takes as a focus the social and political realities of the soil it is rooting in, in addition to emphasizing the usual cognitive and affectual learnings. Like intuition, this work is a candle flame glowing in the bright sunlight, lost in the brilliance of flashy novelty, but capable of lighting the whole house in the darkness. It may be too weak to succeed but, to me, it is an opening to unreachable aspects of my own distant memories, a connection with that slight, though resilient thread of essence Elizabeth describes by saying,

"Le fond est bon ... my core-being is in good health."

Geneva, 28 January 1981