

# Research Communications No. 15

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Continuity and change are essential features of producing journals, as well as of life itself. This year the editorial board have resolved to broaden the terms of reference to include articles comparing Braziers' concerns with movements in thought, procedures, and organisations elsewhere, to enlarge the print slightly for ease of reading, and to aim at publishing **Research Communications** annually.

Continuity and change are themes to be found in the two talks printed in this issue: **The Sensory-Resistive Method** and **The Delights of Difference and the Comforts of Continuity**. The first, the 1995 Norman Glaister Lecture, given by our Chairman, Jean Robertson, reviews formative influences in the creation and development of Braziers, and the vital way in which they have underpinned the community's organisation. The second, a talk given by John Woodcock, celebrates thirty-five years' association with Mensa, under the chairmanship of Eric Hills (who has also served on the editorial board of this publication). It is good to reflect on the rich exchange of ideas and interests between Mensa and Braziers during this period.

Braziers' constant preoccupation with adapting its own discussion procedures for different purposes is shown in two articles on the "Round". Community itself is the subject of several articles. We welcome new contributors, and print the first half of an article in which David Alien considers Braziers in the light of established theories about institutions. George Giangrande has contributed to a report on Dr. M. Scott Peck's theories of community building. Also included is **Belonging: Minding our P's and Q's**, with serious observations but a light-hearted presentation, incorporating the talents of Nonny MacLaren and David Merryweather.

After a gap of several years, we print a poem by Honor, referring to a moving All Souls' Night ceremony held at Checkendon church by the Polish community, and an epitaph there which a Polish house team member translated for her. We also include book reviews by Douglas Holdstock and Tom Baxter, while our Artist in Residence, Ken Chiba, has contributed the design on the front cover.

A group element in the authorship of some articles in **Research Communications** 14 and 15 should be explained. These articles relate to developments in Braziers' organisation, such as the **Houseteam Planning Meeting**, the **Sensory Network**, the **Double Round** and the **Sensory-Executive Integration in the Committee of Management**. They originate in the awareness that ongoing developments and modifications in Braziers' structures and procedures should be researched and written up, with the help of people who took part in them. The procedure is that one person prepares a draft which interested people are invited to comment on, to correct fact and to suggest additional points or different interpretations. The amount of discussion that follows and the use of further drafts rest with the author, who is responsible for the final text. This will not be a definitive account reflecting any fixed dogmas but rather an agreed statement about ongoing living processes, presupposing a strong group input but clearly written by one person. The people involved approve of the practice because it focuses on the transmission of our experience to each other, highlighting the significance of events and individual ways of looking at them.

Through **Research Communications** we aim to communicate the value both of the past and of current changes. In the next issue we hope to report on work recently begun on the Braziers archives, and on developments at present taking place in Braziers. We should like to include a "Letters" section and invite our readers to write to us.

# **The Sensory-Resistive Method**

*Jean Robertson*

*This Norman Glaister Lecture was given at Braziers on 26th February 1995. Jean Robertson is Chairman of Braziers.*

I am honoured to be giving the second Norman Glaister memorial lecture. My subject is the sensory-resistive method.

I shall trace the development of this idea both before and after the beginning of the community at Braziers. I shall ask how does it work and how well does it work? Has it served us well in the past and will it continue to serve us well in the future?

All ideas are a product of their time. In considering the development of the sensory-resistive method we are looking at almost all of the twentieth century. Trotter began his series of essays in 1908 and we are now only five years short of the end of the century.

Only a few ideas are strong enough and contain enough of truth to last this long. Can we say this of the sensory-resistive idea?

The value of ideas, as well as to be of practical use, is to stimulate further thought. Does the sensory-resistive idea satisfy either of these criteria?

I shall finally ask some further and more specific questions about the sensory-resistive method and suggest some answers.

I shall deal with the development of the sensory-resistive method in five parts, starting with Trotter's ideas.

## **1. The development of the sensory-resistive method**

### **1.1 Trotter's ideas**

Trotter<sup>1</sup> suggested that man was as essentially gregarious as a herd animal. His need to be a part of his group and his intolerance of solitude had the force of instinct. Man was more sensitive to suggestions from his group than to any other influence.

As a result his opinions tended to be identified with those of his group. Suggestions from outsiders were likely to be rejected. New ideas would be resisted because they would inevitably run counter to the tradition of the group. Since reflecting on and drawing conclusions from experience were likely to lead to new ideas, there was conflict between group suggestion and the conclusions to be drawn by reflecting on experience.

Trotter proposed that there were two types of people who dealt differently with this conflict. The resistive or stable-minded was one whose beliefs conformed with those of his group or class. He was likely to reject the evidence of experience but to accept group suggestion. These were highly motivated people, but not very adaptable. This type of person, however, was generally seen as normal.

The other type he called sensitives or mentally unstable. They were more open to the evidence of experience. They were more likely to experience conflict because of responsiveness to group suggestion on the one hand, and the evidence from experience on the other. Because of the force of the instinctive response to group opinion, even if it contradicted the evidence of experience, the conflict led to mental instability.

Trotter went on to note that power, and in particular government, tended to pass into the hands of resistives. This deprived the group of the use of intellect, which might otherwise be applied to experience and the conclusions to be drawn from it. Trotter said that resistives were "characteristically insensitive to experience, closed to the entry of new ideas and obsessed with the satisfactoriness of things as they are".

He argued that all societies have developed only a fraction of their resources, because of the drift of power to resistives, and suggested that all civilisations have come to an end because of this tendency.

Trotter made it clear that, when he talked about group suggestion, he was thinking about segregation into classes. He advocated a society without class barriers, in which intellect could more easily be applied.

Trotter was born in 1872 and died in 1939. Although his book was written in the verbose style of his time, he was a modern and original thinker. We must remember that he lived before the rise of the science of ethology which has thrown so much light on the significance of animal behaviour. And before the rise of the so-called meritocracy, which gave more opportunities to more people, without, however, destroying the class system.

## **1.2 Norman Glaister's ideas**

Norman Glaister<sup>2</sup> was inspired by Trotter's ideas and wanted to take them further. He agreed that practical affairs in the world were predominantly controlled by people who were resistive in outlook. That is, by people who were predominantly influenced by the traditions of the group or class with which they were identified. They were not the sort of people who sat down and pondered on a piece of experience until they had a theory about its significance and tried to draw conclusions which could be applied to action. They tended to act in conformity with established habit and tradition.

He suggested that this prevented resistives from initiating progress. Their natural query about any proposition was not "Is it true?" but, "Will it support the policies I advocate?" Sensitives, on the other hand, would ask "Will it help me to believe what I want to believe?" Resistives found a refuge from thought in action and sensitives found a refuge from action in thought.

Norman Glaister thought that there was increasing separation between thinkers and men of action. He wanted them to be integrated. He suggested that no-one was effective in both resistive and sensory modes<sup>3</sup>. The two types, which tended to oppose and belittle each other, should be recognised as complementary.

He had a vision of substituting a world organisation of knowledge, understanding and sympathy, for the world organisation of power. He suggested that committees which exercised power should be matched by complementary committees trying to understand the consequences and values of their actions.

Norman Glaister was also interested in the problems of leadership. In primitive groups competition for leadership was occasional, when the established leader died or outlived his usefulness. With modern man competition for power was a continuous process. Thus in politics and in business a large part of the energy of the leader went into maintaining his position. He also observed that the development of a ruling class tended to cut off leaders from ordinary people, so that, in our complex society, they associated only with other leaders.

### **1.3 The sensory group of Common Wealth**

The sensory method was also advocated in the organisation of the Common Wealth Party<sup>4</sup>.

The task of an Executive was to implement the general policy of the organisation. There was never enough time to deal with day to day problems as well as formulating policy and consulting opinion. Once in position, executives would develop resistance to anything that slowed down the power to make and implement decisions.

They also suggested that it was not in the nature of the human brain to excel both in logical thought and in rapid decision and action.

They proposed a Sensory committee which would submit all the relevant facts in a pre-digested form, rather like a think-tank, thus protecting the executive from the human tendency to distort or overlook uncomfortable facts.

The natural tendency of a busy executive was to resist suggestions for change. Sensory therefore had a duty to examine all new proposals sympathetically. In matters of dispute Sensory's task was to promote agreement and not to take sides.

They warned, however, that Sensory should not claim any power, not even an advisory function. If it agreed with the executive, its ruling would become unchallengeable and, if it disagreed, the moral authority of its decisions would give it power to influence the decisions of the executive. This would corrupt Sensory by giving it power.

Common Wealth were very concerned about the pursuit of power and suggested that this would endanger the aims of a democratic organisation. They therefore advocated a sensory committee, which would relieve the busy executive of the need to take time to think and consider new information.

### **1.4 The Quaker influence**

A fourth strand in the development of the Braziers method was the Quaker tradition.

Historically the Quakers rejected institutionalised religion and had no priesthood or dogma. They felt that Christian qualities were more important than Christian dogma and aimed to maintain these qualities in business and domestic life. They valued decency, honesty and hard work<sup>5</sup>.

Their tradition emphasised the importance of the individual and of tolerance.

Quaker meetings are based on silence. They stress the value of silence in a time when silence and listening tend to be underrated. They advocate that their members receive what is said in an accepting and charitable spirit and that they do not reject the offering of any speaker by negative criticism. There is no leader and the responsibility for the meeting belongs to everyone present.

In business meetings they look for consensus and do not vote. They feel that any individual, however prominent, may be wrong and that any individual, however humble or unknown, may have insight into a particular problem.

Quakers are pacifists. As well as opposing war, they look for peaceful solutions by mediation and reconciliation.

In the present day, when businesses are growing ever bigger and more powerful, a modern Quaker<sup>6</sup> has advocated that there should not be too great a concentration of power in a few hands. No one individual should have unfettered authority, for example being chief executive, chairman and major shareholder, which happens in some companies.

There were many Quakers who contributed ideas to the groups which preceded the setting up of Braziers. In addition, one of our founding members, Dorothy Glaister, who lived in the community for many years, was a Quaker. Dorothy was a woman of integrity and commitment, who had a quiet but considerable influence. The similarities of the Quaker tradition with the Braziers techniques of discussion do not need to be stressed.

## **1.5 Development in Braziers**

I shall describe the later development of the sensory-resistive method in two sections. The first is the contribution of the sensory method in our courses and in our community. The second is the use of the sensory-resistive method in our organisation.

### **1.5.1 The sensory method in Braziers' courses and community**

A typical sensory meeting at Braziers now begins with silence and continues with a "reporting in" round. Each person speaks in turn and contributes what they feel is appropriate from their personal experience, whether it is a concern or a piece of satisfying experience that they wish to share. Everyone has come to appreciate the opportunity to hold the attention of the group for a time and to receive support. Interrupting or otherwise breaking the discipline of the round is collectively considered unacceptable. I cannot do better than to quote Hilda Salter<sup>7</sup> in describing the effects of practising this technique as an habitual part of the Braziers life.

"The sensory method enables the group to build its long term identity, from which grows the directness and honesty of response that visitors recognise as a characteristic of Braziers. When the problems raised are intensely personal and capable of no immediate resolution people are sharing deeper aspects of their lives with more people and people of more varied views and temperaments than would normally be possible or safe. It takes courage to expose problems, wisdom to comment and strength to learn from the comments. The full potential of mutuality is impressive. Since no-one is in a position to dispense wisdom and advice to everyone else, all in turn in time reveal their own vulnerability and receive help as well as giving it. Any type of round requires an honesty not always necessary in discussions elsewhere."

In this way we communicate with each other, learn to trust each other with things that are important to ourselves. And to gain support and courage in solving our own problems.

The quietness and the listening are appreciated by most visitors, who find a sincerity of communication here that is not found, generally speaking, elsewhere. They also appreciate simply being heard.

The quality of the communication is probably the main reason why the Braziers community has survived for forty-five years.

The techniques used in the community are also used in many courses, particularly in creative writing, "a technique for solving difficulties" and in the sensory summer school which has been a feature of Braziers from the beginning.

All of this leads to increased respect and sympathy with individuals and increased value for sharing.

Braziers is often criticised for not publishing the results of its work. Although I cannot refute this criticism, I would like to offer some explanation.

Braziers offers a framework of support that enables people to consider the problems of being human in a complex mechanised society. We tend to concentrate on the sort of problem that is not easily stated without this sympathetic sharing. Visitors or members of our community or network are not pressurised to share their personal insights, although the sum total of those insights must be impressive. In addition, some may gain insights in this way which are not new to all of us. It maybe of intense value to the person who has an insight into their own life, but when written on the page seems neither new nor original. Such is human life.

Let me give an example of a very valuable piece of unpublished research. A few years ago we spent some time considering the problems of hierarchy and leadership. We began by collecting material from the group on their experiences of leadership. This provided a collection of experience which was immediate, moving and honestly given. We discussed these experiences at some length. Some were obviously of considerable importance and sensitivity to the tellers, who trusted the group to respect their confidences. Some were stories of personal suffering because of the misuse of power.

The discussion that followed was very rewarding, but could not have taken place if someone were taking notes. The insights gained were intensely valuable, but may not be publishable in any form.

### **1.5.2 Development of the sensory-resistive method in our organisation**

I will now move on to the use of the sensory-resistive method in our organisation.

The sensory technique is used to explore the values and the impact on individuals of the decisions that we must make. Normally the committee of management meets once in every month and the sensory committee meets three times during the month to consider matters affecting the community, individuals and the Braziers organisation as a whole. These three meetings report their considerations to the single meeting of the committee of management.

Communications between the committee of management and the sensory committee is predominantly verbal. The first part of the committee of management is devoted to a verbal report from the sensory committee. This is possible, because some people are members of both committees. I suspect that even if all members present at this stage of the committee of management had been present at all relevant meetings of the sensory committee, this process would still take place. People remember the same things differently and their own wishes may colour their report so that it is as well to get several comments if you are looking for a whole report.

Although much has been said about the sensory method, we tend to say much less about the resistive contribution.

But it does take a special type of training for someone serving an executive function to defer decisions until a discussion on feelings and values has taken place. The Braziers committee of management has developed a certain skill in recognising those matters which may be decided on the basis of the information before it. The committee also quickly recognises those matters, which, if decided without further discussion about the values of possible decisions, about how people feel about the matter, about its impact on our wider network and possibly on its ethics, we shall live to regret.

Although the committee of management includes members who do not live in the community, it does not include anyone who is not thoroughly integrated into the Braziers network through long-term commitment. We have nothing equivalent to a non-executive director who gives two or three days a month as a total commitment.

Although for many years the committee has included people with a business background, we use their administrative skills without necessarily sharing the values of business.

The sensory-resistive method as a method of organisation is relatively slow. We have learned mostly the hard way, never to ignore or fail to use our own techniques. Generally speaking, we do not vote. It has happened occasionally but is a matter for regret, when we seemed to be pushed into a quick decision without time for proper consideration of all points of view in order to reach a consensus. While we would not expect anyone to change their mind as a result of discussion, there are often subtle shifts of opinion which may result in subtle amendments of the decision to be taken. We feel that this is a better decision-making process than simple majorities. The debt we owe to the Quaker tradition is clear.

## **2. Should we re-name the method?**

In this section of my talk I have traced the development of the sensory-resistive method from 1908 when Trotter began to publish his essays, through the setting upon Braziers by Norman Glaister and others in 1950, to the present day. We have been.; greatly indebted to Trotter, Glaister and to many others for the ideas on which we have based the development of the Braziers method. As I have shown we are also deeply indebted to the Quaker tradition through Dorothy Glaister and other Quakers who were part of the initial motivation.

Since 1950 we have refined the method in many ways and, although we have been through very difficult times for a variety of reasons, we have survived and our methods of organisation have developed. Although based on the sensory-resistive idea, it has been subject to much development. I would suggest that it should now be re-named "the Braziers method", in recognition of the development and refinement of the original ideas over forty-five years. Many contributions have gone into that development.

## **3. Questions**

In the final part of this lecture I should like to ask some questions and to suggest some answers.

### **3.1 Who are the resistives and who are the sensitives? Should we regard them as two psychological types of human beings or as two sides of human nature?**

The answer to this question may be that we should see it in both ways. How does it serve our practical purposes to answer the question?

Both Trotter and Norman Glaister spoke mainly of two human types. Both occasionally also referred to two sides of human nature. Trotter said, "We choose leaders because they are fluent, of invincible prejudice and resolutely blind to dissentient opinion". Since he was speaking of resistives, we may not be too anxious to see ourselves in that role. But he also described sensitives as mentally unstable, so perhaps neither type has too much reason for complacency.

Trotter felt that you could not decide if you were a resistive or a sensitive, only others could do that for you. This may or may not be true but it is an interesting proposition.

Perhaps it is more likely that we all have both tendencies, but operate predominantly in one mode or the other. Long acquaintance with the Braziers method, however, must surely make one aware of one's deficiencies in one direction or the other, and correct them.

The question is of practical importance because on it depends the answer to the question "Who should serve on the sensory committee and who should serve on the committee of management?" For many years we have had so few people in our management system that there was little alternative to using the same people for both. If this situation is changing, should we think again?

### **3.2 What kind of leadership do we want?**

Some years ago we devoted several weekends to discussing the problems of leadership. One outcome of those discussions was the suggestion that leadership was most acceptable when associated with some sort of expertise. If you were good at woodcutting, you would lead and instruct the group who cut wood. If you were good at music you would lead the music-making group.

But this leads several questions unanswered and may be too idealistic. Perhaps we should look at it again.

### **3.3 One of the original aims of the founding group was to work towards a world order that would abolish war. Should this still be one of our aims?**

Trotter, who wrote a postscript to his essays after the first world war, was concerned with the avoidance of war in the future. He suggested that leaving government entirely in the hands of resistives was responsible for the drift towards war. Norman Glaister and the group which set up Braziers in 1950 were also inspired by the ideas current after the second world war of working towards world peace. Is this too idealistic an aim for our small group?

### **3.4 How is the Braziers method vulnerable?**

The answer to this question is of course the pursuit of power. The history of mankind is the history of the abuse of power, no less in the twentieth century than in antiquity. How do we protect the Braziers method from abuse by power-seeking individuals? The desire for power is a part of our human nature.

I would suggest that all we can do is to strengthen our understanding and our structures. Winston Churchill said, "The price of freedom is eternal vigilance." I suggest that this also applies to our structures, depending as they do on goodwill which is carefully nurtured.

## 4. Conclusions

I come back to my original questions. It is the function of ideas to be of practical use and to stimulate further ideas. Is the sensory-resistive idea strong enough and does it contain enough of truth to last for nearly a century?

I suggest that the sensory-resistive idea has sustained these functions and although I also suggest that we have developed and refined it to a point where it should be re-named, there is enough of truth and enough of practical usefulness in these ideas to hold them as a continuing basis for further development.

We have received in trust, not only a solid inheritance in the shape of this house, but also an inheritance of the cement that has bound us together for forty-five years, composed of careful application of the Braziers method, the commitment of our members and their care for each other.

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2. **Implications of the Gregarious Habit in Man** - Glaister, J.N. Braziers 1975. (Written late 1940's).
3. Norman Glaister changed Trotter's word "sensitive" into "sensory" on analogy with the sensory-motor division of the central nervous system.
4. **Why Sensory?**  
The sensory committee group of Common Wealth 1945.
5. **English Social History** - G. M. Trevelyan. Longmans 1944.
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## Sensory-Executive Integration in the Braziers Committee of Management

*Hilda M. Salter*

The Braziers Committee of Management is the chief executive committee, whose members are elected at the Annual General Meeting. Some are resident at Braziers, some are not. The committee meets on the second Saturday of each month and deliberates all morning, continuing into the afternoon if necessary. In the interest of completeness and efficiency, the hour before coffee is devoted to sensory work. (See pp. 2-3 for a definition of "sensory".) This sensory section itself is divided into two phases. In the first the Double Round is customarily used, while in the second phase, the Committee of Management members who also serve on the Braziers Sensory Committee make a report, on behalf of that committee, on its discussions during the previous month.

A full description of the Double Round in sensory meetings can be found in **Research Communications No. 14**. However, in an executive context, it has developed subtle variations in the last twelve years, which are the reasons for its further treatment here. The first round of the Double Round usually consists of a reporting in of any concern the individual participants wish to share with the others, and the second round is for comments on this reporting-in. The function of the two rounds together - "individual" and "comments" - in

committee meetings in general is for preoccupations and concerns to be given safe expression, with the possibility of modification and sympathy, so that the effectiveness of the subsequent committee work is not impaired by unconscious, unvoiced anxieties. In the Committee of Management, however, a more specific bias towards contributions on physical health or morale is expected, so that allowances can be made if slightly unexpected tones or judgements are offered when it is time for final executive decisions to be made.

Another deviation from customary sensory procedure is that, although everyone sits on easy chairs, as is usual for sensory discussion, the meeting has a convenor. This role is assumed by every member of the Committee of Management in turn, the next name on the rota being announced by the Secretary a month ahead of the date on which the person officiates. This time interval enables the convenor to plan the conduct of the first part of the sensory phase. In fact, a third change in practice is that the convenor has power to deviate from the individual and comments rounds in favour of a different task. The unexpected, replacement task chosen by the convenor introduces an element of variety that may stimulate creative, adventurous and productive thought. (Committee members are experienced in Braziers' communication techniques, so anyone with an urgent need to share a prevailing mood would find a way of combining this with the new requirement.) Sometimes the invited response is for basic self-reporting or an extension of this: "How am I?" or "What do we see in our self-reporting that is relevant to wider circles?" It may concentrate on Braziers itself: "Give one worry about Braziers and one solution", or "Comment on some new points of growth that give hope for the future." It may require people to act on the possibility of group consciousness: "Report on something as if speaking on behalf of the group" or "What is the group's attitude to its collective process?" It may touch on research: "Have you had any experiences of synchronicity recently?"

This element of choice on the convenor's part is comparable to the host's function in the second half of the current Sensory Network meetings (See **Research Communications 14**, p. 16: "The Sensory Extension Project/Sensory Network experiment.") It provides the convenor with a legitimate opportunity, as a leader, to test out some new idea or to tap into the group's current assessment of an old topic. In fact, the use of a convenor provides a controlled structure which may also generate variety, spontaneity and stimulation.

After these important preliminaries, the sensory phase of the Committee of Management gets down to its main task, which is to hear reports on, and discuss, the deliberations of the three or so Sensory Committee meetings held in the previous month. Complexity and sophistication are again apparent. The material to be summarised includes issues referred to the Sensory Committee by the Committee of Management, considerations generated by correspondence to or from Braziers, or arising from the Sensory Committee itself, and ideas originating from other sensory meetings in Braziers. The major items to be reported on have already been agreed and written up on the white-board by the Co-ordinating Sensory Committee that meets three days before the Committee of Management, and remain there for use on the following Saturday. Just as the Sensory Committee marks "I""I" "I", for its own contemplanda, in order to prevent any prejudgement of hierarchical importance, so, for the same purpose, the items presented to the Committee of Management are distributed about the white board in a random pattern.

People look at the items on the board. The Sensory Convenor then institutes around in which each member of the Sensory Committee present selects in turn the item he/she wishes to present to the group, with others adding further viewpoints on the same issue, if they so desire, or they may remain silent. Similar rounds follow until all items on the board have been covered satisfactorily.

Experience of this reporting of Sensory Committee proceedings reveals that it is less complicated than a description of it suggests, and it is both brisker and more business-like than in the original exploratory and speculative discussions of the Sensory Committee, yet it provides full communication: a variety of considered points is made by different people, so it is more comprehensive than a report given by one person, with the inevitable, albeit unconscious, element of selectivity. It is more flexible than a written report, while retaining an appropriate objectivity. There is a reminder of more executive functioning in making use of a convenor while preserving equal status, since all assume the role in turn. In fact, the satisfactory ease with which the sensory phase is completed, whether or not the convenor has first-hand knowledge of the Sensory Committee material, is evidence of the mutual trust between the committees and must facilitate the executive discussions after coffee, when the large table is brought in, everyone occupies upright chairs and the Chairperson of the Committee of Management formally conducts the day's executive business. Naturally, those members of the Committee cannot contribute initially to these Sensory Committee reporting rounds, but their positive and constructive function is to listen, receive and reflect during the rounds, and possibly comment at the end, so that, during the executive phase, when the Chair asks what points from the Sensory Report should be taken up for executive comment, decision and action, they should find themselves fully *au fait* with the Sensory Committee's thought.

This procedure for reporting on a committee's findings may be seen to work on different levels. It operates horizontally, as it were, with comments from each to everyone in the circle, and from one committee to the other. It operates vertically in time, the previous month being brought into the present with almost immediate action to be planned for future benefit. The more inward concerns of the Sensory Committee about the effects of issues on relationships, repercussions for the group and their relation to values, may, through executive decision, be translated into outer action. All this is held within the matrix of the Braziers group and, with the added personal dimension of the earlier Double Round, makes for wholeness of communication. The method benefits the morale of individuals as well as general efficiency, since the close interweaving of the strengths of the two committees must increase the likelihood of consensus in the executive phase.

The procedure of starting an executive committee meeting with a double sensory round is exportable; it is currently used profitably by the editorial board of **Research Communications**. Sensory exchange using the Double Round method, based on items written up on a central board, has also been used recently at Braziers to report on a year's major concerns. Even though seven or eight of the twenty-odd participants had no previous knowledge of the technique, the occasion proved both satisfactory and satisfying - even invigorating - especially since the length of time available also permitted follow-up questions, thereby achieving greater participation from non-resident members.

The integration of sensory and executive processes in the Committee of Management is a significant implementation of Braziers' philosophy in action. In 1949, at one of the Sensory Summer Schools which preceded the founding of Braziers, Norman Glaister is reported as saying: "Everyone has some combination of the two. Resistive and Sensitive (equivalent to Executive and Sensory - Ed.), but no one human can have enough of both for today's needs and humanity is crying out for greater efficiency in both. Hence our strivings for a multi-mental organism. . . Resistive/Sensitive makes each individual more complete as an individual, and(they) bring each other up to date in both fields." The same is true of committees. For years the two committees had reported to each other through an exchange of minuted information, but the introduction of the sensory phase at the beginning of the

Committee of Management has enhanced its proceedings. As far as the Sensory Committee itself is concerned, it has no power to make executive decisions and therefore cannot generate an executive phase to match the Committee of Management's sensory phase here discussed.

In conclusion, it seems that for completeness of communication through dialogue, and for truly democratic methods to prevail, some ground rules, with regular provision for flexibility and variation, are essential, as Braziers' ongoing experiments in sensory-executive integration are demonstrating.

## **Braziers' Discussion Techniques: Experiments with the "Double Round"**

*Evelyn Woodcock*

Hilda Salter has described the development, at Braziers and elsewhere, of the discussion technique known as the Double Round. Participants, sitting in a circle, make their own individual contributions in turn without interruption and, when everyone has spoken, a second round begins. This time each person comments on anything which has been said in the first round. These two rounds may take up to two hours, and sometimes, by agreement, there are pauses at the beginning and between contributions.

As Hilda Salter explains, the slow pace and delayed response of the "round" method brings many benefits. For some it becomes more satisfying the more it is experienced. For others, however, it can give rise to feelings of tension and even of extreme frustration. Newcomers, in particular, sometimes criticise the method for inhibiting spontaneous reaction and imposing a (straight) jacket on the human business of meeting together. With the Double Round there may be double the frustration. In consequence, some people may express opposition to the round method altogether. Another indication of mounting tension in the group is observable when the round is broken through interruptions, one-to-one exchanges and so forth, and this can happen even in experienced groups. It also seems that some temperaments find the round much more difficult than others do.

Recently at Braziers a possible solution to some of these problems emerged. In a meeting called to discuss a particular topic, with a convenor, a Double Round was in progress, with suggestions on the topic being made in turn by each person. The convenor wished to write these suggestions on the white-board at the end of the first round. Partly to solve a practical point and partly to introduce an element of variety, the convenor asked people to talk informally in twos and threes for five minutes or so. A burst of conversation followed in these "buzz groups", thus allowing for spontaneous response to the round, and relieving tension. When the round was resumed, people appeared to return to it with renewed interest - and the benefits of some new thinking from their immediate neighbours.

It might be worthwhile for other groups employing the Double Round - in particular, but not only, groups new to the business - to consider experimenting with a short break between the two rounds, even when there is no administrative reason for doing so. In groups without a convenor the person due to start round two might have the task of deciding when, at an agreed time, to call the meeting back from its buzz group phase. Even more recently in Reading a Double-Round group experimented with having their tea break between rounds, instead of at the end of the session. Lively general conversation followed and an equally lively second round. Participants were keen to continue the practice and it has since been repeated.

## Polish Graves at Checkendon

*Honor*

"Who are these lying here?" The cycle-clipped visitor  
gazes at names whose juxtaposed consonants puzzle  
on stones in overgrown grass soaked from yesterday's rain.  
"They are our Polish friends. They ended up here."  
"So many, in this secluded place, why here?"  
"Where have you been? They are history -  
a war displaced them, forced them from firesides  
in the 'forties, parcelled them out over the west.  
The hutted Camp in the deep woods that they lived in for years,  
with its own wooden Chapel, was dismantled long since -  
is a timber yard now. The great trees are still being felled."  
"And they?"  
"Come Peace they were rehoused hereabouts,  
though few of the first ones remain, now very old,  
waiting, with archaic patience, for release."  
Light glints on affluent gilt of more recent inscriptions,  
on a posy of asters, a greying plastic wreath.  
Most wear lichen patches, bosses of moss, black damp.  
Three earliest wooden crosses, made with carpenter-skill  
from forest trees, carry no names; eloquent these.  
Some mounds long neglected, sprawling grotesque,  
surprise with shawls of harebells' aerial blue.  
On one stone names, dates have been added to -  
translates: "We longed to return to our own land  
but fate was not kind". The visitor stands, subdued.  
Invisible lives, their stories are writ in air.  
No language can exclude - we are all of us by now  
displaced from that innocence called Home.  
The ancient church crouches flint-solid to the south  
surrounded by village tombs, roses in bloom.  
Now cloud lets fall a curtain of bright rain.  
"You should come here again on All Souls' night.  
Candle flames flicker on each Polish grave,  
shadow on shadow dark figures lean together,  
their chorale a primitive keening for all dead,  
a grieving for all lost homes and hearth-stones."  
For all living.

## **The Delights of Difference and the Comforts Of Continuity**

*John Woodcock*

*This talk was given on 23rd October 1994 at the conference "Learning from Experience" which celebrated thirty-five years' collaboration between Braziers and Mensa. John Woodcock is Vice-Chairman of Braziers.*

Eric Hills, as convenor of this weekend, has, as so often before, managed to combine our parochial interests with a wider theme. This time the wider theme is very dear to me, as one interested in evolution. No doubt Eric counted on this when he asked me for a Braziers contribution.

Learning from experience is a euphemism for its technical evolutionary counterpart: the inheritance of acquired characteristics. The conflict between the followers of Lamarck and Darwin in the nineteenth century centred on whether acquired characteristics are genetically inherited. Lamarck said "yes", Darwin "no". Today it is widely agreed, first, that acquired characteristics are not genetically inherited, and second, that the human species is the only animal whose life is more influenced by learning from experience than from changes in its genome. The blacksmith's children can learn his skills but cannot inherit his muscles.

If human culture is everywhere and at all times mainly a product of learning from experience, then our topic for the weekend may indeed be expected to teach us something important. After I have looked at what Braziers has learned from the thirty-five year-old Braziers/Mensa experience "I will indulge myself by another glance at learning from experience", in the context of what Herbert Spencer called "general evolution". I have chosen to discuss our topic in terms of the delights of difference and the comforts of continuity because it seems to me that the two conditions summarise Braziers' experience of Mensa. It remains to justify this belief. Initially I was surprised that the evident continuity has been achieved, despite our equally evident differences. Let us look first at some of these differences from the Braziers' perspective.

In the introduction to this weekend, written by Eric for the Braziers Calendar of Courses, you may have noticed a difference between my responsibilities and those of the other speakers. The Mensa speakers are reporting on their personal experiences, while I am down to speak on behalf of the Braziers group. I have to tell you that I discussed my task with the Braziers Sensory Committee, who seemed content for me to speak on their behalf, as requested by Eric. Eric, of course, knows, by now that there is supposed to be a "Braziers' group mind" available to its members, particularly when in difficulties, and that to ask for a specifically personal view of "Braziers' experience of Mensa" would indicate that he had not learned this, in spite of thirty-five years' co-reflection. I admire his confidence in our experiment, but must warn those of you who do not know, that, although closely connected with Braziers since 1958, and despite having filled all roles on the Committee of Management, I have not lived at Braziers for longer than one month, and then in the absence of Glynn and Margaret. I may not therefore be close enough to the centre to have the ear of the group mind - but I will do my best.

The second difference is that, at our joint weekends. Braziers is in the main at work, while the Mensa members are enjoying a mini-break. It could so easily have been a relationship of supplier and customer, a functional relationship rather than the more personal relationship that has actually developed in spite of the difference in the situation of the two parties.

A third difference between us and a potential barrier to understanding is the priorities we seemingly accord to thought and to action. The Mensa/Braziers weekends are all about the interplay of ideas in and for themselves. No collective action is to be expected in consequence of the exchange of ideas. While these deliberations are taking place, the larger part of the Braziers group is escaping from thought into action: cooking, cleaning, gardening, ironing, decorating and so forth. Saturday and Sunday are for Braziers the two days in the week of greatest collective activity. There is no value judgement intended here, or in any of the other dichotomies already considered.

The last difference to which I wish to draw attention - although undoubtedly there must be others I have omitted - is the organisational difference between Mensa and Braziers. Both are legally constituted societies, but whereas the affairs of Mensa occupy its members intermittently, Braziers is a continuous environment for its residents. They may follow their occupational outside interests but the focus of their life is within the group.

There is here a real difference of values, with major consequences. Commitment to the residential group at Braziers, the new extended family, as the basic social unit, contrasts with the Mensa members' acceptance of the individual or the pair for this role. The ramifications of this difference can perhaps best be appreciated by asking oneself the question - should the cell or the organism be considered the basic unit of life? Or even whether the Prokaryotic cell has a better claim than the Eukaryotic cell? Here is room for discussion.

In the face of this catalogue of differences you may wonder how the delight is to be found. My answer is, with the help of continuity. Before attempting to make this connection I would like to read to you one of my favourite quotations from the priest-scientist Teilhard de Chardin, on the subject of human difference or OTHERNESS. At one point in the weekend I began to think that perhaps Mensa members had risen above the problem of otherness. Now I know better, and so feel the quotation is worth sharing with you:

"I confess, my God, that I have long been, and even now am, recalcitrant to the love of my neighbour. I find no difficulty in integrating everything above and beneath me, whether matter, plants, animals, powers, dominions or angels. These I can accept without difficulty, but the OTHER MAN, by which I do not mean the poor, the halt, the lame and the sick, but the other quite simply as OTHER, the one who seems to exist apart from me because his universe is closed to mine, and who seems to shatter the unity of the world for me - would I be sincere if I did not confess that my instinctive reaction is to rebuff him?"

Teilhard was by all accounts a saintly man, loved by everyone. He was saintly partly because he faced up to this problem. His fear and dislike of the OTHER is the more important in the light of his equations: "evolution = rise of consciousness", and "rise of consciousness = effect of differentiated union". The one great "ought" of evolution would seem to conflict badly with much of personal experience. However, it is fairly obvious that, if one runs away at the first sniff of differences, delight is not going to be on the agenda. The delights of difference are proportional to the continuity and depth of association.

In the early, more formal, days of the Mensa/Braziers relationship, the quality of residential weekend facilities at Braziers were tested by Mensa and found preferable to the alternatives. The task of transforming utility into fellowship was eased by the essential tool of continuity - for whatever reason. Continuity is in itself a very powerful social compliment. That two or more people or groups continue to meet is a mark of respect, tolerance and even of liking. It is well established that even villains may enter into a better relationship with their victims if the

relationship can be sustained for some time! Given the opportunities afforded by continuity, the potential delights of difference have an opportunity to emerge.

Perhaps one of the delights at Braziers has been that, behind the screen of hyperactivity displayed at weekends by the Braziers community, Mensa has discovered that Braziers has a real and even specialised interest in reflective discussion. This was not the mask of an intelligent prostitute put on for the sake of an educated client, but a long-standing tradition at the very heart of the Braziers experiment. Many visitors never discover the motor that drives the Braziers community. Their perceptions are limited to their personal interests. The Mensa group perceives Braziers from the variety of its own members.

There is more to this interest at Braziers in group and inter-group discussion. Not only did Mensa find itself in a more companionable environment than might initially have been expected, but, by proving open to aspects of Braziers' methods, Mensa offered Braziers another compliment.

It is surely possible to generalise from our experience to recommend that in situations of conflicting differences a little patient continuity of contact may be the creative answer. Braziers has, or should have, learned many things from the continuity of the relationship between Mensa and itself. The first thing learned, given the chance, is that initially off-putting differences can become the basis for a fundamentally new and enjoyable experience. For instance, the capacity and commitment of Mensa members for speaking their mind on innumerable topics is a vital lesson for members in a community. In community there is an understandable temptation to respect agreement more than truth. To speak out maybe the preliminary to getting out, and this situation does not encourage free and combative verbal sparring, such as is associated with Mensa. However, the Mensa members we know well do not fall out with one another. They return, time and again, together, for another urbane exchange of views. They have the capacity for what might be termed non-projective differences. This is a capacity equally important to Braziers.

A second vital lesson to be learned by Braziers from Mensa is that dialogue can be sufficiently appreciated by some people for them actually to pay for it. Braziers' people submit themselves to a lot of dialogue - too much, some might think - but as it is the glue that holds the community together, the learning of navigation prior to the storm, so to say, it is salutary to meet people who actually pay for the fun and love of it.

The third lesson is that Mensa confirms Braziers' own experience of the need to be open to others. Living in a community may tend to make for reliance on an in-group. Mensa demonstrates that friendship can arise from occasional meeting, and that newcomers add to the richness of an occasion. It is to the great credit of Mensa and of Braziers which, as I have tried to show, are so very different in many ways, that both have persevered with each other, until the continuity of their association has turned the differences into delights, which, in their turn, convert continuity from being a chore into a comfort. May I now for a moment apply these thoughts to the present circumstances.

Mensa first became acquainted with Braziers at a time when Braziers' own continuity was under threat, in consequence of the death of its founder and inspirer, Norman Glaister. Glynn Faithfull, who, in 1964 manfully took on Norman's role, is now, thirty years later, carefully delegating his many responsibilities to a number of others, including the responsibility for this talk to myself. The question is, will nearly fifty years of continuity suffice to relaunch, once again, the Braziers experiment into a new phase? To do so successfully, many differences - necessary differences of ability and temperament - will have to be endured until they become

delights. Continuity of association will be essential to this process, and adequate forms of dialogue will play their part. Mensa's example of commitment to diversity and creative dialogue will play its part in helping Braziers meet its challenges, and it is to be hoped that Braziers' continuity will be rewarded by the continuance of these Mensa meetings.

Having tried to make my case that continuity helps us to benefit from diversity, I cannot resist the opportunity to broaden the topic and to place it in the wider context of general evolution. The point I wish to make is that, if "learning from experience" is the new motor of evolution at its human stage, exceeding, but not displacing, the influence of our genetic and quantum foundations, then we should take very seriously the matter of how experience is acquired and transmitted. This is likely to raise the topic of schooling, or more generally the transmission of experience across the generations, but I would like, for now, to leave that great issue to another conference, and to focus on the transmission of our experience to one another.

The fact of the matter seems to be that we are still not very good at it. We each stick to our own preferences, know where we stand and are usually certain that we are right. What was obvious to Norman Glaister was that different people have limited but unique perceptions of reality, and only a symbiotic mix of their differences will suffice to take us safely into an ever more complex future.

How, we might ask ourselves, is this inter-personal symbiosis to be brought about? New methods of democratic dialogue and discernment will surely help, but above all, if the Mensa/Braziers experience is anything to go by, we need continuity of rich dialogue. How this might be brought about more widely in both our working and our domestic lives is another topic for yet a further weekend.

*David Allen is Convenor of Curriculum at Braziers.*

I have for some time been hoping to write a preliminary study of Braziers, placing it in a broad sociological context. Although research and its communications have been a feature of Braziers' work - and an important part of its *raison d'être* - since its foundation, there has been a tendency for the journal **Research Communications** to be inward-looking.

In itself, this is understandable, since no-one else is carrying out quite the same experiment as we are here. Nonetheless, the absence of articles which relate Braziers to more up-to-date currents of sociological thought has been an unfortunate omission, giving the impression that there is no awareness of what is going on outside our boundaries.

Furthermore, the prominence given to the ideas of Trotter and Glaister, without extensive reference to other, more recent, thinkers on the subject of the sociological experiment represented by Braziers, might lead readers of **Research Communications** to conclude that we had not sufficiently developed those original concepts, which were essentially a product of the First World War, the interwar years and the aftermath of the Second World War. One of the purposes of this study, therefore, is to encourage others to contribute papers relating Braziers' work to current trends in sociology and other disciplines.

The present study will be divided into two parts, of which this one will consider the question of 'total institutions'. The second part, to be published in the next edition of **Research Communications**, will examine how Braziers fits into the concept of a 'total institution'.

The point of departure is Erving Goffman's **Asylums**, where the term 'total institution' first appears. It has since been widely used as a means of sociological analysis. Goffman's work was originally related to formally administered institutions such as prisons. Hence his main definition:

A total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life. (Goffman, 1968, p.11).

He also points out that, in modern western society, individuals normally work, play and sleep in different places and with different people not necessarily involved with the same organisational groups, and normally without an overall coherent plan for doing so. By and large the activities of work and play, particularly, are separated. This is not so in a 'total institution'.

Bearing in mind the original focus of his work, Goffman outlines the main characteristics of life within a 'total institution' as:

First, all aspects of life are conducted in the same place and under the same single authority. Second, each phase of the member's daily activity is carried out in the immediate company of a large batch of others, all of whom are treated alike and are required to do the same things together. Third, all phases of the day's activities are tightly scheduled with one activity leading at a pre-arranged time into the next, the whole sequence of events being imposed from above by a system of formal rulings and

a body of officials. Finally, the various enforced activities are brought together into a single rational plan purportedly designed to fulfil the official aims of institution (Goffman, 1968, p. 17).

For those familiar with the consensual basis of Braziers, there might seem few points at which it and a 'total institution' might cross. Goffman's final point concerning a coercive overseeing authority, in particular, seems ill-adapted to Braziers' system of voluntarism and collective decision-making.

But Goffman's core concept of the 'total institution' has been applied in a wider sense to include monasteries, nunneries and 'progressive' boarding schools, such as Dartington Hall. Christie Davies even cites examples of abstract concepts being used as examples of 'total institutions': colonialism, the American slum and ethnicity. (Davies, pp78-79). While these latter applications are perhaps less than helpful and only serve to diffuse the sharpness of Goffman's original idea, others may be useful in broadening the relevance of a useful analytical tool.

Lewis Coser (1974) approached this area by providing an additional overlapping concept: that of the 'greedy institution'. Whereas in the 'total institution' (or total organisation' as Davies would prefer to term it), it is the totality of (enforced)residence and batch-living that is central, within 'greedy institutions' it is the totality of voluntary commitment to the institution's aims that is paramount. Thus, prisons and prisoner-of-war camps are clearly in the sphere of 'total institutions';

membership of such organisations as the Jesuits or the communist party in old-style totalitarian regimes come under the banner of 'greedy institutions'; monasteries and the like show characteristics of both types of institution.

Kibbutzim are an especially interesting example of the hybrid variety. People are free to join the organisation, but are also free to leave at any time. In theory, anyone joining may eventually become part of the organisation's hierarchy. As with Goffman's original concept of the 'total institution' there is an absence of the 'basic work-payment structure of (western) society'. Batch-living certainly occurs and tasks are decided upon by a higher authority. But the single-sex nature of most 'total institutions' is not present and Goffman's comment that '... those who eat and sleep at work can hardly sustain a meaningful domestic existence' is not relevant. Families can exist successfully even though the mode of their living does not accord with more conventional western practice of separation into nuclear families.

Kibbutzim members are also distinguished by their commitment to the ideals of the Kibbutz and to the furtherance of its aims. This is true whether the membership be long- or short-term. In this sense, the communal style of living is seen as an important positive feature, rather than as an added imposition to be endured by inmates of 'total institutions' as part of a coercive regime. In short, membership of a Kibbutz is an end in itself, as indeed would be membership of nunneries, monasteries and ashrams. This idea of an end-in-itself is, of course, also true of prisons, but the crucial difference is the principle of voluntary membership. It is this combination of commitment to fulfilling the aims of the institution as well as the openness of membership which is the most noticeable feature of the 'hybrid institutions' identified by Davies.

There is, moreover, another distinguishing feature of such 'hybrid institutions' represented by Kibbutzim and their like. Within the more open organisations, there is a wider variety and greater complexity of tasks to perform. Complex administrative or organisational tasks cannot

be left to the inmates of coercive institutions; these are carried out by a directive bureaucracy. Inmates are likely to be given tasks where they may be treated in batches. In 'hybrid institutions' given the voluntary membership of the organisation, not only is the strict differentiation between the ruling bureaucracy blurred, but the nature of the membership may well offer a wider spectrum of skills on which to draw. Moreover, given the supportive ethos of the voluntary members, people may be willing to undertake tasks which develop their skills and which rely on their taking a considerable measure of responsibility for the success of the institution's aims.

The difference between such an organisation and, say, an asylum, is obvious. But there is also a considerable distinction between this type of hybrid organisation and a semi-open 'total institution' such as the armed forces. Increasingly there, individual responsibility for the success of the institution's aims is devolved to the individual level, into which a large training investment has been poured. Yet, the contrast with the type of 'hybrid institution' such as a Kibbutz is marked. Individual members of a Kibbutz may have a degree of influence on how the place is run, or are free to organise others who wish to exert pressure on those in charge. In the final analysis, they can leave the Kibbutz. In the army, attempts to disagree with the ruling hierarchy amount to insubordination; attempts to organise contrary views are seen as mutiny; and normally the army ejects the disaffected, rather than leaving the choice to them.

The reason for dwelling on the 'hybrid institution' combining the 'total' and the 'greedy institution', is that it may resemble the sort of organisation Braziers represents. In the second of these articles I shall examine to what extent this surface resemblance is valid and whether it can be useful in understanding how Braziers operates.

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## Belonging: Minding our P's and Q's

*Hilda M. Salter*

*Illustrations by David Merryweather [Omitted Ed.]*

As a member of the Braziers group, do you think of yourself as

- (a) an individual among other individuals within the group?
- (b) one of all the others and with some boundary keeping everyone together?
- (c) a person so supported by the group as a whole that its individuals may perhaps be taken for granted?

**BEWARE!** Whichever it is, your words may convey a different messages:

### HOW?

TRAP NO. 1 : "YOU"

(1) Giving helpful instructions  
Using "YOU" may imply

- (a) you feel superior and don't make mistakes.
- (b) you are getting at those who do, but don't want to mention names.

Instead, use "WE". Example: "We all need to remember to turn off the heaters in the dining-room when we lay the tables".

Or, use the PASSIVE FORM. Example: "The heaters need to be turned off when we lay the tables".

(2) Asking the group's opinions

Avoid "What do you think?"

No one answers, as people don't know who is being addressed - or they know it means everyone, but no one wants to be the first to start - or they may be bored.

Good alternatives: "What do people think?" - or, "What do you think. A...?" (The name prompts the first reply) - or, "Would everyone please read these papers before tomorrow and be ready to discuss them?" - or, "If anyone wants something from Wallingford, please let B... know:"

"YOU" may be used

- (i) in the plural if it refers to a small group, e.g. "What time do you want to be picked up at Goring?" (when two or three are on the same train);or
- (ii) in the singular if you say the name or look directly at the person addressed.

TRAP NO. 2 : "THEY"

"THEY" can be very divisive.

It is not good to say "Oh God, not again! They haven't brought enough cups" - because it sounds accusing.

Choose instead: "There aren't enough cups - I'll get some."

(Then, with any luck, the person responsible will fetch them. If not, you'll have to bring some yourself).

If visitors say: "Why don't they (meaning Braziers) do it this way?", a possible answer is: "We did try that, but we found it didn't work."

TRAP NO. 3 : "I", "ME" and "MY"

This is most common, and the worst. Individuals naturally refer to a special project or interest as "My ..." which irritates other people with a different speciality or favourite concern. People can be recognised as being identified with the rest of the group when/if they discipline themselves increasingly to use "We", "Us" and "Our".

Correcting "I want" to "Do we want?" or even "Do we need?" shows real community building. This is true both for Braziers and for groups elsewhere.

MANIPULATIVE, you may say? We think a group can usually judge the degree of sincerity from tone of voice and context.

With thanks to Nanny MacLaren, who pointed out these effects of PRONOUNS IN COMMUNITY

## **Civility and Community in the work of Dr. M. Scott Peck**

*George Giangrande and John Woodcock*

Early in 1995 various people at Braziers shared an interest in the book "A World Waiting to be Born - The Search for Civility" by Dr. Maurice Scott Peck. George Giangrande, a member of the Braziers community, offered to review the book and John Woodcock used it as his contribution to the 1995 Braziers Summer School.

George Giangrande writes:

M. Scott Peck's latest book "A World Waiting to be Born" (1993), follows the thesis put forward in his previous work, "The Different Drum" (1987). He speaks of a revolution in human organisations and societies. In his latest book he is searching for Civility or, in other words, harmony and understanding between people. These are issues that go right to the heart of the Braziers community and its work over the last forty-five years.

Firstly, Civility - what is it? It is not just about good manners. Civil behaviour is honest rather than polite: "genuine civility is a form of healing behaviour that demands often painful honesty and the scalpel of candour". He goes on to explore many different issues, including organisation and contingency theory; Buber's theory of narcissism; the "Ideal Observer" theory; vocations, marriage and childrearing; businesses and personal transference, and management styles, to name a few. But the real crux of the book is the description of the way in which a group of people become a community.

The process of attaining a civil basis in human relations in community goes always through four stages:

1. PSEUDO-COMMUNITY. This stage is where most organisations are most of the time. The hallmarks are pretence, superficial politeness, avoidance of conflict, leading to an inauthentic,

boring and sterile atmosphere. However, conflict inevitably arises, and the will to community pushes many to self-destruct in the stage of -

2. CHAOS. In an attempt to patch things up without going into underlying issues, simplistic rules and bureaucratic structures are installed. Attempts may be made to fix, convert or "heal" wayward members. Win/lose situations tend to arise. If this undoubtedly depressing stage can be worked through

3. EMPTINESS results. People rid themselves of things that hinder community, such as snap judgements, fixed expectations, the desire to convert, heal or control. Personal "baggage", such as previously hidden grief, hatreds or terrors are released. Should this be possible

4. COMMUNITY is reached, allowing a group of people to operate like a well-tuned orchestra. Differences are appreciated, enemies are reconciled, members can openly and honestly speak their minds and risk intimacy. The hidden is made known.

"Unaddressed issues in organisational life, like neuroses in our individual psyches, become ghosts that invariably come back to haunt us."

In the Braziers Summer School John Woodcock took up the theme: "A World Waiting to be Born" is a continuation and expansion of Dr. Scott Peck's previous books, especially "The Different Drum" and an earlier book "The Road Less Travelled" (1978). All three books are a commentary on human relationships, the human need to experience both community and a civil society, and the breakdown of both community and civility in the Western world. "The Road Less Travelled" established Scott Peck's reputation as a sympathetic psychiatrist with great insight into the creative forces at work in the world and in the individual psyche. His insistence on objective grounds for hope struck a chord in the USA, and "The Road Less Travelled" was on the bestseller list for five years. Between this book and "The Different Drum" Scott Peck perfected a technique for helping random groups to experience intense well-being in short-term community. The four stages of his basic method in these short-term events, called "community building workshops", are described by George Giangrande above. So successful were Scott Peck's methods that he started a "Foundation for Community Encouragement"(FCE) in 1984, and "The Different Drum" is a report on the use of these methods.

By 1993 Scott Peck had widened his horizons to include the application of "community experience" to corporate bodies, and "A World Waiting to be Born" reports on the experience of FCE in ongoing organisations. Scott Peck's thesis is that an organisation able to provide its staff with community experience will be more competitive than one that does not. However, he recognises at the end of the book that organisations practising community will have to wrestle continually with the political problem of how to function in a culture that is not yet comfortable with community or real civility.

During the 1995 Braziers Summer School, we examined some of the new situations FCE has encountered with corporate bodies. These included, first, the need, especially, but not exclusively, in commercial organisations, to distinguish between attitudes and procedures appropriate to doing the work of the organisation and those appropriate to recognising and benefiting from the feelings and values experienced in a community building workshop. Scott Peck calls the former the "task" mode of organisation and the latter the "process" mode. These terms follow best industrial relations practice in the USA. Civility is required for the task mode and community for the process mode, and it is a matter of experience that process precedes task. Scott Peck implies that to undertake any task when the participants are

seriously out of community with one another spells failure. He advocates moving back and forth between task and process modes, as circumstances require. Braziers' people will recognise a difference here between our practice and that of Scott Peck, in so far as we hold regular and frequent "process sessions" (sensory meetings) to assist subsequent "task sessions" (executive meetings).

Although it is not clear how the switch from task to process modes will be carried out, there is an interesting emphasis throughout the three books on the need for groups seeking community to have commitment to a higher power. However, in "A World Waiting to be Born" there seems to be a curious anomaly, when Scott Peck writes: "It is in business that people may be willing to pay the price of community." He then, surprisingly, says that "Church is not where people's lives are on the line but their workplace is", seeming to go back on his previous association of community with the need for service to a higher power. He seemed to be nearer answering the question of a higher power and the relation to it of the universe, and in particular of human relationships, in the earlier books.

An area in this field in which Scott Peck has advanced since 1978 is in the question of a "group mind" or "group consciousness". The chapter dealing with this in "A World Waiting to be Born" is Chapter 17, and it is in itself sufficient to justify buying the book, for continual re-reading as the subject becomes more commonplace, which it will. As yet Scott Peck has been unwilling to connect community and consciousness unequivocally with the higher power he discerns in the evolutionary process. Perhaps this is because he does not yet recognise that the evolution of life is an outcome of the even more remarkable evolution of the physical world. In spite of this, one can admire the consistency, development and practicality of Dr. Scott Peck's work to date, and look forward to his next book and the progress it may reveal.

## Book Reviews

Joseph P. Provenzano: **The Philosophy of Conscious Energy: Answers to the Ultimate Questions.** Winston-Derek, Nashville, Tennessee, USA. 1993. pp. 246.

This book from America pursues the quest for "ultimate explanations". The approach is through the development of philosophy, culminating in Teilhard de Chardin. I am going straight away to nail my colours to the mast, and say that I feel this book provides what we all need so much at the present moment, namely, an advanced primer to Teilhard's thought. Provenzano, who works at the Californian Institute of Technology, focuses his book on getting philosophy to measure up to providing answers to the "Big Questions" - What is it all about? How should we live? The criteria that he uses to examine each philosopher's stance are:

1. A philosophy should rest on a fundamental insight that is intuitively pleasing.
2. A philosophy should be internally consistent.
3. It should not contradict the findings of modern science.
4. It should reinforce the notion of the importance of the individual person.

With these criteria in mind, he commences to chart the evolutionary development of philosophy from Thales in the seventh century B.C. to Aquinas, Kant, Darwin, Kierkegaard, and Ayer in the twentieth. All in all, he examines thirty-three major philosophers en route. But, he leaves the piece de resistance to the last- Teilhard de Chardin, who, he maintains, provides a breakthrough in relating philosophy to the "Big Questions". He provides an immediately understandable portrayal of the key concepts of Teilhard's thought and of its

implications. This summary is without doubt the clearest that I have read on Teilhard. He then continues in truly evolutionary manner, to develop those concepts a little further into what he calls. *The Philosophy of Conscious Energy*. This he bases on four assumptions:

1. The Law of Consciousness and Complexity is the most fundamental law in the universe.
2. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, in the universe except energy, in one form or another.
3. The transformation of energy from one form to another, sometimes results in differences so great that the two forms are actually two distinct states of energy. This transformation must be thought of as a change of state.
4. All "laws" are potentially state dependent as a consequence.

From here he moves out to chart his philosophical system as moving through four states of evolutionary development - from Radiation, to Matter, to Conscious Energy, to Self-Conscious Energy. He applies his criteria (see above) to his own philosophical thought and makes therefore very clear links with everyday living. This ranges from putting the social crimes current in our lives, such as drugs, into an explanatory context of consciousness - (because society has reached a state of higher consciousness, some wish to reduce consciousness and this is evil at a higher state) - to understanding the reason for evil; to explaining the drive for scientific research; to understanding God's "composition"; to the immortality of the soul. In short, a mind blowing book, yet very practical in its charting of implications, an extremely rare combination.

Tom Baxter

*The Writer was Editor of the former **Teilhard Review**, in which this book review first appeared.*

Francis Crick: **The Astonishing Hypothesis: The Scientific Search for the Soul.**

Simon & Schuster, 1994, 320pp., £16.99.

Murray Gell-Mann: **The Quark and the Jaguar: Adventures in the Simple and the Complex.**

Little, Brown, 1994, 392pp., £18.99.

The authors of these books are among the most distinguished scientists of the twentieth century. Both are Nobel prize-winners; what makes the books unusual are that the whole, in Crick's case, and the majority, in Gell-Mann's, are about fields quite distinct from those for which the authors were honoured.

Francis Crick won his Nobel Prize for discovering, with James Watson, the structure of DNA. After helping to elucidate the genetic code by which DNA controls the structure of proteins. Crick changed his interests to the working of the brain (his third career, he was a physicist before becoming a molecular biologist). His sub-title for this book is rather naughty - a trait which will not surprise those who have read Watson's **The Double Helix** which describes their discovery of the structure of DNA. As an atheist, Crick does not believe in the soul, but is writing about consciousness, and in particular how we become conscious of what we see. He does not believe that the time is ripe for a unified theory of consciousness, but is sure that when this appears it will come from the neuroscientist, not the philosopher; his "astonishing hypothesis" is that consciousness is the result of the activity of the tens of billions of nerve cells (roughly the number of stars in the Milky Way) which make up our brains.

The book is in three parts. Part I begins with a general discussion of consciousness, and goes on to the phenomenon of vision in particular. An account of visual illusions shows that seeing

is not always believing. Part II looks at the structure and function of nerve cells and the brain that they make up, emphasising that there is no one part of the brain which is the seat of consciousness, but with particular reference to the part of the brain concerned with visions. There is nothing original in these Parts, but the non-scientific reader wanting a clear and up-to-date account of basic modern neuroscience could find no better. Part III is an account of Crick and his colleague's own recent studies; this is very much work-in-progress and ends with no clear-cut conclusion. Visual consciousness is thought to arise from a complex interaction between the nerve cells at the back of the brain (where the nerve pathways from the eyes end up) and centres deep within the brain. The final chapter stresses that all this is hypothesis - that is, it is open to disproof - and there is a brief but fascinating appendix suggesting that, although consciousness is a function of the brain as a whole, free-will may be centred in one specific area.

Crick is clear that consciousness is an "emergent" activity of many nerve cells acting together in a way compatible with, but not predictable from, the properties of an individual cell. Gell-Mann's book, **The Quark and the Jaguar**, is a discussion in-depth of the relationship of individuality and complexity and the implications of "emergence". He is not just a Nobel Prize-Winner but has the reputation of being one of the cleverest men alive - he is reputed to understand several dozen languages. Nevertheless he admits to difficulty in writing this, his first book for the general reader - a problem which he attributes to severe criticism of his efforts, when a child, by his father, and, even with the help of his wife, a poet and professor of literature, the book is hard going at times. His Nobel Prize in physics was for predicting the ultimate building blocks of matter, the "Quark" of his title, and about a third of the book is on the micro world of the quantum; the **New Scientist's** reviewer found this fascinating but not easy reading, and it is not for an outsider to comment on this section.

There are many definitions of complexity. Gell-Mann considers some of them (and a recent article in **Scientific American** claimed to have identified 31!) He concentrates on what he calls "complex adaptive systems", which are not merely complex but capable of acquiring information about their environment, processing this information, and reacting back more or less appropriately on the environment. We (and our brains in particular) are examples of such systems; others are ecological communities and the economy. Gell-Mann is also an environmentalist (he was named as one of the Global 500 citizens by the UN Development Programme). He believes that understanding complexity is vital for both understanding the global economy and for establishing a sustainable relationship between humankind and the environment. The jaguar of the title refers to his close encounter with a close relative, a jaguarundi, in the South American rainforest.

Human organizations - and communities - are also complex adaptive systems. They differ from others in that they can be, and are, affected by the actions of individual members, and such actions may be maladaptive rather than adaptive. Brains can be affected by the "misbehaviour" of tracts of nerve cells, which can manifest itself as physical illness such as Parkinson's disease or mental illness such as severe depression, but this is not conscious behaviour on the part of the cell groups. The feedback of individual human activity on other members of a community, whether altruistic, self-seeking, or plain malevolent, adds an additional dimension to the workings of a community as an interactive system - and the larger the community, the more numerous and varied its membership, the greater the scope for interactions and the more unpredictable its behaviour. The experience of communities such as Braziers has much to offer in the understanding of human interactions which is the next stage in knowledge of complexity.

Perhaps only the more dedicated reader will wish to buy these books. But at least a trip to your local public library will provide much food for thought and, at the end, a rewarding experience.

*Douglas Holdstock*

*The reviewer is a retired hospital doctor and a Member of Braziers*