'BRAINWASHING' AND MANAGED GROUP EXPERIENCES: CONVERGING 'NEW' TECHNIQUES?

William Marina & Thomas A. Breslin

Florida Atlantic University
Institute for Humane Studies

> We were the first to assert that the more
> complicated the forms assumed by civiliza-
> tion, the more restricted the freedom of the
> individual must become.
>
> --Benito Mussolini[1]

Preface

The thesis developed here is that there is a convergence of technique between managed group experiences, as they have grown in the West in recent decades, and Communist efforts at "brainwashing," or thought reform, and that neither of these is new, or a result of technological society, but existed in similar forms in civilizations which flourished several millenia ago. This emphasis on the group tended historically to accompany the growth of the totalitarian state, itself not a new phenomenon. As such, it is dangerous to the freedom of the individual, quite apart from the personal problems of a particular group leader. That government in the United States is now involving itself in such group work is a dangerous new development.

The Emergence of the Group

In the last few years there has been a vast increase in the emphasis placed upon the group within Western society. In the area of sex, for example, avant garde magazines and newspapers carry in their personal sections advertisements for "groupies," and it is clear that the phenomenon has spread to sections of the middle, upper middle, and upper classes. Such an emphasis is quite different from the earlier epoch of Western individualism.

One aspect of this emphasis on the group has been within the field of psychology in the area of group sensitivity experiences, often conducted by those who call themselves "humanistic psycholgists" and believe they are helping to free people from inhibitions and "hang-ups." Many businesses have explored the possibilities of the group dynamics resulting from such managed experiences. The varieties of group experiences have multiplied; though one book lists twelve basic types.[2]

Some psychologists who defend group work have become concerned about many of the more exaggerated claims and activities of the most devoted practitioners.[3] Furthermore, it is admitted that there is little data on the long-range effectiveness or consequences of group experiences.[4] Even a defender of the idea acknowledges that in the hands of the wrong group leader group therapy can become like brainwashing.[5]

A powerful technique in the hands of an individual without personal integrity, or with his own "hang-ups" is, indeed, cause for concern. But what if the techniques themselves are similar to those employed in "brainwashing"? Is it possible that these group experiences are simply one more facet of a larger assault on the individual and his privacy which has come to characterize much of our social development in recent decades? Finally, are these techniques radically new phenomena in our age of science and technology, as claimed by many proponents who worship the notion of newness, or are they fundamentally variations on an old theme?

A Personal Encounter

While words can never completely describe an event, this is certainly the case if one has not actually experienced a group

session. A personal disgression can, perhaps, help to explain how one of us first came to consider the question which this essay attempts to answer.[6]   In graduate school in the early 1960s, I wrote a paper on Chinese Communist efforts at thought reform, or control, of their own people, and of the "brainwashing," as it came to be called, which was attempted on a number of American prisoners in the Korean War.

In 1968 I was doing some consulting work on Adult Basic Education projects in a Migrant and Seasonal Workers Program administered by a Community Action Agency under the Office of Economic Opportunity. In this program the teaching was being done by a number of Volunteers in Service to American workers, who had enlisted in the War on Poverty. When I arrived at the site one month, I was told that the planned curriculum work had been cancelled because a sensitivity, or "T" session was being conducted on a nearby university campus by Westinghouse Educational Corporation, which had a federal contract to select and train VISTA workers.

When I arrived at the university I was shown to a classroom where a group session directed by several psychologists, trainers for Westinghouse, was in progress. I was at that time not yet acquainted with "T" sessions, and other aspects of group dynamics which were then already being developed quite extensively throughout the country.

In the center of the room, a young woman, one of the VISTA workers, was seated. Surrounding her in a circle, were about twenty-five of her peers. She was highly agitated, and soon in tears, as they continued to bombard her with examples of the many faults in her personality which made it difficult to work with her, and because of which she was disliked. After awhile, under the direction of one of the trainers, the comments of the group toward her began to shift. If she would just modify her behavior, the group could come to accept her and even love her, several members seemed to be saying. And she appeared quite gratified that the group was willing to do so.

Within a few weeks, however, she quit the program. As I had come to know her, I believe that what irritated members of the group was that she was an intellectual and held an M.A. from a leading eastern university (none of the others did), and, envying her abilities, they accused her of being "unfeeling,"

"stuck-up," and "insensitive."

Over the long weekend each member of the group was in the "hot seat" at one time or another. Interspersed with these sessions, which left the participants in a highly emotional state, were some content classes, again conducted by Westinghouse, that dealt with American history, in particular that of the Cumberland area. Taught by young, radical, student organizers, they focused on a very strong class exploitation interpretation of the American past.

I was disturbed by the whole process, especially the group therapy sessions. Though I had not attended one before, the techniques seemed, somehow, familiar. Suddenly, I realized that what I had witnessed were variations of the techinques of thought reform as employed by the Chinese, about which I had written some years earlier.

In the next few months I came to know several psychologists who were working on doctorates in counseling. One of the required courses involved encounter group therapy and attendance at several weekend encounter group sessions. When I spoke with these friends, what struck me was the tremendously high regard which they felt for members of the group. After only a weekend together, they had really come to "know" these people, and to "share" with them, and found them among the most "marvelous" people they had ever met. These comments came from individuals I had known for many years, and whose abilities to differentiate between persons I respected. Yet, they seemed unable to discriminate very well when it came to members of the group.

My friends regarded my comments on the similarity between thought reform and encounter groups as a hostility toward all psychotherapy. But the most interesting reaction came from the professor who taught the course. I had an opportunity to discuss the question with him, and noted that the Chinese technique of making the person in the "hot seat" formally write an autobiography for criticism by the group was a much more "efficient" method than discussion alone. The group could constantly return to the written record for repeated criticism of "errors" until the document had been reworked to its satisfaction. He smiled, and then informed me that some of the more advanced encounter groups around the country were now employing that approach.

The Recurrence of the 'New'

One of the most fascinating aspects of the study of history is the awareness on the part of the historian on the extent to which people in every age, and certainly in our own "Modern" period, tend to believe that much of their social development is new and has not been experienced by other civilizations. This attitude is not confined to the general population but is shared, and often promulgated, by intellectuals and opinion makers.

Among the numerous examples that might be offered, *Future Shock,* Alvin Toffler's best-seller of a few years back is indicative of this idea. He appears to believe that our society is the first to experience "future shock," which is simply the cultural shock which the individual experiences when confronted by rapid social changes. Granted that perhaps modern technological society has experienced a greater degree of such change within the lives of each generation during the last few hundred years or so, most of this is *overkill.* That is, the sense of shock that leads to social disorientation is much like schizophrenia; once a person has received enough dislocation to send him over his threshold, any additional shock is over-kill, and the organism is no longer much affected by it. That modern society has this overkill capacity is, therefore, much less significant than the fact that other civilizations in history have undergone periods of intensive and rapid change which led to a disintegration of the older society and its values. These civilizations also experienced "future shock."

Elsewhere, one of us has traced the parameters of rapid dislocation in several civilizations.[7] What should be noted here is that, as these changes occurred, those in control of the State became especially receptive to the development and refinements of techniques of group dynamics as means of social control. Most of those writing about contemporary techniques of group dynamics seem blissfully unaware that other civilizations thousands of years ago developed methods of group control. A recent study on the subject, for example, which has a section "A Short History of the Study of Small Groups" notes that the "[s]cientific study of groups is largely a twentieth-century phenomenon," and indicates that in the nineteenth century sociologists were preoccupied with major historical

trends[8] Another study, by Frederick C. Thayer, waxes ecstatic about the "emerging organizational revolution."[9]

This emphasis on the newness of the study of groups is closely related to the quote from Benito Mussolini, cited by F. A. Hayek, with which we began this article: "that the more complicated the forms assumed by civilizations, the more restricted the freedom of the individual." Behind the whole push for group dynamics rests this basic assumption which Mussolini fancied he was the first to comprehend.

Closely allied to this notion is the view that the rise of totalitarianism is interwoven with the growth of industrial society. Thus, even those who would oppose the totalitarianism which they feel is made possible by industrialism, concede that the seeming complexities of this "new" society necessitate the curtailment of individual freedom in favor of the larger community or group.

The scholar who has, perhaps, done most to question the assumption of the relationship between totalitarianism and industrialism is Barrington Moore, Jr., whose *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Modern World* attempts to show the totalitarian elements in a number of pre-industrial societies beginning with the English Revolution in the seventeenth century.[10] That book, however, evolved out of an earlier essay on "Totalitarian Elements in Pre-Industrial Society,"[11] in which Moore offered a great deal of evidence with respect to ancient China. We will focus on China here, though there is certainly data with repect to other civilizations.[12]

China

While students of Chinese history disagree as to the fundamental causes of the breakdown, there is no question that the society was undergoing a considerable social tension in the sixth century B.C. during the period that produced critics such as Confucius and Lao Tze and culminated in the establishment of the centralized empire of the Ch'in dynasty in 221 B.C.

One of the most remarkable documents dating from this era is the 4th century Book of Lord Shang, dating from around 350 B.C. As in Greece, with the laws attributed to Lycurgus in Sparta or Solon in Athens, the changes credited to Lord Shang probably took place over a much extended period of time. In *An End to Hierarchy! An End to Competition!,*

Thayer discusses the recent research into small-group processes which has culminated in the choice of five as the ideal number for the group[13] Consider that "new" discovery in the light of Lord Shang's advice to reorganize the people into groups of five and ten "to control one another and to share one another's punishments. They were also obliged to denounce each other's crimes." As *The Book of Lord Shang* put it:

> Now the people in groups of five are responsible for each others crimes, they spy on each other to discover transgressions, they denounce each other and cause hostile relations. By thus establishing enmity the people harm each other, they injure friendly feelings, destroy benevolence and kindness and damage scholarship and culture. Those of friendly spirit are few, but those who desire to cause harm are many, and the way of virtue has been destroyed.[15]

It is difficult for a normal human being to comprehend that this monstrous system is being advocated in the passage. Thus, Prof. Duyvendak, the translator, comments:

> It would seem as if here is given a description of the state of affairs as desired by Shang Yang. For, as we have seen, the reform which came before all others was the organization of the people into groups of five or ten men, who were mutually responsible for each other, and were obliged to denounce each other's crimes; at the same time the old patriarchal family-system was broken up[16]

If one did not denounce a crime, he received punishment as if he himself had committed the crime; he would be cut in two. The study of group dynamics by the ancient Chinese may not be "scientific" enough to satisfy modern scholarship, but we suggest that Lord Shang knew quite well what he was about. He wished to smash the extended family, destroy the scholarly works of Confucianism, and concept of individual virtue, thus placing all power over human action in the hands of the State. It is difficult to find any modern totalitarian system — the Ch'in even resorted to book burnings — that goes any further, and impossible to accept the myth that modern technology is a necessary condition for totalitarianism. When the Kuomintang pushed a variation of this spy system in the twentieth century, it did not go so far in its attempt to break up the extended family, though the Communists would go farther. But both found clear precedents in the Men of Ch'in. It might also be noted that the Cuban government of Fidel Castro has made efforts to institute such a neighborhood spy system.

Western Classical Civilization

The Greco-Roman world does not appear to have developed anything comparable to the early Chinese in the way of formally worked out techniques utilizing the group. In *Battle for the Mind*, William Sargent has an excellent chapter on "Brainwashing in Ancient Times," in which he compares many of the procedures used by the priests to those used by contemporary psychotherapists.[17] It is not clear, however, what role was played by the group itself in any such experiences, as compared to that played by the priests.

About group techniques in Christianity we shall deal later, though many of these probably go back to the earliest Christian communities. We have suggested that such an emphasis on the group as a shaper of values and of a meaning for life is closely correlated with the breakdown phase of a civilization where there has been an erosion of the old values and a search is underway for some replacement.

In *Civilization and the Caesars*, Chester A. Starr has brilliantly recounted the decay and disintegration of Roman society under the Caesars.[18] It was in that atmosphere that Christianity eventually triumphed. But there were many other groups also in contention for the allegiance of Roman society.

It has, of course, become commonplace to speculate on comparisons between the contemporary United States and the Roman Empire. These speculations are usually couched in terms of power: the decline of "law and order" and of the power of the State in general.

While Edward Gibbon even went so far as to blame Christianity for undercutting the glories of Rome, it is the virtue of Starr's analysis that he reverses Gibbon's argument and demonstrates that the first and fundamental factor in the decline of Rome was that Classical Civilization had reached a dead end in terms of values and any sense of feeling about a meaning of life. For a long time the State, and the power which it could bring to bear, attempted to fill that void. But in the long run it failed.

What characterizes our similarity to the Classical World, as Nietzsche and Spengler so clearly grasped, was the cultural exhaustion, the lack of any value base. It is in such a disintegrating situation that one finds a desperate search for "meaning," often in magic and other fads. Peter T. Bauer has pointed

to the proliferation of such phenomena in the poor countries, where the old life style is being completely ripped apart. In Rome, Gibbon suggested, many "converted the study of philosophy into magic."

For those Romans who enjoyed a degree of affluence, Epicureanism held out a promise of restoring some meaning to life. The *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, for example, speaks of "the Epicurean band full of joy." [20] Starr observes that such comments "strike one as a weak expression of social urges." [21]

While discussing this wider cultural context in which the shift of emphasis to the joys of the group takes place, we would be remiss not to mention William C. Schutz, much of whose encounter group work is described in his book *Joy* and a second volume, *More Joy*. Perhaps the ultimate in such titles is Herbert Otto's *Peak Joy*. We might also note here that the Elysium Institute, whose very name recognizes a similarity between the Greco-Roman experience and our own, came up with a seminar on "Cosmic Joy," followed by another on "Advanced Cosmic Joy." [22]

It would be difficult to match the wit with which Andrew Malcolm has treated Schutz and other faddists. The reader is simply advised to peruse those sections of his important study. [23] To capture the full flavor of a comparison with Roman phenomena, the portions from Malcolm's work should be read in conjunction with the sections of Starr and Gibbon describing the rise of cults, and Sargent's description of dance therapy and the use of hallucinogenic drugs such as hellebore. There is a marvelous passage in the memoirs of the Emperor Julian (4th century A.D.) where he talked about the bearded, unwashed youth in tattered clothes frequently found along the Roman highways (read "Hitchhiking Hippies"). What angered Julian, who had respect for the learning of the Stoic and Cynic philosophers, were the claims of these ignorant youth that they, too, were philosophers. He referred to them as "Pseudo-Cynics." [24]

The general boredom with life of many of the wealthy Romans led to some of the youth seeking excitement in gladiatorial contests and to the increasing advocacy of suicide as a way out after sex, drugs, and other efforts to find joy or thrills had been exhausted. Only an obtuse reader will fail to note the similarities with our own civilization.

Christianity, Conversion, and Group Conformity

The phenomenon of intense personal behavioral change or conversion has always been associated with Christianity. But in the sixteenth century, while the Roman Catholic Church was being challenged by the Reformation and was attempting to initiate a centralized hierarchy with strong vertical control over the membership at large, Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus, the Jesuit Order, developed the Spiritual Exercises to systemize the conversion process and to lead those converted into the obedient service of the Church.

Whether conducted for three days or for as many as thirty, the Ignatian exercises begin with a meditation on sin, in which the exercitant is to consider his own soul as though it were imprisoned in his body, then the sin of the rebellious angels, and finally the fate of a soul damned for committing but one grave sin. The individual is asked to compare his malice, iniquity, weakness, and ignorance with the goodness, justice, omnipotence, and wisdom of God; "to see all my corruption and foulness of body;. . . to look upon myself as a sort of ulcer and abscess, whence have sprung so many sins, and so many wickednesses and such most hideous venom."[25]

Loyola structured the Spiritual Exercises so that individuals would pass on to the next stage only when they had experienced contrition, grief, and perhaps tears. To that end, Loyola counselled reduction in sleep, food, and light, as well as the self-infliction of physical penance. Then, after purging themselves in a general confession of the sins of their past lives, the exercitants would begin a series of meditations on Christ, their king and savior, calling them to his glorious service.

The Spiritual Exercises of Loyola have remained the core of the Jesuit Order and, combined with various disciplinary practices such as group criticism and public confession, have remained the source of its strength and proverbial discipline. At first, these exercises were given only to selected volunteers; later, Jesuits and members of other religious orders were required to carry them out in abbreviated form each year. In this way the Ignatian exercises became a regular and formal instrument of group discipline, a sort of revival, as the Church and especially its religious societies became more iso-

lated from and threatened by the emerging modern world.

A contemporary of Ignatius Loyola, John Calvin (b. 1509), used the dynamics of religious conversion to establish a religious dictatorship in Geneva. That city had been passing through an uneasy period of profound social change during which the old order lost its grip on the politically divided populace. Rejecting reason and historical tradition as guides for human conduct and as bases for human society, Calvin offered the Genevans the Judaeo-Christian scriptures as the unique and necessary source of belief and the foundations of a new social order. After years of effort, Calvin established a State in which every activity, every word was judged in light of his religious values and mandates. Nothing was private. Spies were everywhere. Believers were held responsible for their own behavior and that of their families. Recalcitrants were banished or put to death; the wayward were punished. The rest of the citizenry prided themselves, and rested secure, in the belief that they had been chosen by God.[26]

Communal religious responses to social stress did not end with Calvin. Both in Great Britain and later in the United States, the Protestant churches and their members found themselves threatened by the rise of the industrial way of life. The religious revival became an important way of imposing order on society. In England, the Wesley brothers spearheaded revivalism. In the fast-changing United States, the best known and most influential of the nineteenth century revivalist preachers was Charles Grandison Finney. Finney was not only an effective revivalist but he was also an analyst of revivalism. His own *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* clearly witness to his oratorical strategy of cultivating distress among his listeners and then, in a group context, of providing a sense of relief, of personal safety or salvation. "It is of great importance," he wrote, "that the sinner should be made to *feel his guilt,* and not left to the impression that he is *unfortunate.*" Until you can make the sinner blame and condemn himself, Finney believed, "the gospel will never take effect."[27]

Those in whom the revivalist stirred up a sense of guilt were urged to make their guilt public by moving forward and sitting in the "anxious seat." By thus putting aside what Finney termed "false shame" and breaking the "chains of pride" the individual would open himself to the assembly which might then comment on his past behavior and pray for

him, thereby accepting him on its terms and assuring him that it accepted his decision to be a fervent Christian.[28]

To help the newly converted on the straight and narrow and to win over new converts, Finney urged that church members go from house to house exhorting their neighbors.[29] But the great revivalist realized that:

A revival will decline and cease, unless *Christians are frequently recon- verted.* By this I mean, that Christians, in order to keep in the spirit of a revival, commonly need to be frequently convicted, and humbled, and broken down before God, and re-converted. I have never labored in revivals in company with anyone who would keep in the work and be fit to manage a revival continually, who did not pass through this process of breaking down as often as once in two or three weeks. Revivals decline, commonly, because it is found impossible to make the church feel their guilt and their dependence, so as to break down before God. It is impor- tant that ministers should understand this, and learn how to break down the church, and break down themselves when they need it, or else Christians will soon become mechanical in their work, and lose their fervor and their power of prevailing with God.[30]

No less than Finney, twentieth century evangelists have attempted to master the process of inducing conversion, radi- cal behavioral change. Thus Bryan Green, Rector of Birming- ham, in *The Practice of Evangelism* points out that in dealing with individuals the evangelist ought to do more than emphasize failures against honesty, love, etc., and allow people to get them off their chests. "Instead of true conver- sion," he notes, the result of that technique was often "only a psychological release." Instead the evangelist should begin with the "superficial or surface needs" of the individual, such as fear of death, loneliness, weakness of will, aimlessness, failure to achieve, and shame, and then work to convince the individual that behind these lies a need for God. "The first principle is that the soul must come to a real sense of need — to that point of despair when it is crying out, 'O God I need Thee. Come to me and save me.' For it is in the despair of the soul that faith is born."[31]

Brainwashing and Thought Reform

While Western scholars and students of industrial psychol- ogy studied group dynamics for various reasons, it was the so- called "brainwashing" efforts of the Chinese Communists on United Nations prisoners taken during the Korean War in the

early 1950s that focused public attention on such techniques.

In this short essay, we shall not describe those efforts to indoctrinate forcibly prisoners of war. There are several excellent studies which do so.[32] A mystique has grown up about such "brainwashing," which was actually much less successful than is commonly imagined — about 13% of those subjected to the process were converted by it but their conversion was temporary.

As Robert Lifton has pointed out, the term has come to be used quite loosely.[33] We prefer the phrase "thought reform," as used by Lifton and others, coupled with the term "coercive persuasion," employed by Edgar Schein.[34] A more descriptive phrase might be "thought reform through coercive persuasion and continued follow-up."

We are primarily concerned here with the efforts of the Chinese, going through three phases, to indoctrinate their own people. It is these techniques which we wish to compare with group experiences as they are now developing in the West.

The first phase of indoctrination of the Chinese population began after their takeover of mainland China in 1949, though aspects of it had been in use earlier. A major effort was made to wipe out any vestiges of attachment to capitalism and the profit motive. As William Sargent notes, "Orgies of group confession about political deviation were encouraged."[35]

A good description of this process is given by Andrew Malcolm in his excellent study, *The Tyranny of the Group*:

Apart from these great spectacles the Chinese also made extensive use of small-group training, which makes the Chinese experience particularly relevant to the subject of this book. These training courses all took place at isolated camps. Students were kept in a condition of constant mental and physical fatigue. Tension was always maintained at a high level.[36]

Such techniques are Standard Operating Procedure for many of the Encounter Groups in the West. Weekend sessions are usually held at isolated retreats. This is a not so subtle aspect of coercion, for even if the individual chooses to break with the group, he may find it rather difficult to make his way back to civilization. The effort to fatigue the individual is also common in the "marathon" encounter groups, for this dulls his ability to cope with the pressures of the group and its leaders. The recent Erhard Seminars Training (est)* groups even deny the individual the opportunity to to the bathroom, so that

coping with one's kidneys becomes a major problem.

Malcolm describes the language in the Chinese small groups as "vicious and humour was utterly lacking." In each group were informers who were very difficult to identify. He concludes:

One characteristic of the Chinese ideological group that is still not used in American organizational development groups was the writing of auto-biographical statements. These comprehensive narratives were read and criticized in the small groups. They would then be revised to reflect an even more perfect understanding of Maoist thought and would finally become the property of the state.[37]

Malcolm is correct to emphasize the great efficiency of the Chinese use of the written autobiography. He is in error, as we noted earlier in recounting the admission by an Encounter Group teacher, in his view that the autobiography is not yet in use in advanced Encounter Groups.

In the Chinese training techniques, after about six months of group meetings a crisis develops, at roughly the same time in most members of the group, "characterized by hysterical weeping." In this atmosphere, the trainers begin to introduce the Communist revolutionary ideas, followed by four more months of reinforcement.[38]

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of the last decade, including the public degradation of those seen as not sympathetic to the regime and the development of cadre schools for training, is simply an extension of these early efforts.

R. L. Walker has listed six factors that form the basis of thought reform: the isolated camp; fatigue, with no opportunity for relaxation or reflection; tension; uncertainty; vicious language; seriousness, with all humor forbidden.[39] These are developed by making the individual feel guilt and disillusionment about himself and his past. As John Wesley and Charles G. Finney both realized that continuing meetings were necessary to reinforce the conversion, so do the Communists.

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is an admission that such group training must become a permanent way of life in Chinese society if they are to create the "new man." In the face of this agonizing process, we can perhaps take some small

---

*We have followed the practice of using lower case letters —est— to abbreviate Erhard Seminars Training so as not to confuse it with —EST— the usual abbreviation for Electro Shock Therapy.

solace in the knowledge that Chinese rulers have been attempting such a re-creation since at least the time of Lord Shang.

The Present Situation

Earlier we touched upon the beginnings of the study of group dynamics in the West during the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Recent studies of group dynamics are hard pressed to encompass the varieties of group techniques now so widespread in business, pyschotherapy, and religion.

Only on occasion do advocates of group techniques show an awareness of the historical dimensions of what they are proposing. While he does not mention other civilizations and only probes recent Western history, an advocate of encounter groups, Thomas C. Oden, notes:

Most of the leaders of the "encounter culture" have not been trained to think historically, and make no pretenses to do so. So the service of thinking historically must be rendered by those in touch with the historic tradition, but it must be rendered in a way that can be appreciated even by those who had imagined that they were doing something entirely unprecedented.[40]

Oden does not wish to debunk encounter groups but to support the movement by "showing that its historical origins are connected with rich western religious sources from which it is now estranged." Those sources, he claims, are Protestant pietism (puritanism) and Jewish hassidism. He points to the curious fact that "if you can convince the encounter clientale that the meditation they are doing comes from eastern religions, and not from the west, you can proceed amiably.[41]

Some Observations

We have attempted to show that these group techniques not only spring from religion, but go back to totalitarian societies of the past, especially when the society and its values were in a state of rapid change. The refinement and widespread use of these techniques by the Chinese Communists is but the latest example of the effort of the State to utilize such procedures.

We believe in the inherent dignity and freedom of human beings as rational individuals. We do not oppose pyschother--

apy, group or any other, which builds on the dignity of the individual and helps him to learn to live his life more rational-ly.[42]

Most people would agree that the Chinese program of thought reform is a monstrous crime against the freedom and dignity of the individual. We would suggest that anyone considering involvement in a group experience examine the procedures to be used, against the six points which Walker listed as the essence of the thought reform technique. In listing these again, we shall discuss the new est phenomenon in conjunction with each point, as an example, and because that group has attempted to keep secret its procedures.[43]

1. Isolation. The est meeting is not so isolated as some of the training spots used for many weekend encounters. Often it is held in a hotel to accommodate the 200 or so participants. But the group is closed off for enormous periods of time. What holds many is the $200 which they have prepaid for the course.
2. Fatigue. The est sessions go on for 16 hours at a time with only two short breaks, and fatigue is an obvious goal of those in charge of the system.
3, 4, 5, and 6. Tension, Uncertainty, Vicious Language, and Seriousness. These are all present in an interlocking fashion. The participants are castigated for hours on end, with a seemingly endless flow of foul language. The net result of this unremitting attack on those present is to develop a sense of deprivation and guilt.

D. C. Hebb, an early researcher in the field of sensory deprivation — and over-stimulation does the same — observed that it could disturb the individual's "capacity for critical judgment, making him eager to listen to and believe any sort of preposterous nonsense.[44]

In that situation the est participants exhibit the same kind of crying and hysterical behavior as was found in Chinese thought reform sessions. It is at that point that the trainers begin to impart their own message. Like the Communists, the est people have found it necessary to have a continuing series of follow-up sessions. We suggest this is necessary because the vaporous information they have been given is based upon the context of the emotional experience rather than a legitimate, and thought-out system of values. The shallowness of it, therefore, demands constant reinforcement, as the religious evangelists clearly understood.

In closing we would like to touch upon two questions: the damage done to individuals in these group experiences, and most ominous of all, the increasing interest and involvement

by government in group techniques.

It is frequently argued by advocates of group techniques that such drastic procedures are necessary to break down the old patterns of behavior and replace them with new ones. While some success is claimed, there are few studies on either these or the casualties, quite apart from whether "success" meant a constant need for reinforcement. We suggest that whatever the success, it is not worth a technique that is based upon degrading the individual's sense of self-esteem and increasing his sense of guilt. One of the few studies on Encounter Group casualties found that group leaders were very poor at identifying casualties, and found a rate of 9.4% among those who completed the groups. Apart from a suicide, the study found:

> The severity and type of psychological injury varied considerably. Three students during or immediately following the group had psychotic decompositions — one a manic pyschosis, one an acute paranoid schizophrenic episode, and the third an acute undifferentiated schizophreniclysergic acid diethylamide episode. Several students had depressive or anxiety symptoms, or both, ranging from low grade tension or discouragement to severe crippling anxiety attacks to a major six-month depression with a 20-lb. weight loss and suicidal ideation. Others suffered some disruption of their self-esteem: they felt empty, self-negating, inadequate, shameful, unacceptable, more discouraged about ever growing or changing. Several subjects noted a deterioration in their interpersonal life; they withdrew or avoided others, experienced more distrust, were less willing to reach out or to take risks with others.[45]

The Chinese Communists also found a large number who simply never recovered from the effect of the training. We believe that these techniques, based as they are on self-abasement and guilt, will always have a high casualty rate, regardless of the extent of training of the leaders, and that the "illusion of success" must be maintained by frequent reinforcement since it is based upon an emotional experience with the group rather than a reasoned working out of a new set of values.

Finally, we noted earlier that these techniques were used by Westinghouse Educational Corporation on a contract to train VISTA workers for the federal government. The techniques have increasingly come to be used by large corporations, often in a context where some workers are unaware of it, and in government agencies. Werner Erhard makes no secret of the fact that he hopes to see est utilized as a means to change our social institutions. That it is a psychological mech-

anism and not a value system is seldom considered. As the Chinese clearly understand, once this crisis has been reached the individual is disarmingly open to whatever values are then introduced. And the former encyclopedia salesman turned entrepreneur may be right, for the article about est mentions "the recent, Federally funded est training of school children is a step in that direction."[46]

This is, indeed, ominous. We began by pointing out the use of these techniques by the State in Ancient China. Evangelists, such as Finney, always understood the great appeal of these techniques to youth as a substitute for a more disciplined education. He criticized many religious books written for the young because they did not sufficiently emphasize "the *guilt* of sinners, or make them feel how much they have been to blame.[47] That the government is now subsidizing the development of such techniques for use on the young is a fearful prospect for the future.

[1] Quoted in F. A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (Chicago, 1944), p. 43.
[2] Carl Goldberg, *Encounter: Group Sensitivity Training Experience* (New York, 1970), p. 38.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 77-80.
[4] Joseph J. Reidy, *The Sensitivity Phenomenon* (St. Meinrad, Indiana, 1972), p. 15.
[5] Thomas C. Oden, "The New Pietism," *Journal for Humanistic Psychology*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring, 1972), pp. 24-41.
[6] The personal experience is related by William Marina.
[7] William Marina, "The 'E' Factors in History," *Modern Age*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Spring, 1974), pp. 175-85, and expanded and revised as *Egalitarianism and Empire* (Menlo Park, California, 1975).
[8] Theodore M. Mills, *The Sociology of Small Groups* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1967), p. 3.
[9] Frederick C. Thayer, *An End to Hierarchy! An End to Competition!* (New York, 1973), p. 4.
[10] (Boston, 1966).
[11] Barrington Moore, Jr., *Political Power and Social Theory: Six Studies* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), chapter two.
[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 54-9, also discuss India.
[13] P. 8.
[14] Moore, *Power*, p. 43.
[15] *The Book of Lord Shang: A Classic of the Chinese School of Law*, Translated from the Chinese with Introduction and Notes by J. J. L. Duyvendak (Chicago, 1963), pp. 57-8.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 58.
[17] (New York, 1957), chapter eight.
[18] (New York, 1965), *passim.*
[19] Peter T. Bauer, *Economic Analysis and Policy in Underdeveloped Countries* (Durham, 1957), p. 30. Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, many editions, Volume One, chapter two.
[20] Quoted in Starr, *Civilization*, p. 271.
[21] *Ibid.*
[22] See Andrew Malcom, *The Tyranny of the Group* (Toronto, 1973), p. 95, which we also consider the best single book on the dangers discussed here.
[23] *Ibid.*, especially pp. 104-7.
[24] Sargent, *Mind*, chapter eight.
[25] Ignatius Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises*, edited by Joseph Rickaby, S. J. (London, 1923), p. 34.
[26] Moore, *Power*, pp. 59-73.
[27] Charles Grandison Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, edited by William G. McLoughlin (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), pp. 205-6, emphasis in original.
[28] *Ibid.*, pp. 267-9.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 240.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 284.
[31] Bryan Green, *The Practice of Evangelism* (New York, 1951), pp. 153-4.
[32] A good bibliography is in the excellent study, Edgar H. Schein, *et. al.*, *Coercive Persuasion: A Socio-Psychological Analysis of the "Brainwashing" of American Civilian Prisoners by the Chinese Communists* (New York, 1961).
[33] Robert J. Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of "Brainwashing" in China* (New York, 1961), pp. 3-5.
[34] Schein, *Coercive Persuasion.*
[35] Sargent, *Mind*, p. 161.
[36] Malcom, *Tyranny*, p. 46.

[37] *Ibid.*

[38] R. L. Walker, *China Under Communism* (London, 1956), pp. 71-2.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

[40] Oden, "New Pietism," p. 25.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[42] Of course, not all pyschotherapy attempts to degrade the individual as a means of breaking down the personality. Albert Ellis' Rational Emotive Therapy especially emphasizes working out problems rationally. See Albert Ellis, "A Weekend of Rational Encounter," *Freedom Today*, #2, (August, 1975), pp. 26-9.
One of the problems with psychotherapy, as with law, as Richard R. Korn has pointed out, is that they "testify in [their] own behalf. We seldom hear from the clients or patients about what was done for them or to them." In a witty essay he shows that prostitutes and psychotherapists do much the same thing. They: 1) are "not typically involved on a personal and emotional level,"; 2) "offer services to strangers"; 3) "manipulate" the client; and 4) offer the service "for money." Korn quotes William Schofield, *Psychotherapy, The Purchase of Friendship* (Englewood Cliffs, 1964), p. 164: "If prostitution is the oldest of professions, is there any pride to be taken in the fact that the sale of friendship may be the commerce of the newest?" Richard R. Korn, "Prostitution and Pyschotherapy," paper delivered on June 15, 1969 at the Symposium "Sex Disorders in Clinical Practice," held at the San Francisco Medical Center of the University of California.

[43] Our data on est is drawn from Mark Brewer, "We're Gonna Tear You Down and Put You Back Together," *Psychology Today* (August, 1975), pp. 35-6, 39, 40, 82, 88-9.

[44] Quoted in Malcolm, *Tyranny*, p. 27.

[45] Irwin D. Yalom and Morton A. Lieberman, "A Study of Encounter Group Casualties," *Archives of General Psychiatry*, Vol. 25 (July, 1971), pp. 16-30, and reprinted in Robert T. Golimbiewski and Arthur Blumberg (eds.), *Sensitivity Training and the Laboratory Approach: Readings About Concepts and Applications* (N.P., 1973), p. 245.

[46] Brewer, "We're Gonna," p. 89.

[47] Finney, *Lectures*, p.7.