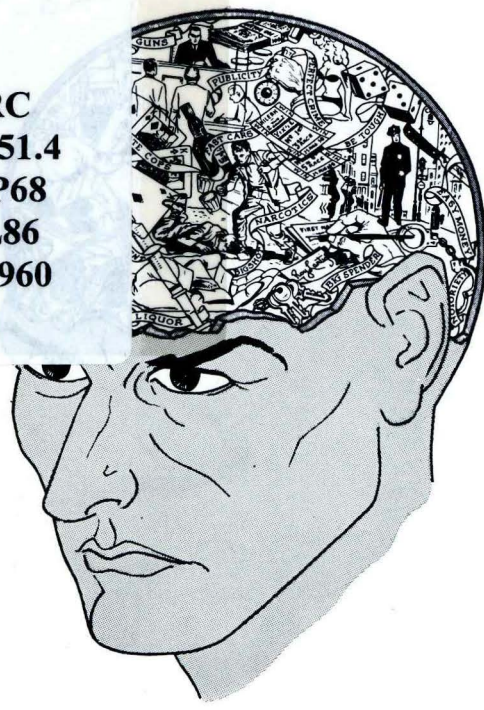


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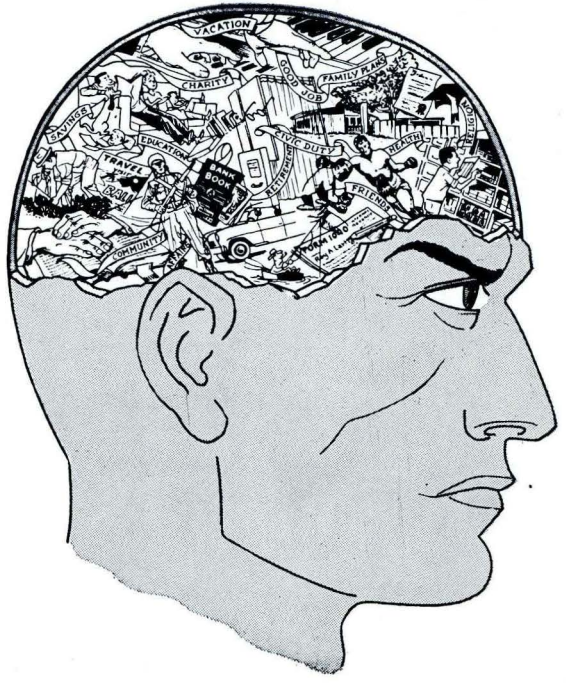
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PICTURES IN THE MIND

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By
Walter A. Lunden



PICTURES IN THE MIND

BY

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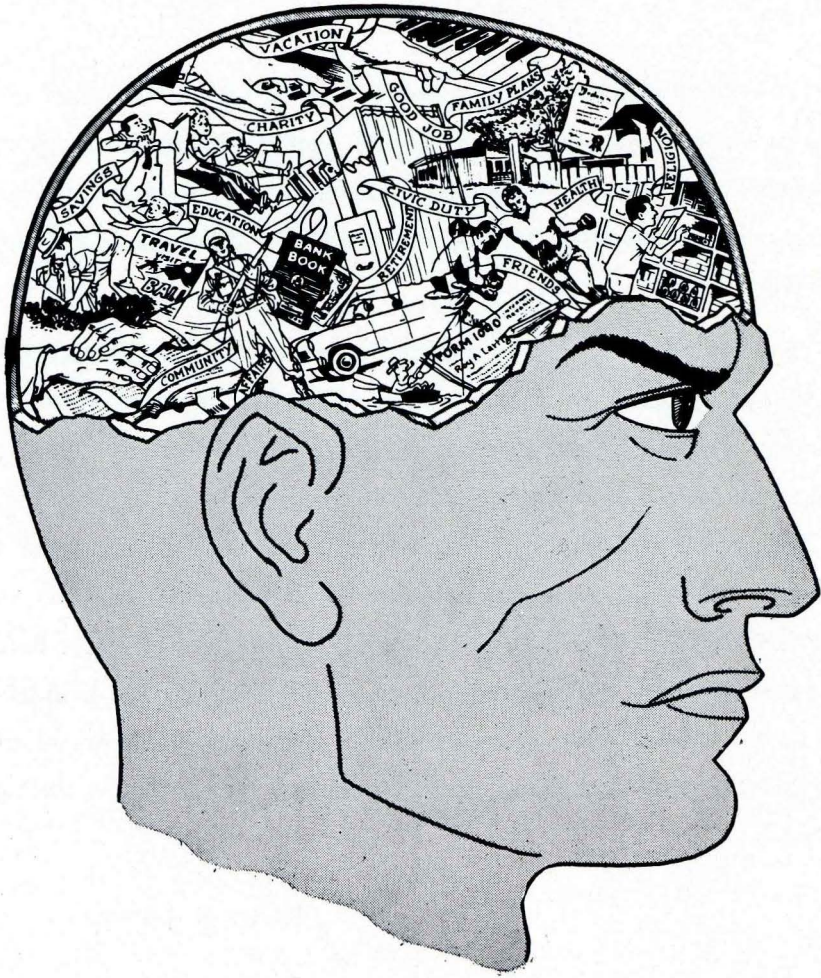
Preface

This small publication contains two parts: one, a very brief and general statement of certain salient factors involved in group therapy and, second, an analysis of the group therapy program conducted at the Iowa State Penitentiary, Ft. Madison, Iowa from 1950 to 1952.

The study of the group therapy program at the Penitentiary was made possible by a grant-in-aid from the Harvard Research Center in Creative Altruism. A preliminary report on the findings was made at the annual meeting of the Midwest Sociological Society in the spring of 1952. Subsequent to this the material appeared as Chapter 28 in the Symposium, FORM AND TECHNIQUES OF ALTRUISTIC AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH, edited by Dr. P. A. Sorokin and published by the Beacon Press in 1954. The author is indebted to the Beacon Press for permission to reproduce the material and to Roy Lartigue, Art Editor of **The Atlantian** for the two drawings.

Walter A. Lunden

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
March, 1960



PICTURES IN THE MIND OF THE AVERAGE PERSON

This cut-away drawing by Artist Roy Lartigue represents the Pictures in the Mind of the average person.

THE PICTURES IN THE MIND

or.

WHAT IS GROUP THERAPY?

When confronted by the words "Group Therapy" many are prone to repeat what Alice said to Humpty Dumpty while in "Wonderland":

"It seems very pretty," Alice said, "but it's rather hard to understand! Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas—only I don't know what they are!"

The confusion and the misconceptions about group therapy have arisen for a number of reasons. The main one perhaps, is due to the fact that certain persons have accepted only part or parts without fully understanding the totality. It is very much like the blind men who touched parts of the elephant. One blind man said that an elephant was a rope because he held the tail while another blind man said that the animal was a tree because he touched the huge legs of the creature. Group therapy, therefore, is what certain individuals elect it to be, each differing according to their own point of view.

Group Therapy is Not New

Perhaps the most serious confusion about therapy has come about because many individuals think that it is something new which has developed out of present day psychology and psychiatry. However, in point of time the basic principles of group therapy are much older than contemporary psychiatry since certain parts were explained in the Yogi Philosophy used by the Buddhist leaders in India long ago. Furthermore, some phases of group therapy are but modified forms of the "Spiritual Exercises" established by the monastic orders which anti-date modern psychoanalysis.

As a Man Thinketh

Quite apart from these philosophical and mystical ideas the statement by Christ, "As a man thinketh in his heart (mind) so is he," summarizes many of the fundamental elements in group therapy. One needs only to answer certain questions to clarify matters. Where does a man obtain the ideas which form part of his thinking? How does thinking affect actions and behavior? Basically a man thinks with ideas (conceptual pictures) of things he has received (collected) from the world in which he lives and his past experiences. These pictures in the mind (conceptualized patterns of behavior) in due time determine how a man will conduct himself. If one of the pictures a man has in his mind is, consideration for others, affection, or kindness, in all probability that man will be kind and considerate. On the other hand if the pictures in the

gallery of his mind are images of injustice or brutality, such a person will most likely act in violation of laws. As a "man thinketh in his heart" (mind) merely means that the ideas and the attitudes a man has will determine how he will relate himself to others around him.

Source of the Pictures

The next question is, "How does a man obtain the pictures in his mind?" The answer is clear—from the world in which he lives, from those with whom he associates and from experiences. In a sense the mind is like a photographic film which reproduces or duplicates what comes through the lens. What the eye sees and what the ear hears in time becomes the pictures in his mind. These pictures constitute a miniature photographic gallery of society, some pleasing and others less pleasant.

Changing the Pictures

If the objects which a man sees in his world become the pictures in the gallery of his mind, and in turn influence him in his behavior then it naturally follows that any attempt to change his conduct must begin by changing these pictures, attitudes and emotional bent. Since the world around a man is the source of his ideas it also follows that a group in which a man lives can be a source for deriving "better pictures" and "other emotional patterns". This process of changing the pictures in the mind is not all that is involved in the transformation of man's behavior but it is a basic part.

Brain Washing

At this point it should be indicated that the process of placing pictures in the mind may be used for undesirable or subversive purposes just as it may be used for sound practices. A drug may be used to benefit or to destroy the body. The well known practice of "Brain Washing" is a current example of how a man's actions may be altered by perverting his thinking. In other words prior pictures in the mind may be shattered or torn down and other contrary images placed in the mind bringing about different or opposite behavior patterns in the man.

The Need for Better Pictures

Group therapy in its fundamental form is a process by which a person may change (reorient) his ways of thinking and behaving by relating himself to others in such a manner that undesirable pictures, values, and patterns of behavior may be replaced by "better" pictures, values, and conduct patterns. This posits the principle that "the better" pictures, values, and modes of behavior must be available and that the person "wants" to change or "excavate" the old and accept new or better pictures. In other words a horse may be brought to water but if he does not want to drink, he does not drink. Likewise a boy may be sent to college but if he does not want to think he will not think unless or until he so decides.

If a man is satisfied with the pictures in his mind and the manner in which he relates himself to others nothing short of a catastrophe can force him to accept other pictures. Implicit in this is the fact that such a person has a need and a desire to look for better pictures. Further, these mental images must be presented in such manner that a man may want to seek the more desirable. There must be therefore, good images at hand to replace the "bad images".

Pictures in Prison

Here we may ask, how can "good pictures" or "good values" be presented to men in prison? Is not prison the last place where "the good" may be found? This condition is a serious and fundamental problem because past habits tend to crystalize or fix images so deeply into a man that replacement is often impossible. Also a man's life may be so "shattered" with broken images that reparation may not be possible. In addition the total social circumstances of a prison community seldom afford inducements to seek better pictures. In simple terms how can a man find standards or ideals in a place where good pictures from which he can obtain good images and patterns models have been distorted or broken. Herein lies the crux of the whole problem for if a prison community does not provide a person with new images with which to create better pictures in the mind, imprisonment then makes a bad condition worse. It is paramount, therefore, that some means be established to reach the mind and heart of the inmate. If this cannot be done bitterness wells up into the mind and heart becomes a stone. This may explain why some men have written over the doorway of a prison the words, "abandon hope all who enter here".

The Agony of a Vacuum

Group therapy is something more than a number of persons sitting in a circle of associates talking about individual problems, surrounded by various types of tape recording machines and other gadgets. Discussion is part of the plan but only a small part. In other words, "Non-directive discussion" is but a miniature "can-opener". Furthermore, undirected talk or group interaction may accomplish nothing more than "Blowing off steam" or relieving tensions, but this is not enough. A man may unburden himself of the bitterness stored up in his mind but doing so only leaves a void of agony. If this happens and there is nothing constructive to fill the vacuum conditions may become worse. A **catharsis** or purgation of the emotions is but part of a larger process. This situation was clarified in the Parable of the Evil Spirits.

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from which I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then he goeth, and taketh with himself seven other evil spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

Behind the Iron Curtains

Beyond the process of unburdening of self there are other conditions which must be kept in mind. Not all persons will expose their minds to the view of others and not all men want to come out from behind the "protective shield" with which they cover the pictures in their mind. A clam when touched will close tighter. Furthermore, certain persons are more vocal than others. They may be able to "verbalize" because they have the gift of the "Blarney Stone" but there may be little depth to what they have to say. Again, the damage of past experiences may be such that a man is not in a position to trust his real self to the examination of others, especially since he may have to live with them every hour of the day for a long time. Prisoners live "Behind Iron Curtains" which are more difficult to penetrate than a prison wall. Seldom does a man outside a prison reveal what he really thinks, unless he is among friends, and then with caution. Each man is a citadel which he guards against intruders.

The Naked Man

Group therapy is a very difficult procedure that can be used only with caution by individuals who understand others, at least in some respects. It is not a mechanical device or automatic contraption into which a person drops a coin and from which certain results come forth. Modern push button automation cannot be applied and people are not boxes operated by certain gadgets. Group therapy in its total form strips a man to the core in such a way that he stands psychologically naked before himself and in the full gaze of others. Further it implies introspection—placing himself in such a posture that he may see the pictures in his own mind—and heart. All this demands courage, honesty, sincerity, truthfulness and patience, qualities which some do not possess. In fact many people are so afraid of themselves that they try to "runaway" from the pictures in their minds, believing that they can some how escape living with themselves. Seldom can the coward, or the dishonest man "fit" into a group therapy program. It is very unlikely that the immature or adolescent person can benefit much from genuine group therapy. It is true that certain types of therapy have been utilized in treating abnormal mental patients and juveniles but the entire procedure is quite different. Contraiwise, methods used for juveniles cannot be applied to adults with much, if any success.

Directed Home Work

Group therapy is something more than "group talk" or "kicking an idea around". It means certain types and amounts of "home work" much after the nature of a "Do It Yourself Plan". It is possible for a man to see himself in what another may say, but this is not enough. Group therapy demands "reflection" on the past in the solitary time in the cell. This "mental excavation" is not easy. Barnacles do not just drop from the hull of a ship,

they must be scraped away in dry dock with a sharp instrument. This phase of the program is often overlooked or neglected because thinking does not always come easy and prison life is not conducive to much thinking for the average man. Further, this thinking, if results are to be obtained, must be guided or structured to follow a definite procedure, otherwise a man merely "day dreams". Unless the therapist or leader has been able to explain this to a man results are ineffective.

No Bag of Tricks

In still another sense group therapy is not "a one shot deal" or a quick device that can cause changes over night. A man may change his clothing but have difficulty in changing his thinking or his values in life. Time is a factor. Pictures which have been collecting over a long period of time cannot be changed in a moment or as easy as shifting the buttons on a TV set. It has happened in rare instances as in the case of a catastrophe but only the forces of circumstances on a Road to Damascus can change a Saul into a Paul. Those who take group therapy, both the men and the leader, must understand the slowness of which new pictures replace old pictures in the mind. Victor Hugo once remarked that if a man lives in Hell long enough he comes to like it. The novelest Dostöievsky also said that once a man has been accustomed to wearing chains he becomes lost when they are removed. Group therapy, therefore, requires time, patience, and endurance. It is a program into which a man must be willing to put himself and not doing this, results will prove unsatisfactory. This may explain some of the present failures where group therapy has been applied. Things, automobiles, radio and TV sets may be changed annually or every six months but man is more difficult to change. No therapist leader can bring a bag of psychological tricks into a prison and change 1000 men.

No Phonies Wanted

Finally, he who attempts to work as a therapist, (leader) in group therapy must be a **MAN** who himself has had the experience of the "Blood Bath" of the vicissitudes of life. In spite of human frailties common to all, he must be a man who can stand up under the scrutiny of other men—an especially prisoners. Of all men prisoners have the peculiar ability of "spotting a phoney" in their midst. Therefore, a phoney has no place in group therapy. Why is this important? Prisoners carry in the gallery of their mind so many "double crossing" pictures that they can and will trust only a well integrated and balanced leader. The ultimate basis in any group therapy program rests upon a **man to man** relationship. The image, the picture which prisoners see in a leader, must therefore, be a "good image", not a "copy". This is why it has been said that only the man who in his own life has known and experienced sorrow, pain, and death can talk to others about sorrow, pain, and death. All men are "Doubting Thomases" who must be

shown even to the point of seeing and touching the nail prints in the hands and the gash in the side of the man who was executed on a Roman Cross. The therapist must be a man among men.

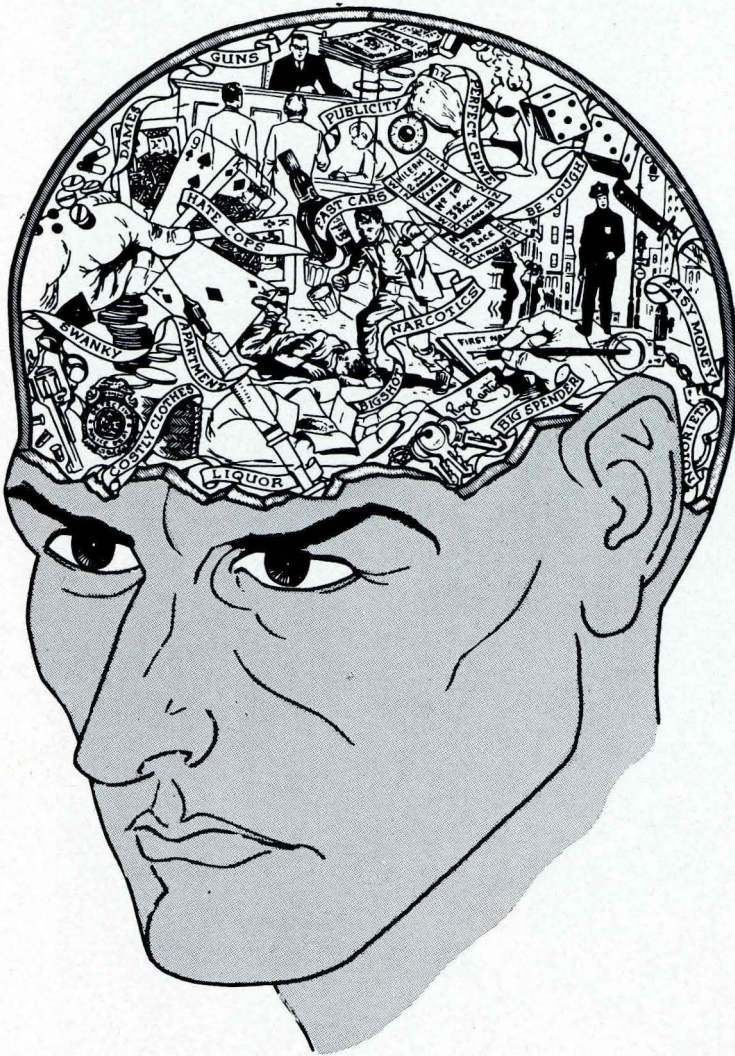
"Don't Giv' a Damitas"

Any understanding of group therapy must consider that inmates, whether men or boys, are motivated by expediency or "What'll I get out of it" attitude. They want "to live it up". Group therapy should "slow down" some of these emotional drives and avoid "racing motors". A leader needs certain perspective in dealing with groups to avoid "racing motors". Uncontrolled permissiveness has led to situations where one girl rubbed perfume over the suit of the leader for some unknown reason. In instances permissiveness has gone so far as to allow members in the group to lie on the floor, and come and go very much as they wished. In a few instances cases have been known where property has been destroyed and other members of the group made a "scape-goat" as the result of outbursts. These unbridled antics may be allowed but they certainly have no place from a constructive point of view. The idea of "Don't Giv' a Damitas" must be dealt with and certain controls must be used. If this is done then the members may "Slow Down" to the point where they begin to learn. One inmate stated, "I'm loining a lotta sickologe—That helps me see how I'm wired up and why I blow a fuse when my feelings get short circuited".

The Ultimate Question

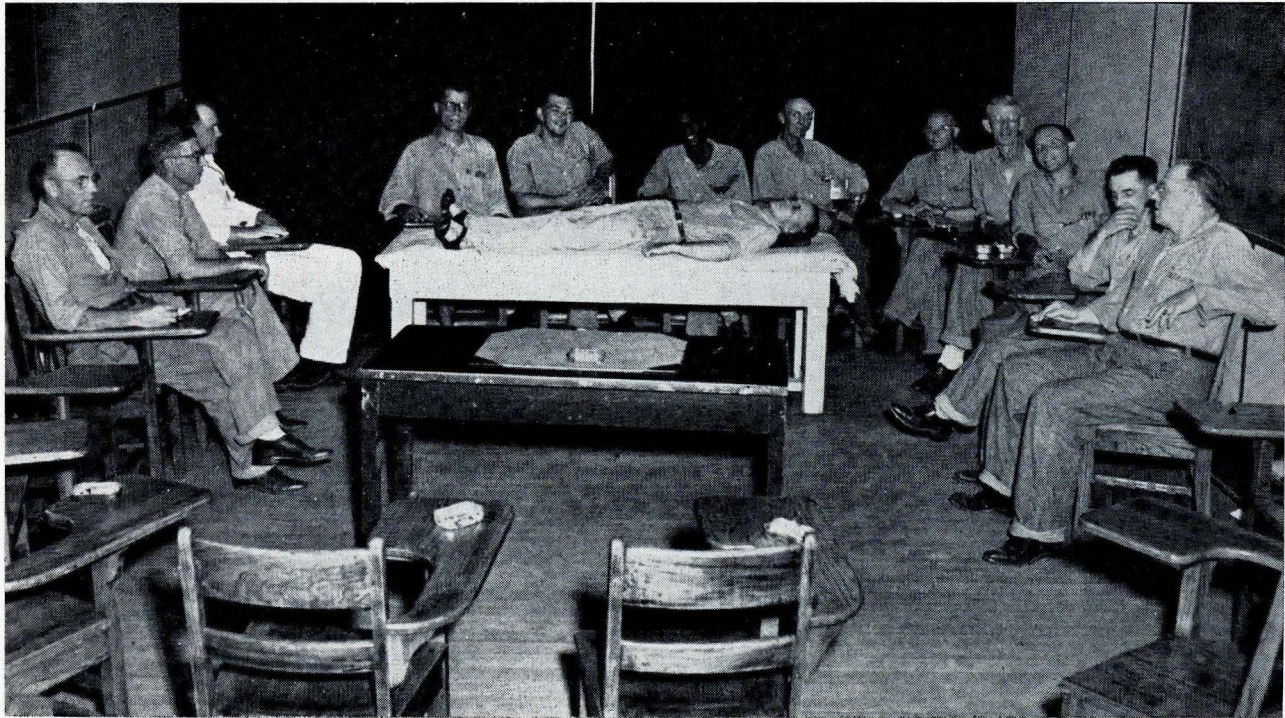
Beyond this is the ultimate problem of the complete transformation of the inmate who takes part in group therapy. Given an intense and deep participation what assurance is there that the men subsequently may withstand the social situations outside after release from prison. Here there is no conclusive or final answer any more than for the civilian who has never been in prison. Under normal conditions the average person may conduct himself satisfactorily. However, when confronted with the adversities of a "Job" few men may remain steadfast to their principles. Group therapy is a means of helping a man to understand himself and the sources of his problems. Whether he can succeed depends upon his own strength and the pressures surrounding him. This is an issue which confronts all men whether in or out of prison.

The foregoing is not a complete analysis of all the components of group therapy but it is enough to shed some light on what it implies in its totality. The report presented in the following pages is but a very brief summary of a group therapy program in a given time and place which brought about certain results. Those men who took part in it, both inmates and leaders, readily admit that it was not "The Program" or the best possible but the system in many respects points the way to what can be done by serious and courageous men. It is a simple case of one prison in Iowa.



PICTURES IN THE MIND OF THE AVERAGE PRISONER

This cut-away drawing by Artist Roy Lartigue represents the Pictures in the Mind of the average prisoner.



“Pilot Group” of men in Group Therapy Program at Iowa State Penitentiary, Fort Madison, Iowa, 1950.

Antagonism and Altruism Among Prisoners

From Antagonism to Altruism through Group Therapy

WALTER A. LUNDEN

I

Introduction

The prison as congeries of persons is at the far end of the continuum of human relationships in which there is a minimum of altruism and almost a maximum of antagonism. The personal characteristics of the prisoners, the control of physical and social life, the anonymity and isolation tend to reduce relationships to a condition of mistrust, suspicion, and deep hatred among prisoners. This antagonism exists between prisoners, between prisoners and guards, and between prisoners and society in general. Inmates are near each other physically but the prison society is an anomalous existence in which contacts are surcharged with resentment and bitterness. There is an absence of creativity in prison life unless it be that of mere physical custody, food, and shelter. The psychosocial isolation and the solitude tend to shatter personalities into independent segments, all of which develops antisociality and egotistical selfishness.

Because a prison contains a certain residue of men who by their overt acts have violated the norms of conduct, it is almost devoid of friendliness or semblances of altruism. When, however, a penal community does not evidence the usual anomalous condition because a certain social pattern has been operative in the prison, that factor warrants investigation. This explains, in part, the purpose of the present study. A limited amount of evidence has been found which reveals that antagonisms have decreased among a group of prisoners and certain elemental forms of altruism have arisen because of a group psychotherapy program. Basically the hypothesis of this study is: **A given type of group psychotherapy has reduced antagonism among inmates of a prison and tended to create modified forms of creative living or altruism.**

Before examining the hypothesis of this exploratory investigation it will be necessary to appreciate some of the general principles and practices of group therapy, especially as they apply to prison life. After this has been done the investigation will turn to an analysis of a group therapy program as it operated in the Iowa State Penitentiary at Ft. Madison, Iowa. Finally the report will conclude with the evaluation and interpretation of the results.

II

Group Therapy as a Method of Treating Maladjusted Persons

From the time that prisons in the modern sense came to be a part of the socio-juridical structure in Western society, men have looked upon a prison as something more than organized punishment for convicted persons. Men have hoped that imprisonment might in some manner reform the inmates serving time. As correctional institutions have increased together with the amount of crime, however, the hopes for reformations have been dimmed. Excellent physical plants have been built to house criminals but, in contrast, not much has been done for or to the men housed in these institutions. Not only have the prison population and institutions increased, but today more than half the men in prison have had prior prison records.

Aware of this increase in prison population and the large number of recidivists in these prisons, men have attempted various approaches to reach the personality of the inmates. One among these more recent methods has been psychotherapy. In the West and especially the United States the elements of psychotherapy have been known for a number of years, but it was not until after World War I that they began to be applied to nonpsychotic individuals or groups of individuals in institutions. For purposes of brevity only a limited number of therapeutic methods and practices will be examined here in order to relate them to the present study herewith reported.

In general, group psychotherapy may be classified into a number of categories according to the method of application or operation. Very broadly they are: the authoritative method of A. A. Low,¹ the inspirational-class procedure of J. H. Pratt,² the didactic practices of J. W. Klapman,³ the aesthetic motivation of I. M. Altschuler, the psychodrama of J. L. Moreno,⁴ the therapeutic clubs of J. Beirer,⁵ and the psychoanalytical methods of Schilder,⁶ L. Wender,⁷ and Foulkes.⁸

1 A. A. Low, "Group Therapy Interview Conducted at the Chicago State Hospital," Chicago, Illinois, Ill. Rec. Inc., 1942.

2 J. H. Pratt, "The Home Sanitarium Treatment of Consumption," *Johns Hopkins Hospital Journal*, May 1906; "The Class Method in Home Treatment of Tuberculosis and What It Has Accomplished," *American Climatological Association*, Vol. XXVII, 1911.

3 J. W. Klapman, *Group Psychotherapy, Theory and Practice*, 1946.

4 J. L. Moreno, *Mental Catharsis and the Psychodrama*, 1944.

5 J. Beirer, E. B. Strauss, and A. Strom-Olsen, "A Memorandum on Therapeutic Social Clubs in Psychiatry," *British Medical Journal* (London), December 30, 1944.

6 P. Schilder, "Results and Problems of Group Psychotherapy in Severe Neurosis," *Mental Hygiene*, January 1939.

7 L. Wender, "Dynamics of Group Psychotherapy and Its Application," *Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases*, July 1936.

8 S. H. Foulkes, "Principles and Practice of Group Therapy," *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic*, May 1936. For a summary of current practices and bibliography, see S. R. Slavson, "Group Therapy," in *Progress in Neurology and Psychiatry*, ed. E. Spiegel, 1946.

These and others were concerned with maladjusted individuals in relation to the group. The frame of operation was primarily in the group rather than on the individual basis as in the case of analytical psychotherapy. The basic principles in each of these procedures involved an attempt to reorient or resocialize the person through group interactions. The dynamics employed interstimulation, induction, identification, assimilation, polarization, projection, rivalry, and integration. Through the collective experience and associative thinking of the group the individual overcame ambivalence, certain hostilities and antagonisms toward other people and social conditions. These interactions in the group have tended to produce a special form of catharsis which in turn relieved the individual of emotional and intellectual problems or disorders.

III

The Group Therapy Plan in the Iowa State Penitentiary, Ft. Madison, Iowa

Over a period of years beginning with 1947 the author has had an opportunity to observe prisoners in a number of circumstances and conditions in the State Prison at Ft. Madison, Iowa.⁹ Because of favorable facilities he had good access to prison records and agreeable co-operation with the inmates. Through the considered co-operation of the warden and the guards, personal observations have been made possible for a period of five years. The time span has been long enough to observe conditions in the prison prior to the introduction of the group therapy program, to watch the inception and developments of the plan, and to make an analysis of some of the consequences. In addition the inmates of the prison have co-operated and volunteered information at various stages of the group therapy program. There has been ample opportunity to observe the men in the group therapy sessions, to interview them individually and in groups in order to obtain reactions to the plan. Time has been a valuable element in the present analysis because the investigator has had opportunity to study the prison community before, during, and after the therapy program had been introduced. In this time the warden of the prison has given ample opportunity to work with the inmates in various studies apart from the one herewith reported. These conditions have made possible a broad frame of reference and observation which enhanced the scope and nature of the findings.

9 The Iowa State Penitentiary at Fort Madison, is the oldest prison west of the Mississippi River. The first buildings were opened to receive prisoners in 1839 or eight years before Iowa was admitted to the Union as a state. The institution has a normal capacity and houses about 1200 male inmates. It comprises modern cellblocks, well-operated prison industries, ample mess hall, and an extensive recreational yard for inmates. The prison receives first offenders over 30 years of age and recidivists from all counties within the state. In 1947 the average age of men in the prison was 37 years.



Discussion aspect of Group Therapy at Iowa State Penitentiary, Fort Madison, Iowa, 1950 under R. Hilpert (left middle).

Early in 1950 Warden P. A. Lainson and Dr. Charles Graves, the director of mental institutions in Iowa, initiated a group therapy program among the inmates of the prison. Warden Lainson and the educational director of the prison, Roby Hilpert, selected and screened from the 1200 inmates eleven men who constituted the "pilot group" for the experiment. With one exception these men had been in the prison school program or had worked in some supervisory capacity in the institutional workshops. They represented different types of men, tractable and intractable. Each had some time expressed dissatisfaction with himself and had indicated a desire to improve his conditions, "to get more out of life." They were recidivists, some having served several terms in different institutions. Their ages ranged from 20 to 60 and their offenses included various types of crimes against property, morals, and persons. The commitment time included short terms and some life sentences. Prior to the first meetings of the group, Dr. Graves examined the case histories of each man in order to acquaint himself with the social background of the prisoners.

At the first meeting of the group all eleven men were seated in a circle, which included the psychiatrist, Dr. Graves, so that each man could at all times hear and see the participants. The principle behind the face to face circle is that the speaker is more important than what he may say. In addition the circle has the symbolic effect of the completed group with lateral and radial interaction patterns. The leader made clear that the program was purely experimental and exploratory and that no prediction could be made as to the outcome of results. The men would be given an opportunity to study themselves in order to effect some change in their own thinking, habits, and relations to other men in the prison. The leader made clear that the program in no way was related to parole considerations for those eligible or their status in the prison. The plan was purely voluntary and the discussions in the group entirely permissive. No one would be required or urged to talk in the meetings unless he chose to do so. The only requirement for the group stipulated that all discussion must center about the personality of each speaker with no criticism or evaluation of other men in or outside the group. After these preliminary explanations all the men expressed a desire to participate in the experiment because "they had everything to gain and nothing to lose."

After the preliminary details had been clarified at the first meeting further procedures were explained in subsequent sessions. There were three two-hour meetings within a period of two days. The leader indicated that the thinking and the speech reactions were to be directed at the **what** which was explained as any reaction they may have to any idea, any person, any object, or situation which they encountered in the group meetings. At the outset the leader did most of the talking until the men began to react to his statements. The subject matter was not determined prior to the meeting and no one was able to predict the topic or the reactions of the men. The nondirected permissiveness of the plan, the

openness of the talk, and the general face-to-face relationship in the circle had a tendency to allow the men to relieve certain emotional barriers, which they later expressed as "an opportunity to let down our hair."

Subsequent to the **what** approach to ideas, objects, and situations, the group dealt with a second concept, the **why**. Why do they or have they reacted in the way which they have? In order to help the men develop the **why** procedure, each man was encouraged to develop an "autobiography of the **why**" by writing his own life history in the free time in the cells. In this manner the men were able to link the **why** to the **what** of their reactions and to understand the mechanization of their own behavior patterns. In order to clarify the procedure, the leader compared the inner reactions of a man to the operations of an electric motor. If or when an inmate found that he reacted disagreeably or "violently" to a word, object, person, or situation, this man was actually "racing his motor" or creating tension in his body. Any tense inner reaction caused him to "race his motor" which in turn created "heat" and ultimately uncontrollable behavior or violence. This "chain reaction" helped the men to understand the "reason for their crimes."

Once this mechanism had been understood by the group, the leader next explained how to keep from "racing their motors." Dr. Graves introduced a third element—the relation of words to reality. He explained that "the word is not the object" and "the map is not the territory." As an illustration of this semantic procedure a member of the group was given a piece of paper upon which had been written the word "cigarette" after he had asked a colleague for a smoke. Here the written "word" was not the object, the cigarette. No satisfaction could be derived from the word because the word and the object—the ink and the tobacco—were not the same and no amount of rationalizing could make them such. By expanding on this analogous word imagery, the leader explained to the men how they could "break the hold" which certain words had upon their emotions. Therefore, if or when someone called them by some derogatory name, the name used was in reality not the object.¹⁰ This entire procedure of breaking down the social imagery encrusted or overlaid in words involves a singular process of reversing the process of learning and association. Once this procedure was understood and applied the men were able to "dis-associate" the cultural force of the word conductor from the object. If "words are like electric currents which pass between human

10 Were there time and space available it would prove highly informative to examine the sociology of words and how man builds his culture by means of words. The same words, so created, in time become the channel of the conductor by which people influence others. "It is by means of speech that human beings for the most part regulate mutual behavior. When we want to stimulate others to a specific act or to restrain them, we nearly always employ oral symbol, as in the injunction, 'Hands up!' 'Do that,' 'Don't do this.' Words are like electric currents which pass between human beings." P. A. Sorokin, *Society, Culture and Personality* (1947), pp. 53-54.

beings," the force of the "current" becomes broken when the object is no longer connected with the reality. When this can be done a man need not "race his motor" when a certain word is directed at him, especially when that word has malicious content.

In time another factor was introduced to the group—how the habitual behavior of one person may affect others. An individual very often is not aware of how his own behavior may influence another person. A certain type of behavior may not be offensive to the person because of habit, but it may be to others who have had no association with the man. In other words we are not aware of our unpleasant offensive conduct because it is ours. This concept posed a new thought for the inmates. They soon became aware of how their own behavior may have disturbed others and in turn how habits disturbed others and in turn how habits of others influenced them. Once the participants came to understand the manner in which others respond to them they, in time, made certain allowances for the other man. Before long they began "treating others as they wanted others to treat them." This tended to establish a certain degree of tolerance and understanding of others. By understanding the behavior pattern of others, each began to appreciate his own part in relation to other inmates. This phase of the procedure touched on a basic factor in the conduct of the prisoners. The very act of violence or crime which they had committed was an objectification of the fact that they had at some time failed to take into account the personality of other people. It also tended to break down their own **egocentric** character and bring them into an awareness and realization of the social device by which society is held together—the social norms which regulate and give solidarity to a community.¹¹ When an individual has reached this stage in reorientation he approaches a new set of social relationships. It marks an important development in the transition from antagonism to altruism in human relationships.

Another factor which played an important part in the group therapy program operated about the functional relationship between physico-muscular and emotional tensions. The leader explained to the inmates how muscular rigidity and fixity depended to a large degree upon the individual's mental status. Psychological tensions have a direct connection to and with muscular tensions. Therefore, in order to effect a change in the psychological and mental state, the individual must apply some method to reduce physical rigidity. The leader introduced methods of muscular relaxation and rhythmical breathing to the men. Through proper breathing and relaxing of physique the individual effected a certain amount of emotional calm and stability. As the men assumed relaxed positions in their cells and breathed rhythmically they recalled and "relived" their past experiences (autobiography of the

11 Spencer pointed out in his **Principles of Ethics**, Vol. I, p. 219, "Absolute disregard of all other beings would cause universal conflict and social dissolution."

what and the **why**) which had been related to their problems. As the men began to practice these exercises each had a variety of psychophysical reactions. At first many of them were disturbed by recalling as they relived "their past." In time, however, as they repeated the exercises they found they could "go over their record" without being troubled. The exercises had a twofold effect on the men. They were able to control emotional disturbances which arose because of past experiences and at the same time they learned a method of controlling their emotions in present situations. Not all men were able to attain the same degree of effectiveness in the exercise.

These four elements, ideational patterns, an understanding of the relationship between ideas and objects, the factors which condition behavior patterns, and the relation between body condition and psychological tensions, constitute the main procedural program suggested and explained to the eleven men in the pilot group. As they continued to meet one or two times each week, evenings or afternoons, they brought their developmental practices and problems into the group for discussion and comparison. In the absence of the psychiatrist the educational director of the prison acted as the group leader. In time the men began to show beneficial results although one man did drop out of the program. Later, however, he rejoined the group. By the end of three months the group had gained a certain degree of integration and reorientation; the men attained a more basic understanding of their problems. They developed a noticeable amount of "we consciousness" and **esprit de corps** of a type.¹²

When the pilot group had gained acceptance among other prisoners and had come to show evidence of change or improvement, and as other inmates began to display varying degrees of interest in the program, the psychiatrist, warden, and educational director decided to widen the program: to set up new groups of inmates who expressed an interest to "join the work." New groups were organized of about twenty in number as rapidly as inmate leaders could be supplied from the eleven men in the pilot group. One or two of these men assigned to five men groups. Each of these groups met once or twice a week with eighteen to twenty-two members present at each meeting, and at stated times the psychiatrist, Dr.

¹² Part of the progress of the group may have been due in part to certain factors present in the prison. When other men in the prison learned of the group therapy classes they began looking askance at the plan and called it the "Nut Class" or "group of Time Killers." This fact has a tendency to make the members of the group more conscious of the program and placed them on the defense "for their cause" (a catalytic influence). Had it not been for the fact that some of the members in the group had been recognized inmates with status among prisoners, the class may have gone about its work unnoticed. However, about one third of the men in the group had in the past been among the most incorrigible and intractable men in the prison. Some of them had "fought" the prison administration and had participated in numerous plans and attempts for escape. Some of the men had in the past maintained their status among prisoners because of the physical strength as well as their ability to "outsmart" other men.

Graves, met with them. In his absence the educational director assisted, but men from the pilot group served as instructors and explained techniques and procedures. Each of the five groups maintained its own identity and followed the same general operational procedure as outlined in the plan for the original eleven men.

At the end of five months the various groups achieved a certain degree of success and integration in the program. By this time the prison guards, warden, and administrative staff began to observe a change in the general conduct of the men in the groups and also among the nonparticipating inmates. A number of the men in the groups by statements in the meetings and by their conduct in the prison came to resolve some of their antagonisms and violent differences. There were fewer internal disorders and clashes. Some of the men indicated that they had gained a certain "release" from tensions and trouble after having been in the therapy group. As may be expected, not all the men who had joined the classes were able to make adjustments as well as others. Some dropped out of the program after three or four of the meetings but their places were often taken by others waiting to join. In spite of minor details, the general consensus among the prison staff, among the participating members, and even among nonparticipating members was that the program had assisted men in making a more agreeable adjustment to prison life.

In the time the group therapy program has been in operation, approximately 120 of the total 1200 men in the prison have been participating in the plan. The reason for the limitation of numbers has been the fact that the program has been implemented on an operational basis—the number of men participating has been in terms of the number who could be adequately absorbed into groups. The very nature of the plan postulated a voluntary selection with no compulsion. In addition each man entered the program because of his own volition. No rewards were attached or held out as an inducement beyond what benefit the man received for his own personal satisfaction. Participation in no way changed the prisoner's assignment, privileges in the institution, or opportunity for release on parole. In spite of these known factors a few men did join the groups believing that they might gain an earlier release. When, in time, they learned that participation had no effect on their chances for release, they continued in the group because they said, "they could get along better with themselves and other men." The mere fact that the program has expanded beyond the original eleven in the pilot group to include more than one hundred others, and that it has continued for two years, is evidence of a sort which attests to its value to the men and to the prison community.

As indicated, the program began with a small group of men who were willing to participate on an exploratory voluntary basis. As these men progressed others entered the program only as they could be absorbed into it. This has been one of the elements in the relative success—spontaneous emergencies rather than superimposition as a directive plan. Further, each man was told as he joined

the groups that he could withdraw at any time and that this withdrawal would in no way affect his relations with other men in or out of the group. As indicated, when the initial group took form, other inmates in the prison assumed a derogatory attitude toward the participants. They were called by various names such as the "Nut Class." However, as the group continued, as others joined new groups, and as personal relations and behavior patterns began to show results, this early derisive point of view disappeared among the nonparticipating inmates. One of the significant facts in establishing the group in the prison community is the type of men in the group. As indicated, some of the men in the earlier groups had long records of incorrigibility in the Ft. Madison prison and in other institutions.¹³ The very singular fact that some of the intractable inmates entered the group early and that changes were observed by other inmates tended to give evidence that the plan had some value. Men invariably stated that "If the Nut class can do that to B., then I want to get into it."

In making evaluations of the changes which have occurred in the Ft. Madison prison, the author has observed the men in their daily routine; he has participated in the therapy group meetings and talked to the men individually and in groups. Further, in order to delimit the area of analysis of how the therapy group had been implemented and received by the inmates as well as to evaluate results, twenty-five men in the therapy groups were selected for detailed interview and examination of institutional records. Some of the twenty-five were in the original pilot group of eleven, whereas others entered the program as additional groups originated. This has been done in order to determine reactions of the men at different stages in the program.¹⁴

13 In prison if a prisoner has been one who defied prison regulations, attempted to escape, or has displayed violent opposition to guards and administrative officers, such a man gains status among other inmates. If an inmate has the "courage" or "fortitude" to oppose prison discipline, he in turn wins a certain type of admiration from other inmates. This is a natural process of polarization in any group, and especially among prisoners. Such a man becomes the "leader" for the opposition. Others may not follow or imitate his actions but he does objectify their desires and wishes, whether they be desirable or undesirable from the viewpoint of the prison administration.

14 In order to understand the background of these 25 men a limited amount of information about them has been tabulated. Of the total number, 9 had been convicted for forgery, 3 for larceny, robbery and sodomy, 2 for murder, 1 for breaking and entering and 1 for a sex offense. The sentences of the men ranged from 3 years to life: 4 for life, 8 for 10 years, 6 for 7 years, 3 for 25 years, 2 for 5 years, 1 for 20 years and 1 for 3 years. Twenty of the men were recidivists—12 were serving their second sentence, 4 their fourth term, 3 their third, 1 for the fifth time, 1 for the seventh—and only 1 for the first time. The ages of the men ranged from 27 to 67 years, with most of them in the middle forties. Ten of the men were married, 9 divorced, and 6 were unmarried. Of the 19 who had been married, 12 had children numbering from one to five. Six of the men had a grade school education, 11 had some or completed high school and 8 had gone to college, 1 having had three years of

IV

Organization of the Groups

When the inmates were asked why they had joined the therapy group, with very few exceptions they indicated that they wanted some help in their respective problems. All the men wanted assistance in their individual difficulties. One man with a series of prison terms stated that he had a "screwed up" idea about human relations, whereas another revealed that he wanted some peace of mind so that he could live with himself. Others wanted to know what was wrong with themselves. One man had "always been running away from some kind of trouble and wanted to stop running." The men who had joined the groups more recently said they "had seen what [the plan] had done for the other men and if it could do that for one of the most hard-boiled men" they felt that it could do something for them. This represents the opinion of several men toward the more intractable inmates who had been in the earlier groups.

One of the important elements in the Ft. Madison program was the fact that all the inmates came in to the program of their own volition. Through years of experience, the present and prior incarcerations, the men had come to realize that "there must be a better way" to live with other people. Even the one man who joined the group "because he wanted to shoot an angle" indicated that after he had been in the group he forgot about the angle and found that he was getting along better with other inmates as well as himself. Some of the factors which explain the relative success of the program have been: the inmates' awareness of their problems, the voluntary nature of the plan, and the wise selection of the men who comprised the original pilot group when the plan was first instituted. Much of the later development of subsequent groups depended very largely on the results of this first group. They demonstrated the results to the other men.

The relative success or failure of a therapy group depends very largely on the initial organization and the means by which the group originates. Much hinges on the group leaders and the relationships established among the participants at the early meetings of the group. The therapist must evoke in the members a pattern of response—which has been designated as **transference**. Prisoners by nature are suspicious of nonprisoners or of persons coming into

graduate work. A question may be raised here that these men did not represent a true cross section of all the 120 in the program. In attempting to evaluate basic elements in such a situation it was necessary to select those who were more articulate and better able to analyze conditions than others. One man was chosen specifically because he seldom talked and had a tendency to "clam up" under questioning and especially in a group. Much to the surprise of the investigator and prison officials this man proved to be one of the most capable of analytical thinking and verbalization. He was one of the men who had displayed the widest range of change in habits and conduct.

the institution from the "outside." They live in a community where suspiciousness is the norm, therefore they suspect "civilians." Most prisoners suspect that a nonprisoner has some ulterior motive, "racket," or "angle to play" when he attempts to work with them or offer some kind of assistance. Altruistic motives are foreign to their thinking and living. In general they may know that kindness and unselfishness are "fine things" but when they are confronted with the actuality they become doubtful about the ends sought. Most inmates have suppressed their emotions and feelings to the point where they are not willing to respond unless the therapist can transfer a sense of *loco parentis* to the men.

This empathic response is a major factor in implementing a therapy program. The response has the characteristics of restoring a parental pattern which most of the inmates have never had. Even for those who had had it, the form had been shattered at some time in the past. The means by which this transference operates depends on the group and the therapist. The leader may have to strive for a common psychological denominator after which the transferences and acceptances occur. The transference operates in two directions, from the leader to the inmate and from inmate to inmate (multipolarity), which implies that the group as a group effects a total or near total response to the empathic offer. The therapist at this stage must operate very largely on the basis of strategy rather than any set pattern of techniques. He must be (**feel**) sure that he has gained a certain degree of acceptance before he may proceed. Prisoners are very quick to detect sham or the work of a charlatan and they can soon distinguish between the genuine or shallow nature of proffered assistance. The acceptance may or may not be gained at the initial meeting of the group. Time may be required in order for the prisoners to make comparative evaluations of the leader and what he has to offer. It is not possible to establish a set time and form for creating sound transference because it lies in the nature of interpersonal relationships. This is why it has more of strategy than scientific procedure. Unless the leader has gained acceptance by the group it may be wiser to terminate a program rather than to risk the effort.¹⁵

V

Evaluation of the Group Therapy Program

The final part of the analysis deals with an evaluation of the therapy program as it relates to creativity or to altruism. Has any

¹⁵ In seeking to determine how the therapist, Dr. Graves, effected adequate acceptance by the original 11 men in the pilot group, the investigator spent considerable time in individual and collective conference in reconstructing the original meetings with the inmates. Dr. Graves explained that he had had experience in working with mental patients and believed that a modified form of group therapy would help them in their problems. He offered no cure-all and made no promises or glittering generalities of results. The inmates were ready to admit that the leader's personality, his frankness, choice of words, general physical posture, and over-all appearance gave them the feeling that he was a "right sort of a guy."

evidence been found to indicate that the men participating in the program have displayed verbally or otherwise any sign of consideration for other men tending in the direction of altruism?

As indicated earlier, the limitations of this investigation have not made it possible to interview personally each of the one hundred and twenty men participating in the therapy program. However, twenty-five of them who were at various stages in the program have been interviewed at considerable length. These men have volunteered information in relatively long interviews and some have written accounts of reactions to the program. As stated earlier, these men represented various types of prisoners. Some of the men were known to the investigator prior to the therapy program in the prison and others were so intractable that there was no opportunity to contact them. Three years prior to the present investigation, and before the therapy plan had been in operation, these men would not have been interested in talking to the investigator about their own problems or the general prison situation. Frankly, they had but one problem—to get out of prison as soon as possible by whatever means. Now after the therapy program these men have been willing to give their time, interest, and attention in examining the program. In the interview they displayed a friendly and considerate concern. With very few exceptions they were at ease and frank in discussing personal problems and details. As the investigator raised certain questions in the group interviews the inmates proceeded to discuss the issues much after the fashion of college students in a classroom.

As the men had participated in the therapy groups and as they moved through the various phases of the development, their egotistical and self-centered concern shifted. They soon found that the solution to their own problems was in the direction of a larger group of men outside of themselves. As they came to see themselves and their problems mirrored in the lives of other inmates and in their associative thinking, they became less self-centered and more interested in other men.¹⁶ Their own selfish concern led them to an interest in "others" outside of themselves. First they became aware of other men and their life problems. Next they discovered that "others" and the group helped them to understand themselves. As this occurred, each group began to develop a certain "we feeling" in which the men found an elemental sense of security and stability. The group in time set up a new or another pattern of personality image. After the hostility and suspicion had broken down in the group discussions, and their respective "shells of isolation" which they had built up over the years had disappeared, they began to reach out for other personalities.

These men were free in admitting that prisoners "carry a big front" which gave them a false sense of security in and out of pris-

16 In 1927 Charles Cooley clarified the "looking glass" concept when he explained that a man understands himself as he sees himself in the thinking of other men. See Charles Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order* (1927), pp. 183-184.

on. They had become inured to the prison code that "each man shall do his own time" and "carry his own load." This had tended to compensate to some degree for the psychosocial isolation which exists in every prison. In time this isolation or social vacuum broke down under the influence of close relationships in the groups. Through the discussions these men reached across the void in which they had lived, into the lives of other inmates. As they recounted their past experiences and their personal problems they established a new bond of fellow feeling toward others. This marked another step away from antagonism and personal animosity.

This multipolarity served as a transference cathexis and in due time created a sense of "sharing" and a certain willingness to give and take for the mutual benefit of all concerned. Some of these men evidenced a "social hunger" for the group and the class took on the aspects of an arena in which they struggled to find themselves. In doing so they strengthened their own egos. At the same time the inmates found they no longer needed to "keep on guard" or to protect themselves against other inmates. In this arena of personalities past images of self disappeared. The men tended to reduce their feelings of inadequacy to the point where they developed a sense of security which came from the newly found bonds of relationships in the group. Another factor which aided these men was the fact that in time each began to get at the source of his own difficulties and came to understand the **what** and the **why** of his problems. As the men slept better, ate better, and experienced fewer tensions, they discovered a "certain peace of mind" which they had not known before.

Because these men had found this certain peace of mind and a new sense of security in sharing each other's experiences, they eventually developed an expressed or unexpressed desire to share what they had with other men outside the group. Just what psychological process these men went through in arriving at this point of concern for others may be difficult to explain empirically but it was none the less an evident factor. One man expressed the idea when he said, "If I do not share what I have found I would sooner lose what I have." He explained that he would not impose what he had on others but if others came to him he would help them as others had helped him. He was willing to share the benefits he had received.

Another prisoner indicated that when he saw other men "suffering" under tensions and emotional pressure as he had in the past, he "became sorry for them and wanted to help them out of their difficulty." Several men pointed out that as "others" had helped them in their problems they "owed something of a debt to other men." A number of the men indicated that since being in the therapy groups they had learned to enjoy some of the little things which they had long forgotten—music, changes in the seasons, food, sunrises and sunsets. This tended to make them want to help others enjoy the "small things in their existence."

Perhaps the clearest evidence of the change from antagonism to a singular type of altruism is the one fact that the men were willing and did help others. Their old habit of "slashing back" when mistreated has been replaced by consideration for others and a willingness to understand other inmates. To be sure, not all the men attained the same level or point in these changes but the great majority of them did. How long this will continue cannot be predicted but for the present these men not only said they would share but they are in their work and free hours actually "sharing" and helping fellow inmates. The part which sharing plays in the larger process of altruism may need further investigation but it is one of the common and basic characteristics of "men of good will" and of "Good Neighbors."¹⁷ It reveals a definite move away from antagonism in the direction of altruism.

¹⁷ "Sharing" is one of the attributes and behavior patterns which P. A. Sorokin has found in his "Good Neighbors." They were people who helped others beyond the "official help." See Chaps. Nineteen and Twenty in his **Altruistic Love** (1950).

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