

*John Heron speaking to CCI Aotearoa international gathering
January 2018 at Kawai Purupuru*

I should explain, I'm 89 years old and more accurately in the fourth month of my ninetieth year. It's got more energy in it - the fourth month of my 90th year - whereas 89 is not a very attractive figure.

(General laughter)

From the age of 40 to 50 the brain loses 5 percent of its bulk every decade. So, this for me, will be for me an interesting exploration of being who I am in relation with who you are. How many people in the room have I met or who have been to something I've done? Quite a number, isn't it? I think it's the majority have, is that right?

So that would be presumably mostly since 1991. I came in 1978 and someone came to see me in my office in the University of London. I was running the education department of the Post Graduate Medical School.

He had come to the workshop. We had a long interesting discussion.

It was 2 or 3 years after my visit in 1978 and I said 'If you'd be interested in a workshop I'd be very happy to come out and run an advanced workshop and so on and so forth.

He said, 'Oh well we've thought about that but we really think it would be better if we found our own way'. I liked that a lot, though slightly disappointed of course. This is a robust community - developing in a wonderful and impressive way.

Virginia: I was wondering what it was that disappointed you?

You mean when my proposal of returning was rejected? Well, it was elegantly and wonderfully rejected.

General laughter

The thing about NZ is that the psychic layer over the whole country is porous. This is my world-view; I find it much easier to open to the subtler dimensions of being here than anywhere I've lived. Although there was something still miraculous about Tuscany, where I lived for 10 years, as a whole, in NZ, there's a kind of psycho-spiritual dynamic ferocity which I find deeply nourishing. It makes all kinds of multi-dimensional ways of living in the universe more available.

It's not surprising - if you look at the history of Europe - what a history of slaughters, disasters, wars. I know there were Maori wars but they were very limited compared to hundreds, thousands of years of trouble in the whole of Europe.

Anyone got a question that springs out of that?

Richard: I wondered if you were aware of, or sought an understanding of Maori spiritual connection to the land when you arrived here?

To me that's a fundamental compounder of the ferocity. Fundamental. In the trips after '91 I used to work near Wellington – at CIT. They had a pleasant lecture room and then, in addition, a sacred space dedicated by the local tribe and what I like about it was, we could do some conceptual work and a little bit of the experiential work in the regular room, then we could go into the sacred space, and then all kinds of options were open. We could enter into the transpersonal dimensions of the educational process – engage in spontaneously co-created ritual so there's no doubt in my mind that the fact that the Maori culture is still extant is an element of it. It's still all over the country.

I found, because they're busy with their traditional rituals, that creating rituals in my workshops took much more easily than in Europe because New Zealanders are used to starting events with some kind of Maori process – I think it's fundamental to what's going on here. And although there's still reconciliation work to do the between the indigenous people and the invaders, it's quite distinctive; it's not clear there's been anything as advanced in terms of managing the interface, compared to other parts of the world – the North American Indians it's been very, very rough.

And the other thing I liked – two or three years ago, one of the things issued by the United Nations was a list of which countries are more corrupt and New Zealand was the least corrupt country in the world. *Chuckles*. Which I liked.

Diana: we also very high on the list of giving and volunteering.

That's excellent.

Sue from UK: I wondered whether you had a vision for the impact of the mental wellbeing of the country that Co-counselling might influence – the NHS – you know get inside the innards of how we approach mental wellbeing. Did you have any view of this when you started? How it would influence society generally in respect to mental health and wellbeing?

Yes. I launched the Human Potential Research Project at the University of Surrey where I was a lecturer. That was a very interesting story but I won't go on about it. That was a radical project. I founded it because I was getting interested in participative research and I started working on that in 1971. Then in 1972 Tom Szasz professor of sociology from the University of California in Santa Barbara came over and he was researching Anti-psychiatry with Ronnie Lang and the others. He was also in the original Harvey Jackins Re-evaluation Counseling. Harvey Jackins had invented it after being a communist and then going into Scientology; after falling out with them he set up Co-counseling.

Anyway, Tom Szasz ran several workshops and I attended two of his weekend residencies. They were elegant. He was clear, he was good, he was competent cathartically in every way. After that he asked me to come and have a session with him. We had a session – that was to kind of check me out. It's an extraordinary story – everything condensed into weeks. And he said 'When I leave would you be willing to teach co-counseling and set up a community in London/Guildford area because I was at the University of Surrey?'

So, he was seeing co-counselling in the context of being very interested in anti-psychiatry. So many of the anti-psychiatry people were making very powerful mission statements that had huge implications in how to deal with people who were mentally unwell – instead of fixing a label and making a schematic scheme in some hospital of how to treat it – there was something much more important needed. In a way Tom and his interests were starting what Dennis Possel nowadays calls the ‘psychological commons’.

The psyche as a commons; the psychological area is a commons. You don’t fence it in with enclosures where people claim they own it and they manage it and they know what to do with it. It’s always open. The psychological area of people is not anything to do with a professional enclave. It’s a commons of awareness - people need to find a way of coming together, and together, without trying to control each other or build up some vast profession that makes money from the sick. There is something much more grounded in the whole idea of the commons with its gifted nature and that it is not to be owned and fenced in. When people buy it or say they own it, and say they can control what goes on in it, it is usually deleterious in the long run. So, to me, that idea of psychological commons was somehow implicit in what Ronnie Lang was doing, and what Tom Szasz was clearly trying to build up.

So, yes – and it was actually here – somewhere in the early 90’s I rephrased that as a self-generating culture where every form of human association is managed by people on the spot. There’s no ownership, though there are agreements about how to manage the commons we all share, and people take initiatives about it. In Co-counselling a lot of people take initiatives to run workshops in the interests of enlarging the commons – the psyche. So that’s the vision.

Sue: In my experience, it’s still hard work to break into the psychiatry aspect with a concept of common ground. I’m not sure we’ve yet got the messages through.

Oh no, it’s a huge undertaking. Give us 200 years. *General laughter*

Talk about psychiatrists. I used to run a group. I got this incredible appointment – they didn’t know what they were doing appointing me. (*laughter*) I knew there’d be trouble as I was running their Education Department. I wrote my own job description and said, ‘If you sign this I’ll come, and if you won’t, I won’t’. So, they signed my version of my job description. And that had them once they’d signed that. It was very carefully worded in a discretely, potently, radical manner.

So, I had a group of psychiatrists and they were still talking labels and treatment methods, and eventually I’d pick up on certain things and take a few cues. And the psychiatrists would find themselves unbeknown to themselves, working on their stuff.

Laughter

And by the time two of them had broken down in tears and worked through some really troubling stuff, the group stopped using the language of ‘patients’ and the jargon of the hospital and started to talk more about fruitful contact and loving

understanding of the life-process. But unfortunately, when I left, after 9 years, they didn't appoint a suitable person as my successor.

Does this have anything to with the answer to your question?

Sue: Yeah. My passion is to get the concept of Co-counselling generally into psychiatry generally. There's a lot of resistance. People still have strong reactions and say 'You can't heal yourself...' etc. etc. We go gently.

Yes, it's going to take time that's for sure. The universities are all neo-liberal capitalist institutions selling valid knowledge to students: unilateral control over what you learn, how you learn it and whether you learnt it. Unilateral assessment anchors everybody into purely intellectual processes. The more experiential you get, you can't start judging.

If you were to run a course on philosophy – on spiritual philosophy, and called spiritual exercises part of the learning – you can't have people judging whether you've succeeded spiritually or not. You'd be back to the Inquisition.

Laughter

It's a **huge** issue. Universities are wedded to the power of neo-liberal capitalism saying 'We sell valid knowledge and we know who has the valid knowledge'. And that is such a strangle-hold on the whole social system.

I've got someone who's interviewing me for an article in the Journal of Transpersonal Studies so I've got a nice little window to make some points there.

Can you speak about the television programmes on personal development that you made in the UK?

There was one on Salman Rushdie's Satanic Verses. I did a workshop on that. It was interesting. I think there was one on parenting, divorce, and there was another one. There were about four. There was one where there was some experiential stuff going on and what was interesting – the producer/director who asked me was a friend. He was managing the whole thing, and there was something quite telling going on – maybe someone being cathartic – it was quite an intense moment. They only had about 20 minute lengths of film in the thing and suddenly there's this dramatic thing going on, and I hear the camera-man whisper 'I'll have to change the film'; so they had to stop. I went along with it and said 'Ok we'll stop – we'll pause'. And he took a couple of minutes or whatever. I said to the people involved, 'Could you do that again' and they said 'Okay' and it went deeper. That was fascinating – it went deeper.

Was this shown nationally on television?

That would have been great if they'd actually shown the first go, and the camera and whatever, but no the BBC couldn't cope with that.

Laughter

It was very instructive that. Something about being thoroughly witnessed by everyone else in the group – by me, by the crew; then the pause and doing it again. I haven't gone into business on that – I mean I could set up a little company and get into NZ television.

Laughter

Diana: One of the things I remember from the courses you ran in Wellington in the 1990's was this very intense process in the room and how you talked to people. You would be counselling someone – they would be getting into a deep process, and then you would sort of put them on pause and give an educational chat to the rest of the room about what was happening here, and then come back seamlessly as if nothing had happened, and the person would go deeper.

Another great passion in my life is (and it's all these 'co's'), is Cooperative Inquiry of which I am the inventor – just to puff myself up - with a lot of very helpful input from Peter Reason. It's in the whole tradition of radical research: you don't do research on people you do research *with* people. Everybody has a say. Everybody does the experience being researched as subject, and everybody makes sense of it as researcher – that's the model.

Peter Reason and I launched two co-counselling cooperative enquiries. The first one was exploring the client process. What's going on in the client? As a self-directing client what seems to be working? What seems to be enabling? What seems to get off track?

I think it was over a few days in the University of Bath. We took over some of their rooms. We'd go off and have Co-counselling sessions and the first client after the half hour or whatever time - would take time out to reflect on what he or she had been doing. What self-directive initiatives or exercises, and how did they go? The person would make some notes, and incidentally ask for feedback from the counsellor - 'What did you see me doing?'

There was quite a time taken looking at the processes taken by the client to work through their stuff, with a bit of supportive help by the counsellor. Then the person who was the counsellor took a turn with session and reflection, then all that material was taken back to the group as a whole. We shared all the different things self-directing clients were doing and their merits, and where they went, and started to map it. And we went through several cycles of that and ended the inquiry all gathered around the accumulation of processes, and made a final map of what seemed to be the key issues of client self-directed competence and effectiveness.

One of the things that was very interesting was that some people in the group were worried that this sort of process would decrease the depth of the work. - Pottering around like this - Is it all going to freeze? But again, the opposite was true. People found that with the first session as client, then analysis and making notes and talking about it, then the next session went deeper.

It was a hugely encouraging finding for peer-to-peer research: to be co-creatively mindful about some deep thing – if space is given to it - time is taken.

We're just caring and loving ourselves more elegantly and more adequately - it's extraordinary.

Where did this start?

Diana: *I was reflecting on your process in 1990's in Wellington group-work.*

Well, alright - we got a nice journey out of that.

Diana: *The journey of what we did at the time has lasted with me for many years.*

John: Oh wonderful.

Diana: *I'm curious about the pause - do you think the pause for analysis/reflection, and then going into the work again? Is your thinking that it adds value to the balance of attention?*

Yes, I like that. I like that a lot. I do. I'm just thinking of - if I have a session and come out into present time and then I start gently reviewing what I've done that is a potent kind of balance of attention isn't it? Thank you.

Do you know how to do co-operative inquiry?

Read my books then - well people don't always find that helpful.

Laughter

Kathleen: *This last year I've been reading a series of books related to human development, neurobiology and neuroscience including Sue Gerhart's book, 'Why love matters: how affection shapes the Brain'; she sets out what a difference being brought into a loving situation can make for a child, and how she and others can support parents to work in ways that work for their children.*

There are two other authors who started off as doctors, became psychiatrists then became therapists. One is the author of 'Born for Empathy' and 'the Boy who was raised as a Dog' - Bruce Perry. And the other one is Daniel Segal who's written a whole series of books about parenting which are really accessible, and also books on the developing mind. These two authors, in very different ways, summarise the current knowledge around neurobiology and the development of the human brain and the relationship between how significant social relationships are to how the mind develops and the structures of the brain.

Robyn and Regan are running a workshop on this tomorrow and my question is whether co-counselling is sufficiently flexible to be able to embrace the best of what neuroscience has to offer us, while retaining the best of what Co-counselling has given us in terms of the heart and the spirit as well as the science which in many ways is both catching us up and at the same time questioning parts of how we do Co-counselling.

It was a very funny thing with a whole lot of books...If you were to speak in very simple direct language. Forget the names of the people but remembering their ideas. If you just put it very, very simply

Kathleen: I'm very happy to be corrected by Robyn -

John: Don't worry about Robyn and -

K - A little bit of help never goes astray

John: You're out there on your own and I love you and let's do it.

Kathleen: Yes, John; this very much takes me back to the 1990's. What I would say is, that if I have experience as a child where my attachment needs are looked after then the brain structures itself - and it's loved and people explain things as the child needs things explained, and the child is able to respond and be creative; then the child can relate to the world from a strong sense of self in relationship because it's the self in relationship that structures the brain. That also creates the mind and in coco terms we would call the patterns of relating and being.

Excellent - so what?!

Kathleen: There are some learnings for co-counselling

John: That's the thing - pull out what's the learning.

Kathleen: Explicit memory and implicit memory. In the very early stages when the structures associated with memory are still developing I may have an implicit memory but it won't be in such a way that I explicitly remember it because the brain structures are not there. So, I may have a feeling or a sensation-type memory that doesn't have context around it from very very early on, but I don't have the language-development or the explicit memory structures necessary to be able to make sense of it further down the track.

Sooner or later this has got to connect to Co-counselling. We haven't got there yet. Look, where I'm at right now is thinking to myself: You see the realm of academia, and this includes medical research, is such that it's a place where people can hide in the top of their heads to defend themselves from acknowledging what's in the bottom of their hearts and souls. This is true of psychology in terms of university ways of researching and it's certainly true of medicine as a whole, that all this so-called research has produced a proliferation of extremely expensive drugs, the scandal of which the system will never acknowledge the side-effects and the deteriorating effects of statins, beta-blockers - you go through the list. Cholesterol - the great myth of science. Someone was saying 'Oh well, Trump's cholesterol was high'.

Laughter

With deep respect, it sounds like you've got yourself trapped in the whole elaborate enterprise and it's taken you, I don't know how many minutes, not to get to the actual clinical point of what difference it would make. I'm in a state of loving, helpful and healthy scepticism because there's a gap between your exposition and the experience. What comes before everything is the experience. Experiential knowledge is the foundation of all other knowledge.

Someone explains Kathleen was really saying that her reading has led her to question some Coco methods.

Thank you that's the one – I should have seen that. What are we doing wrong?

Kathleen: Sometimes, in therapy, catharsis has been helpful and sometimes not. I'm known for being gullible. I have an issue about that in social settings and how I felt.

What you said was that some forms of catharsis are counterproductive?
An important component of this particular debate is to be clear that people have differentiated between catharsis and dramatisation. It's quite a fine line. It's always possible that some dramatisations are highly sophisticated, and it's not always easy to separate them out. That's just one factor.

The other thing about catharsis is, it doesn't solve everything. Because there are two ways of people dealing with distress. One is cathartically, and the other is by transmutation. A personal example of transmutation was: I was in a relationship and we were having a fight; it so happened we were booked in to an evening of Japanese Noh theatre which is extraordinary symbolisation of all kinds of emotional states done in gesture – I totally identified with what was going on, on the stage, and when I came out, all the restimulation had evaporated. So, there are certain ways of dealing with emotions where the negativity is transmuted. It's base metal turning into gold by the alchemy of the aesthetic processes

What's for sure, I don't think transmutation is perhaps given enough attention. I wrote a whole chapter on it. I do think it's important that that distinction is owned.

Can we take the best out of Cocounselling and use the best from neuroscience in terms of it now explaining about emotions and creating emotions to create something that's even more powerful?

Well, yeah - if you're persuaded of it, be true to your beliefs and systems. Neuroscience is highly sophisticated and I think we have to be very careful of using brain-talk to run experiential-talk because the research has to be looked at – what are the assumptions of researchers? There's nothing more intimidating – you see I'll give you feedback: You started the thing by mentioning a long list of prestigious names – two or three or four books and you piled up quite a ramp from which you would then look over the discussion and if I may say so that's classic – that's academia.

Art therapy – huge capacity to expand Cocounselling into the non-verbal which would be movement, music, art. Engaging with the person through non-verbal means. If attachment or non-attachment happens pre-verbally when we're very young then to tap into that we need to do that non-verbally. So, movement, art or whatever takes us out of head, and re-embodies us.

Oh yes, sure. And the other thing is – toning, non-verbal sounds, improvised all of them together, and what that does - it draws up the imminent spirit to become the spirit between. But endless people get to that without having to look at attachment theory. Be careful because science is a weapon – be careful.

If we want to break through barriers and make Coco more acceptable then sometimes it's good to have the language to go with it. MRI scanning has brought another layer of knowledge about how the brain works, so I don't know how we're going to integrate that.

The question is, the people that have discovered the knowledge, have they put it to work in the way that you think it could be put to work?

I would beg you, if you want to bring this into Co-counselling, don't come in with three books and four professors and language that doesn't either get near what you appear to be saying.

I just did it the way I know how, John.

You did it the way the system in the universities does it, which is to talk books and names. I'm not decrying research but so much of it is used manipulatively or defensively. Think of psychoanalysis, psychotherapy and so on – promise me you won't intimidate a whole room full of trainees by talking about books... This is interesting deep water.

Fred: What do you see as the relationship between co-creating and co-counselling?

Co-creating has always been around lurking in my system. To me there's always been a very deep spiritual component. You know, I drop asides in way back in saying "the counsellor within is the spirit within you" without making it too heavy. What I argue is that the deepest levels of distress are the tensions of the human condition - being on this planet and our separation from mother earth as well as the intransigence of physical matter. It demands a lot. It can be very easy to get frustrated about having to do things that involve managing great lumps of matter. All people are subject to these deep tensions; there's a list of about five tensions to do with the human condition. The challenge between biological needs and cultural needs, and the needs of the soul for meaning, and so on and so forth. Those fundamental frustrations, when the tension of them accumulates, can lead to acting out unpleasantly to other people. And then we get secondary distress which is interpersonal hurt.

My view was and still is, that some attention needs to be paid to the fundamental distresses. Like coming into being as an entity every second gets interrupted by all these tensions, and that frustration can easily get displaced into doing nasty things to other people who are also locked up in the same thing.

That's quite radical but...

Fred: Do you think co-creating should be taught within Co-counselling itself as part of the fundamentals training?

I first made it explicit in 1996 in Italy with a whole bunch of teachers from the States and the UK (I don't think from New Zealand at that time). It started as a discussion about Co-counselling theory. It came together and I put forward this whole thing and John Talbot, who is still active in the UK, didn't like it at the time and that's fair enough. It's been taken up to some degree, and then I had another go at it in 2007 here, when we had the house up on the hill.

My general impression is that people have toyed with it but it's a sideline. And, sensing this, I just gently withdrew. Well, I've withdrawn from active engagement because as you can see from this current exposition, lots of mental flaws. Well, they're not that bad, actually! Fred, just hang in there a minute. I know you have been interested in the co-creating thing.

Fred: I teach it. We have a group in the US. I don't teach it in fundamentals which is why I was curious about the relationship. I think it's very powerful. That's why I wanted to know what your thought was.

Well, I agree with you. I think it's very powerful. Thank you. That's reassuring and I'm delighted and I'm moved. And for me the spiritual dimension is always not fully developed in that form. For me it's always important that people co-counsel on religious oppression and all the harm that Christian religion has done because of the sin theory. The relentless 'God have mercy on us miserable sinners, Christ have mercy on us' - awful stuff!

Fred: Right now, in the United States, the religious oppression coming down from the top is almost overwhelming. People need to release it.

It's good. There's the co-creating thing - there's making sense of brain science without falling foul of it. All that's interesting.

I've noticed in recent years I've got to be less and less interested in tinkering with the interpersonal layers of distress and more interested in this fundamental tension of the being as born into the body and paying attention to that. Inhabiting that space more as a place of transformation. And that inside the quality of free-attention and presence between two people we can vibrate closer in there.

Well, for me there are three dimensions of spirituality. There's the spirituality within, the spirit between, and the spirit beyond essentially. Oriental culture has been dogged by the spirit beyond, and it seems to me that the whole transpersonal movement has been somewhat caught up for some years in the transcendent spirit-beyond traditions which are at the extreme.

Nowadays I think this is the age of the spirit within and between, and the spirit between is, as I say, in our inquiry group you simply enter it by attuning to the shared energy field. The spirit within is the divine living energy which is at the root of all human motivation - everything that's going on in the body and so on and so forth. And just to let that work and let that be and let it express itself in movement and sound, done with a group of people - if they pause, they witness that suddenly they are in the spirit between, which is co-ontological. It is shared real presence. Each person has a presence and then altogether those individual presences within a shared presence, and it's very potent and very beautiful - if you stay within that presence, being open to what is right here and now, a great sweep of cosmic awareness starts to open up. So, you go through this spirit within all the tissues, all the human urges and motivation and life-divine coming through into this between. I think that's very simple.

For me in that space between, if that's generated in a Co-counselling session it really enables very deep work. I think that's what you're saying.

For me what you just shared made such simple and profound sense.

Thank you.

Do you have ideas how Co-counselling could more effectively influence the political world?

Yes, Co-counselling is a very important part of the P 2 P community in the world so there's peer Co-counselling, there's cooperative inquiry – the peer-to-peer world is bringing forward the notion of the commons. We never lost it even in England where there remains common law. Commons is natural in cultural areas – land/spaces not owned by anybody. They're for public use, people have the right to use them and all that's necessary is that rules are agreed upon so that the shared use is manageable and cooperative and so on – so commons law.

What's happening to a remarkable degree is the revival of the notion of the commons. If you go to the P2P website (initiated by Michel Bauens who was in NZ a year or two ago and gave a talk at AUT), you'll find a remarkable amount of post-capitalist collaborative cooperative working – collaborative economics. The whole movement in various places all over the world, in which people are exploring collaborative ways of working, collaborative ways of managing their bit of the commons. That's, I think, what both cooperative inquiry and Co-counselling need to be open to. I've spent 30 years – from 1971 to the end of the century doing radical work. Now it's beyond me, but that's the next thing – Co-counselling and cooperative inquiry start to integrate with the wider commons movement.

If you go to the P2P foundation.com there are various headings and one is 'Introduction to the Commons' and it's well worth having a look. There's a lot going on all over the place in terms of mutual non-hierarchical ways of exploring the world we live in - from psychology to various aspects of culture. Co-counselling would be very good for activists.

Also, the question is, could co-counsellors become more socially active? Harvey Jackins the originator of Co-counselling, did a lot of work in the North Western United States encouraging workers protests and so on, about capitalism.

Co-counsellors are the leaders of social-activism of the new age. His idea was that co-counsellors would indeed be busy – he dropped all the communist labels – but bringing into manifestation a society with social-justice, less inequality between wealthy and poor, less exploitation of the workers. He wasn't very good on the liberation of women.

Where did Tom and Dency Sargent come into play? Where did you meet them? How did they fit into the split off. I'm in Fred's co-creation group. Can you recommend any of your writing that is more easy-reading for the non-academic?

The problem's solved because I'm not writing anymore really. When I do write it takes a hell of a long time but it does keep the brain going somewhat. Well they – have you seen the 1998 revision of the basic co-counselling manual? I don't know that anyone has found that unreadable. So anyway, while I recover from the pain .. (*general laughter*) It was an interesting question – give it to me again.

Tom Sargent – oh yes, I got so sunk into my writing. I became a co-counsellor and teacher, and Tom, who wanted me to do that, went to Jackins and Jackins said 'Yes, I'll appoint him.' You had to be accredited by Jackins to become a teacher. Jackins said to me 'You're a teacher and you're also the area reference person for Europe'!

Tom and Dency were running the Re-evaluation counseling community in Hartford and I went over to attend some Jackins events in Philadelphia and one or two things, where I met Dency and I think Tom. I actually stayed at their place on one of the visits, and we got to know each other. We were talking and so on and so forth. As area-reference-person for Europe I was the organiser for the whole of Europe in Re-evaluation counseling. I had a lot of contact with Harvey and I found him increasingly dictatorial. You could apply the theory, and you could expound the theory, as long as it was his theory; and basically the theory was not open to any sort of elaboration or question-raising on the part of teachers or anyone in the wider Re-evaluation counseling community. He also would interfere with what was going on in some of the local communities. And it happened that he started to interfere in what was going through Tom and Dency in Hartford, Connecticut in ways they didn't like – they found it oppressive and inappropriate and the long and short of it all was we got together the three of us, and said 'This isn't good enough: Harvey says 'The client is in charge' and he also says 'Harvey is in charge of all the clients and they better believe it.'

So, we met together, and founded CCI. Tom was involved but I think it's my sense that it was Dency and I that set it up really. To a remarkable degree, the whole Connecticut community came along, and certainly in the UK, so far as it developed at that time, joined, and Dency and I did a workshop just west of London in Surrey somewhere to launch it all off, and then we were on the go.

It's extraordinary how well it did take off actually. We kept the word Co-counselling; Harvey had turned the word Reevaluation into a word that he owned. You couldn't use it but that didn't seem to apply to Co-counselling.

What did Harvey think of the fact that you split off?

I don't know. I suppose he was not very happy about it. We didn't have any contact after that. He never made contact with me. I've still got great respect for him in some ways. You know he's deeply flawed, but then who am I to talk?

Laughter

And he was very good. He was inspirational. He was a great talker and writer. I had him over to the University of Surrey to give a talk to co-counsellors – that was

still in the Re-evaluation counseling days, and he did a great job. He had people out for counselling in front of the group and he was good at it.

He wanted the theory to be clear and that was good. That was a good side of him. He said the theory is a very important part of the liberation process and I think he was right – probably neuroscientists would agree to that!

I had a session with him and it seemed to go alright.
Re-evaluation (RC) is still going. He died and it's been taken over by his son.
Dency's still going strong.

Very strong

Too strong?

Very strong

You and Dency were both at our second CCI in 1997. There was a conversation that you and Dency had – I think it was taped. I don't know who has that.

I think Co-counselling has got a robust future particularly if all you people are part of it. I think it's important all this exploring. The more the better in a way.

Your whole life has been about inquiry and some of the fruits of that are this modality we've been living with. What's your inquiry at the moment?

I've got several lines of inquiry going. A very important one is inquiry into the dynamics of the ageing process. It's extremely interesting. It's very, very interesting to be aware of the degree to which you're not functioning well. What I mean by that is: there are four kinds of memory – oh God I can't remember them

Laughter

Oh, wait a minute - There's episodic, semantic, procedural and working. Episodic is 'Can I remember the first day I went to school?' or something like that. Semantic is forgetting words to do with language and so on. Procedural is like going through some procedure on the computer, and I can't remember what working one is. As I said, to quote the scientists, from the age of 40/50 there's a 5 per cent drop in brain capacity per decade, so I've now lost according to that 20 per cent compared to 40 years ago. And that's interesting is to be aware of. The degree to which a person can be aware of the extent to which their cognitive competence is declining – it's a delicious paradox. How can I be aware of the limitations of memory - particularly in the cognitive area. I think that meta-awareness and sustaining that meta-awareness, and anchoring it into whatever comes next after this round or this body. I think that's a very good way of, if you like, enjoying ageing by having a capacity to monitor, and work with how it is ageing.

Does that make sense?
So that's one very important inquiry.

Another very, very important inquiry is profound interpersonal relationship where there is a 20 year age gap. That's a sort of creative shocker. It's profound.

The whole area of participatory spirituality. Of still enquiring into the relationship between the three dimensions. The deeply imminent ground of rootable human motivation. The spirit within, deeply imminent, and the spirit between, and the wider reach of consciousness – spirit beyond the normal limits of the mind which can only open it up. And also playing around with the bearing those have on the ageing process, and so on. You get a lot of shape in terms of those three spiritual dimensions, to the part of the mind that susceptible to the immediate ageing.

I'm sure there'll be several others but that'll do.

The inquiry group we're still going. I ran a workshop on cooperative inquiry into entering altered states of consciousness. It was up at Scott's Landing and after I'd gone back to Italy I used to come over a couple of months in the southern summer. After I'd gone back to Italy, a group of people got together on their own – nothing to do with me – to continue exploring the spiritual reality of their lives.

When I came back the next year for another two months to do things, they asked me to join the group. So this is a totally autonomous group run by people here and not launched by me. I was invited to come as a peer not to come and push anybody about. And that's the inquiry group – I joined it in 1994 or 95, and then I would go back to Italy; when I'd come back here for two months I was graciously invited. And then, when I moved here, we were meeting every fortnight and that is an inquiry into the three dimensions of spirituality interweaving, and how they blend into everyday life. And what they can yield in the way of uplift and growth; so that's very important. Virtually every member of the inquiry group is an experienced co-counsellor.

I don't appear at the public events because if you've been a founder of something, and done it for 30 years, it's much more prudent to allow a local community to flourish entirely in its own mode. I have had the privilege of being part of the inquiry group into the spiritual activities with people who are co-counsellors; so I never lose touch with you.

Is that alright? Have I left anything out?

I got curious about the reality you find yourself anchoring into.

Indigenous people know all about it. It's a subtle realm just beyond the frequencies of this realm. But then there's subtle, and there's spiritual. The subtle is a realm – there's the physical realm and the subtle realm and the spiritual invades the whole, and manifests in all these different modalities; so you have to differentiate between spirit and realms or worlds or fields.

The mystic is into the spirit. The adept is into the occult – the other worlds. I think the art is to blend them. Death is you know - in some sense I can't wait. In another sense, there's a huge amount of grief at leaving.

We used to do primary theatre together, do you remember?

You've been talking for 94 minutes John.

You were speaking earlier on about these two ways of release through catharsis and transmutation. Can you speak any more about transmutation aspect of release?

Certainly. The example that I gave: identifying with potent powerful emotionally-charged movement of all sorts of different kinds – Japanese Noh theatre artists – their identification, transforms the negative emotion into something benign. Another one is music – some quality of form and sound; certainly in colour. Some particular quality of form in all the modalities: sound, colour, movement in the arts.

I believe, and if I'm not deluded, experientially healed. As I said, it's alchemical – turning base metal into gold. There's no tears shed but there's a potent shift of frequencies in the neurological and psychological systems that the pain goes.

Despite all the bad press my books have got there is .. (*chuckles*)

If you have a look at "Helping the Client" – fifth edition – that counts for something (!) 2001, and just look at the chapter on transmutation; it gives a whole list of different ways – I think that might be better. That might be working memory mightn't it?

Laughter

Are your books available on line as PDFs?

I had them all online in the PDF format and it said at the top 'You can download these in order to decide fully which one you want to buy.' This is a ruse to try placate the publishers. You know you publish a book and they advertise it for a period but after 10 years, they don't give a tinker's cuss and don't make any effort to publicise it at all. I got away with that for a bit and then Sage, who publish two of the books, got rumours that free copies were floating about; so I changed it to not putting links to – not putting the full PDF version in it. Putting the title in as an online link to the sale point. That quietened them all down. But then if you went to look at the list of publications, on the curriculum vitae page – altogether on the same page, all the books are there in PDF. And I've got a very competent host. This is all on my website <http://www.human-inquiry.com/> You can download them for nothing. Because I think it's ridiculous that publishers are so greedy for books that they won't advertised – just on their list if you know what I mean. So, help yourselves.