

§3 Observations

Dialectic: Thesis + Antithesis => Synthesis
(Bring something into existence that was not there before.)

"We see things not as they are, but as we are."
- H.M. Tomlinson

*When you are not on the same page,
open a new page and write on it together.*
- Kent Busse

In the **Ernstraud Encounter**, each stage is treated in sequence. Issues of disagreement are barred until stage IV; what would have been a battle becomes a collaboration. One stage might be substance for less than an hour, or for a day.

Disengagement periods (rumination breaks, silent reflection) provide time for taking private notes, sharing meals, hearing or making music together. Silent rest time can be more helpful than meaningless banter. The conversants demonstrate their tact and mutual sensitivity in setting the pace.

Using constant application of the Golden Rule, the **Ernstraud Encounter** thoroughly exposes each conversant's capacity for *empathy*. You might try imagining both sides of the encounter in advance as you would play both sides of a chess board; this is one technique of getting into the other person's mind. Remember to be flexible, because in the live encounter the other side is not likely to play out exactly the way you imagined it, just as in a chess exercise. The surprises will be particularly educational.

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happiness sharing as a way to peace

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§1 The Bare Face of Truth

The Ernstraudian flagship has for years been the **Ernstraud Encounter**, a skeletal outline for productive dialog based on genuine interaction. The process is not an exercise in polished prose: using the outline, the conversants build an original structure in real time. They work out the revelations and breakthroughs they encounter along the way.

Memorized platitudes fall away as the parties realize success in their present activity, not in prepared individual goals. The process is revealing, measuring and exposing each participant's adeptness at understanding as dialogue proceeds with slow deliberation before measured speech.

The genuine encounter occurs in present *being*; it cannot be preprogrammed or commercialized. Let us hope that nobody will attempt to hire a facilitator. Doing so would abdicate the obligation of candid honesty and responsiveness to the dialogue partner.

While some of these encounters involve elaborate formality, others occur regularly in ordinary daily conversations graced by mutual respect. Always, the parties grow together.

§ 2 Encounter

Ernstraud Encounter

Two individuals have prepared to meet in friendship--or to learn friendship. They may be diplomats of hostile countries that speak different languages, or they may be next door neighbors practicing the same religion. Something has motivated them to come together: whatever their life stations may be, they follow these steps to greater understanding and common achievement.

Identifying Me -- two sessions

How can I know you if I don't know myself?

- I. This is who I am.** (Constructive self-image: I bring a talent.)
no false pride, no false humility
understanding why I am on earth, my gift to mankind
perception of myself and of others and our relationships
not a therapy session -- apply my talent to our result

- II. My critics say this of me.** (I understand how others see me.)
perception, trustworthiness--I am fair
empathetic understanding of other perspectives
accommodation of this external perception
valuation of others, including you
continuation, strength--I proceed thoughtfully
self confidence in the face of doubt
willingness to incorporate and synthesize

On with the Business -- two sessions

Each participant has been awaiting this moment of helping.

III. Your strength serves your concerns.

(I tell you your strengths.)

Accommodating the criticisms seasons your resolution.

I perceive your talents as possibilities for solution.

I formulate queries that deepen your confidence.

You create a new reality which is not a win-lose duality.

We, the conversants, become stronger *with* each other rather than *against* each other.

IV. We proceed to the identified shared issues we have brought into this encounter.

There is no distinction between YOUR concern and MY concern; we are sharing common burdens.

We are collaborators on mankind's concerns.

* * * * *

If the participants have come together from antagonistic positions which they hope to resolve, specific discussion of their differences may begin after stage IV is reached and sufficient bonding has occurred. Up to this point, the encounter has consisted in taking and sharing information for the purpose of forging a team capable of facing substantive issues.

§3 Nuclear Weapons Again

but a different lesson this time

The social sins listed in §2 above have not ended the human species. Nuclear and biological weapons do pose that threat. *Therefore I regard it a crime against humanity to invent, manufacture, develop, test, possess, or use any of those weapons.* It saddens me that some of my friends are not motivated by the same conviction. What shall I do now?

Here is the problem: developing godlike character includes -- indeed, requires -- loving all of God's children, including the ones who have perpetrated all of the sins including tolerating nuclear weapons. Writing the articles v01-n01§1 (kindness in the face of not getting my own way) and v01-n03§3 (personal redemption) has significantly increased my capacity for this kind of love.

It is not enough to say that I will hate the sin and love the sinner. Loving the atomic bomb maker as a sinner is a distorted application of self-righteousness. I trust my moral compass, but it is not the universal standard for identifying sins or sinners. Indeed, identifying sins and sinners is not for me. It is divisive, futile and useless.

Unredeemed, I quoted Jeremiah 17:5 "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." Today I build bridges instead. Writing about personal redemption has changed my view of non-pacifists whose votes cancel out mine. **Those very people are my beloved neighbors.**

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§1 Survivor's Guilt

*-- take time to smell the roses --
love not only yourself, but also your life*

We who enjoy comfort and privilege live in danger of feeling guilty about enjoying life while the world is overly populated with unhappiness and outright misery.

How can I enjoy myself while other human beings are not enjoying themselves? This disposition is blatant fraud. It improves nothing about the world. If I race to the worst at the bottom, that detracts from, and denies, the good at the top. Worthy enjoyment acknowledges that which is good. *I must experience happiness in order to share it.*

How can I be innocent while escaping the suffering experienced by others? Guilt actually does attach to enjoyment that *causes* the suffering of others. Luxury obtained through exploitation *is indeed* guilt. Intelligently ending overconsumption *does* alleviate suffering. On the other hand, smelling the roses is *appreciating* existence, not exploiting it. Being awake to pleasant experiences sustains my strength as I alleviate suffering of others; I am not helping you enjoy your life if I hate mine. I do not ask who owns the roses before I enjoy the smell.

§ 2 Power of One -- Power of Me!

It's up to ~~the government~~ me.

Racism, religious intolerance, public slaughtering (capital punishment), female genital mutilation, and ritual human sacrifice are blemishes on human society. Somebody had to think them up before they became institutional practices. Somewhere, something went wrong: well-adjusted individuals will not pass racist laws; the enlightened faithful will not condone human sacrifice under any name. These sins have to be removed the same way they came about: one conscience at a time.

Let me illustrate with my experience of Switzerland. My friends and I sometimes left items on the train--clothing, cameras, umbrellas. We reported each instance to the SBB railroad, and selected the station where we would pick up the found items. We did not regularly lock our bicycles; the locks could be popped off very easily. I knew that this condition was not the result of laws against stealing, because I had grown up in a country with laws against stealing which had very different results. Obviously Swiss people return private property because the individual Swiss are honorable people. From that personal honor emerges a collective conscience even capable of democratic taxation, humane distribution of wealth, and universal healthcare. Through personal honor, the Swiss are able to carry out nurturing, constructive relationships and to enjoy a peaceful and healthy society. This is my direct personal experience.

In general, government does not create good or bad people. The opposite is true: good people create successful government. When individual people have a constructive mindset, they combine their good intentions. Government reflects the quality of the people--even in non-democratic states.

Herein lies relief from the litany of sins that opened this article. We shape our society when we first obtain the light for ourselves, and then lovingly propagate that light to those around us. **Laws against stealing do not end theft. Public policies do not end graft. Laws enforcing religious practices do not create faith.** Instead, individual people discern beneficial behavior and implement it. Growing out of that process, public laws articulate the practices on which the individual people agree. It is not the laws themselves, but rather the individual people who formulate and embrace those laws, that advance us together into a happy future.

Therefore, let us not condemn the people or institutions of our government. **Let us not anticipate that government can cure social ills.** Instead, let us carry out good behavior in a way that persuades others to do the same. *We will eradicate poverty when we individually overcome greed.* The government cannot do that for us; nobody can leave it to his neighbor to be modest. *People mimic good models as readily as any other, and with far more pleasure.* Good government is the **result** of the example we set and inspire in each other. You and I are the creators of shared happiness. The question is not "why can't [the government] ...?" The question is "what shall I ...?"