

Tony Merry 1948 – 2004

Blunt remarks

"I apologise for my English" I stumbled. – "No need to apologise - I do speak and understand fairly good English". I clearly recall the straight and simple response, from Tony Merry when we met some twenty years ago in Dun Laoghaire near Dublin, Ireland, in 1985. It was the time of cross cultural workshops. A time when the iron curtain divided the East and the West of Europe for four more years. We did not know about the future of training institutes. We knew something about our common philosophy of the client centred therapy or person centred approach. A man, named Carl Rogers, had some ideas about bridging the gap between the countries in the east and the west. And he would do it on a psychological base, a concept called PCA.

Austria, my home country, has been fortunately on the wealthy side of the division of Europe. Luckily I have had a chance to be part of a staff who joined every year for a new adventure in another European country. Szeged, Cape Sounion near Athens, Sheffield, Paris, Pforzheim, and Modra were the stations. A Magical Mystery Tour of the Carl Rogers Enterprises. To facilitate cross cultural workshops meant to translate ideas of commitment and understanding. What was needed was a good portion of humour and somebody with a clear view on familiar ideas, with no distraction of fancy. "This above all: to thine self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not be false to any man". One needed a reliable and trustworthy person, a Merry Man. One should not underestimate the impact of the stall on the development of the PCA in Europe. And Tony definitely belonged to the well respected senior staffmembers everywhere.

Years later, when I was invited from the Institute for Person Centred Learning to join for some training groups down at Corsica Hall in Seaford at weekends I met his students from previous groups. All of them or at least most of them had a very careful learning experience which I am afraid, I nearly damaged. Some of them thought of me I was a blunt. They had and I am sure some still have such a careful and precise way of using the attitudes of a good therapist. Strong convictions based on experience. They resembled their facilitators and still were personalities with a character: All staff of the Institute for Person Centred Learning Institute provided tools to listen and more so attitudes to care.

And the language used, was not only English, but it was Tony's language. For me Tony has been one of the most important voices in the concert of PCA. Maybe not one of the loudest, but a distinguished one.

So I like to close my blunt remarks with a quote, not from the Beatles, Tony's favourite group, but with another classic line:

"A friend is one that knows you as you are, understands where you have been, accepts what you have become, and still, gently allows you to grow." We know it is not Rogers who said this. It is from the Swan of Avon. And it seems to be appropriate to express that, here in Stratford, East London though. And I am sure Tony can hear this and he will smile from a higher ground. Thanks for everything.