

LAING SYMPOSIUM 2015

The Legacy of R.D. Laing and the Future of the Psychiatric Survivor Movement by Will Hall, MA, DiplPW

audio recording here: <http://www.madnessradio.net/audio-extra/WillHall-Esalen2015-LegacyofRDLaingAndthePsychSurvivorMoverment.mp3>

outline/notes of my talk below: (some moments of explicit language)

Intro:

- **Everyone hear me ok? Accommodation**
- **Thanks to Michael and colleagues for organizing, Esalen for hosting**
- **Honor to be here and to be recognized for my work and contributions by so many colleagues of Laing.**
- **Scottish heritage preclude anglicization of Laing pronunciation**
- **Massive challenge of the title of the talk, Laing is in many ways the very atmosphere the survivor movement breathes in, hope that becomes clearer.**
- **my work — many years individually, also support groups**
- **people in states of madness, also families which go quite a bit crazy too**
- **enter into the experience of the other – my own madness experiences key for this**
- **essence of Laing's genius was harnessing his own madness**
- **Divided Self – most famous work – some clinical examples of schizoid personality actually himself**
 - **basically see my work shamanically as crossing between worlds, seeing many worlds**
 - **My own schizophrenia diagnosis woven in here but not directly, my interpersonal sensibilities and political frameworks in creative and productive tension with this culture.**
 - **Laing is historical figure so much of this will be history with theory and my own ideas.**
- **So give a talk, some history theory and some secret history – oh and a Raffle!**

My relation to Laing

- Saw my father reading Colin Wilson *The Outsider* when we were on the subway in London in 1975; Wilson was huge influence on Laing.
- **First encounter Laing – teen find an anthology of the Radical Therapist in a used bookstore.** Very impressed by someone from the Radical Therapy collective read a poem about George Jackson, I was like who is George Jackson.
- age 17 – Santa Cruz -arrested protesting US war in Lebanon, left in an isolation cell in juvenile hall, follow up from a social worker who drove me around town to some appointment and she asked what I wanted to be as a career and I was studying revolutionary nonviolence, later worked at the Resource Center for Nonviolence in Santa Cruz said I wanted to something like a social worker violence at level of individual and at level of society – like Laing
- Age 20 best friend's boyfriend was slowly going mad, she recommended *Divided Self* to me, recognized so much of myself

acknowledgement I don't have authority of fidelity to True Laingianism

- **not up on Laing scholarship. sketchy on history**
- **Want to suggest that there is no True Laingianism**
- this gathering might be one upmanship of What Laing Really Said, wandering around clutching our John Clay biographies and Penguin paperback *Politics of Experience*
- no idea what Laing meant REALLY, I have only my Laing Introject, I'm just a fanboy here

Actually, speaking about “legacy of Laing and Future of Psych Survivor Movement” there are many Multiple Laings:

- heretic medical student
- existential philosopher
- clinical writer and theorist
- clinical innovator
- pop icon acid marxist
- post-Laing – birth trauma + rebirthing
- Initiate into the cult of Kali
- also the drunken sexist Laing
- revolutionary social critic Laing

- **Laing as heretic medical student / doctor**
 - took hippocratic oath seriously –
 - btw, “**do no harm**” is not in there. But it does say to not act like a **god**. (diet is first thing mentioned)

- **appalled nazi x rays of jews dying that medical professor used as teaching – and how this was accepted unflinchingly by professor and by other students// normalcy of violence – Laing – Glasgow- anti-jewish atmosphere**
 - 1948 comes across psych patient **Artaud’s essay about Van Gogh**, written while Artaud was a psych inmate: “*contemporary life preserves itself in its old atmosphere of lechery, anarchy, disorder, delirium, dissoluteness, chronic madness, bourgeois inertia, psychic anomaly (for it is not man but the world which has become’ abnormal), deliberate dishonesty, flagrant hypocrisy, sordid contempt of everything which shows distinction, laying claim to a whole order founded on the fulfilment of primitive injustice- an order of organized crime, in fact. Everything is going badly because at this moment the morbid conscience has an essential interest in not recovering from its own sickness. And so a vicious society has invented psychiatry to defend itself from the investigations of certain superior lucid minds whose intuitive powers were disturbing to it....In its asylums, society has managed to strangle all those it has wished to rid itself of or to defend itself from, because they refused to make themselves accomplices to various flagrant dishonesties. For a lunatic is also a man whom society has not wished to listen to, and whom it is determined to prevent from uttering unbearable truths.*” That’s not Laing that’s Artaud, but it might as well be Laing. So the basic message is pre-Laing, emerges from resistance to psych coercion, patient experience
 - Laing as medical student listens to so-called psychotic people, hangs out in padded cells
 - walk around Glasgow taking on different psychosis, bury himself in snow to push himself beyond his own senses, exploring learn about firsthand

- so very early Laing as a doctor is shaped by psych patient voice which is what movement is about = Laing was a listener and a broadcaster and a spokesperson, who had sympathy and talent for connecting with mad people
- **Laing existential Heideggerian philosopher-**
- **whenever search Heidegger in Google it autocorrects to HeadGear. Why is that?**
 - **Glasgow university Scotland huge contribution to the Enlightenment,** science, history of philosophy, David Hume, Adam Smith, James Hutton (geologist age of earth), Joseph Black (chemical formulae) (btw, Hume's critique of the unified self may have been influenced by Buddhism by way of Jesuit missionaries)
 - mentor Joseph Schorstein MD neurosurgeon, jewish, son of rabbi biblical scholar, left wing, left europe fleeing nazism, met glasgow uni, in war – surgeon for serious brain injuries – laing called him master of the euro tradition. schorstein was *fierce intellectual critic of epistemological supposition of mainstream west science, thought it would destroy humanity*. Schorstein was opposed to lobotomies – (used for homosexuality in those days) Schorstein saw it as same attitude towards sick people that Nazis had. Laing grew up in extremely anti-jewish enviro so this encounter = key // Laing also met Karl Abenheimer in Glasgow – was with Jung in '36, worked with Fromm-Reichmann, studied under Karl Jaspers – schorstein/abenheimer philosophy group in Glasgow gave feedback to Divided Self drafts
 - very influenced by J.P. Sartre, co authored "*Reason and Violence: A Decade of Sartre's Philosophy*"
- **Laing the clinical writer and theorist innovator**
- **understanding people in social context, struggle to live – existential understanding**
- **influenced by many therapists working with psychosis: Szasz 1961, harry Stack Sullivan, Bateson, Frieda Fromm Reichmann, Jay Haley, Winnicott, Tavistock clinic**
 - 1960 – *Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness*
 - hugely influenced by Colin Wilson *The Outsider* 1956,
 - pop culture success.
 - turned down by 5 publishers,
 - context crucial to understanding experience
 - Brings Kafka, central to existential thinking of time, into psychology

- **Extremely powerful ability to traverse clinical academic and popular clarity:**
- ***“Schizophrenia cannot be understood without understanding despair.”***
- ***“The experience and behavior that gets labeled schizophrenia is a special strategy that a person invents in order to live in an unlivable situation.”***
- ***“We respect the voyager, the explorer, the climber, the space man. Why is it we do not respect the mad who are often exploring the ‘inner space and time of consciousness’?”*** (Note the word “often”)

- heavily influenced by Gregory Bateson’s communication work and family therapy

- ***“CHILDREN DO NOT GIVE UP THEIR INNATE IMAGINATION, CURIOSITY, DREAMINESS EASILY. YOU HAVE TO LOVE THEM TO GET THEM TO DO THAT.”***

- ***“From the moment of birth, when the stone-age baby confronts the twentieth-century mother, the baby is subjected to these forces of violence, called love, as its mother and father have been, and their parents and their parents before them. These forces are mainly concerned with destroying most of its potentialities. This enterprise is on the whole successful.”***
- ***“We are all in a post-hypnotic trance induced in early infancy.”***

- but not a family blamer – saw system not individual. also not focused on abuse
 - not Fromm-Reichmann schizophrenogenic mothers
 - crucial bc violence is intergenerational

- ***“Nor is it a matter of laying the blame at anyone’s door. The untenable position, the ‘can’t win’ double bind, the situation of checkmate, is by definition not obvious to the protagonists. Very seldom is it a question of contrived, deliberate, cynical lies, or a ruthless intention to drive someone crazy, although this occurs more commonly than is usually supposed.”***

- Abenheimer, student of Jung, in Schorstein circle

- Erving Goffman very early influence – *Asylums*, *Stigma*, symbolic interactionism puts meaning at center of intelligibility of all human behavior. Goffman invited to Congress on Dialectics
 - existentialism influence -> distance from psychoanalysis though called Freud a 'hero,' insisted on relationship and experience – “Why do almost all theories about depersonalization, reification, splitting, denial tend themselves to exhibit the symptoms they are attempting to describe? We are left with transactions, but where is the individual?”
 - *Divided Self* remains a classic in psychology. Very psychoanalytic. Title is from William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, and means the kind of sick souls, the twice born who finds truth not through the natural realm they were born to but a mysterious other spiritual realm.
 - In many ways Laing takes the psychoanalytic literature of his time about psychosis and then turns himself into its protagonist, writing to the world not as doctor remedying patient but as patient remedying society.
 - Many of the anonymous clinical case examples of the schizoid personality were actually Laing writing about himself.
- **Laing the clinical innovator – Rumpus Room, Kingsley Hall, Philadelphia Association, Arbours,**
 - **Laing had uncanny rapport with mad – famously in 1972 while touring he was invited by psychiatrists in Chicago to give his opinion on a girl in a padded cell who didn't speak just rocked back and forth naked. Laing said nothing and just stripped off his clothes went into the cell and rocked back and forth with her. 20 minutes later she started speaking for the first time in months. Doctors were amazed, Laing just said “Did it never occur to you to do that?”**
 - back when he created Rumpus Room patients weren't allowed makeup or their own underwear, staff told not to speak with patients because it was like disturbing a broken limb you need to keep it immobilized
 - Kingsley had its own inspiration from earlier Villa 21 – David Cooper
 - Kingsley very influential though not acknowledged
 - Soteria – Mosher – legacy continues today
 - **Kingsley was a pop commune, many people came through and visited,**
 - perhaps partly inspired by Milbrook Leary's estate, not just Villa 21

- **apparently Sean Connery, you know, the original 007 spy and fellow Scotsman, was a Laing admirer and apparently they had wrestling match on the floor.**
 - Best we have is Soteria – Mosher update of Kingsley
 - **Laing the drunk egomaniac**
- **10 kids (!), macho reckless posturing, incoherent booed off stage.**
 - One of his sons commented it was ironic someone known as a doctor of families took no interest in his own.
 - Margaret Mead refused to appear on a TV show she was invited to with Laing bc he had left his wife and 5 kids.
- **Initiate into cult of Kali Laing;**
- **1971- goes to India (like Timothy Leary and Beatles 1966 before him), by chance meets a Gangotri Baba who was also a doctor and had renounced material to be a devotee of Kali living on a mountain crag. Fire is sacred, Laing was initiated into cult of Kali**
- ***“My Mother is the principle of consciousness. She is Akhanda Satchidananda; indivisible Reality, Awareness, and Bliss. The night sky between the stars is perfectly black. The waters of the ocean depths are the same; The infinite is always mysteriously dark. This inebriating darkness is my beloved Kali.” -Sri Ramakrishna***
- **pop culture icon acid marxist Laing**
- Laing was almost inevitable given the era of Kubrick *2001: A Space Odyssey* 1968 (including a psychotic computer), Star Trek’s first interracial kiss (Kirk and Uhura), Andy Warhol shot by Valerie Solanos, Laing in *Life* magazine 1971
- **Hippie, let it all hang out, defy family, upheaval of times, anti-war, flower power, young generation told they are crazy but actually the world is crazy**

- **three words: LSD**
 - originally developed by psychiatrists to induce psychosis to better understand it
 - Huxley *Doors of Perception* 1954
 - Laing very early exploring his own madness / emulating psychosis to understand others – this persists in survivor movement in idea of “peers”
 - LSD used a lot at Kingsley and remember it was legal and was widely used in psychiatry at time (banned in US in 1967)
 - I myself have never done LSD... Officer.

- **Laing’s pop influence may be invisible today but it’s there widespread**
- **Pink Floyd’s *Dark Side Of The Moon* many Laing themes, third biggest selling album of all time (beat out by Michael Jackson and AC/DC), anti-lobotomy lyrics**
 - A 1999 USA survey, however, found that 91% people in US cited stressful circumstances as cause of schizophrenia

- **is there a Laing revival?**
- **new film feature biopic, Laing played by actor David Tennant, also know for playing Doctor Who.**
- ***Guardian* called for Laing rehabilitation in 2011 editorial**
 - Mike Cornwall, Mike Thompson revitalization of Esalen work on alternate visions of psychosis
- **post-Laing Laing**
 - *Did you used to be RD Laing*, influence of Grof, birth trauma, rebirthing
 - Laing’s 1978 film on birth – focuses on voices of mothers and on images of medical controlled birth, not on research. appeal to humanity

- **Laing: the revolutionary challenger of society.**
- **Is Laing’s legacy is made palatable for present (like how we forget Dr.King’s militancy)?**
- **era: global uprising against colonialism global protest era**

- **possibility of popular civil war overthrowing capitalism was taken seriously – by the capitalists. Assassinated JFK bc fear too soft on communism/Bay of Pigs betrayal/Vietnam withdrawal, and MLK bc anti-war stance and Poor People’s Movement against racism war and poverty- three evils**
 - ghetto riots in US, eve of the general strike in Paris, rebellion in Prague against Soviets, MLK and RFK
 - soldiers in Vietnam are shooting their officers
- **Laing in vein of Herbert Marcuse, product of times, critique of alienation / false consciousness**
 - Marcuse critical of both capitalism and communism – consumerism based on false needs, this is key as to why he is threatening, because as a capitalist you can’t just put it into the ‘other side’ camp. proletariat integrated into capitalism so it takes outsiders minorities etc. *“Bureaucracy”. people recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment,”* the irresistible output of the entertainment and information industry carry with them prescribed attitudes and habits, certain intellectual and emotional reactions which bind the consumers more or less pleasantly to the producers and, through the latter, to the whole. The products indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness
- **Marcuse rejected both capitalism and communism: critique of technological anti-ecology society**
 - **sort of combining Orwell’s 1984 with Huxley’s Brave New World –**
 - **rule by terror, rule by distraction**
 - **there are slaves too frightened to rebel, then there are slaves who love their servitude**

most deeply meaningful of this revolutionary Laing –

1967 International Congress on the Dialectics of Liberation

- Congress as a coalition of ‘politicos’ and ‘culture wizards’
- Laing, Thich Nhat Hanh, Stokely Carmichael, Gregory Bateson, Paul Goodman, Julian Beck, Herbert Marcuse, Carolee Schneemann, Allen Ginsberg
 - Dialectics – Hegel Marx – Marcuse – endorses negative/upheaval/*against* as paving way to positive. pro-protest, pro-rebellion
- Ginsberg captured the mood of the cultural moment well *“WHAT’S GOING ON? I don’t know what the fuck is happening. Like my world-system is crumbling.”*
 - Not so much the Congress itself, which apparently didn’t amount to much other than everyone arguing with each other, but the cultural moment
- To look at Laing’s legacy and the future of the psych survivor movement is to put us into a thinking mindset, a mental capacity, that can simultaneously embrace Bateson’s ecological holism, Thich Nhat Hahn’s Buddhist antiwar activist nonviolence, Black Power revolution against racism, critique of consumerist capitalism, sexual poetic liberation and neo-Dada performance art. And from that mindset we ask the question How do we overcome human violence and save ourselves from extermination?

But First A RAFFLE,

- copy of *Politics of Experience*
- psychic lottery, honor system, number from one to a million

At Congress Laing’s articulated vision of overcoming normalized violence:

- ***“We are effectively destroying ourselves by violence masquerading as love.”*** – reference to family dynamics and professional care in psychiatry — but also something much more
- **Challenge to *“a social world system that as a whole presents more and more the appearance of total irrationality.”***
- ***“Normal men have killed perhaps 100,000,000 of their fellow normal men in the last fifty years.”***
- **Normalized violence means we continue to act “normal” while the Vietnam War of the 1960s-70s goes on on TV. Or the war, gun violence, racism, prisons, poverty, ecological destruction toxic poisoning of 2015.**
 - Laing directly disagrees that violence happens because the powers that be have not allowed change to happen. He says it is because the normalized violence of the larger macro is the same as the normalized violence of our intimate relations of normality.
- **Our society is violent and oppressive because of Us not because of Them.**
 - Laing describes social contexts being thoroughly interrelated all the way up – social, existential, moral *holism*
 - Laing also said that this madness wasn’t just the war planes above dropping bombs, but that it exists between us “Let no one supposed that this madness exists only somewhere in the night or day sky where our birds of death hober in the stratosphere (Viet Nam war). It exists in the interstices of our most intimate and personal moments.”
- **Extreme philosophical existential moral burden: we have failed to free ourselves of this violence we must take responsibility.**
- **It is ok for us to say I have failed — what is not ok for us to say is I give up.**
- **This is the real challenge of Laing’s legacy. Not just psychiatric violence which is normalized but all institutional violence.**
- **Laing: a favorite quote from Heidegger “The dreadful has already happened”**

What “destruction” means. What “extinction ” means. What “survival” means.

- **“Only by the most outrageous violation of ourselves have we achieved our capacity to live in relative adjustment to a civilization apparently driven to its own destruction.”**
 - “It is quite certain that unless we can regulate our behaviour much more satisfactorily than at present, then we are going to exterminate ourselves.”
- **Laing’s era it was the fear of nuclear war with the Soviets that meant “extermination.” Today let us be very clear what extermination means. Fall of Communism does not disqualify critique.**
- **Let’s be clear – what do we mean by Destruction, Extinction, Survival, Extermination –**
- **Herbert Marcuse, – First it is a continuation of the Nazi modernization project. It is the same extermination because it is the same technology, the same science, same alienation of humans from selves – treat people as objects. Come back to Schorstein’s denouncement of the western epistemologies of destruction.**
 - No actual trend in civilization to mitigate move to extinction. Talk but no actual trend. Everyone wants the new iPhone.
- **Extermination today is already well underway. It is the absolute certain direction we are headed as a human civilization**
- **It means facebook and hashtags while the seas are overfished the forest cut down species extinct toxic poison fills our food water dries up global temperature rises, drone robot extrajudicial executions, Guantanamo still not closed, massive military budget no “peace dividend”**
- **one example: NY Times – now we will call it torture, before didn’t. Openly acknowledge this. Normalized.**
- **Bush election 2000, Gore won popular vote. Normalized**
- **colonize other planets, normalized.**
- **Greeks rise up against loss of pensions, Hong Kong rise up against Chinese annexation, why do we not care 2008 people lost third of net worth, climate change widespread popular support, Koch brothers**

INTERRUPTION

- *shut up will — you can't do it not good enough*
- *it's not real this Extermination fear it's paranoia*
- *I'm a human being I need the help of all the parts of me the perfectionism and doubt*

Bring this to the Psych survivor movement we have today:

- historically what was it
- **Madness Network New, Network Against Psychiatric Assault, Insane Liberation Front, Mental Patient Liberation Front.**
 - **These are revolutionary movements began in early 70s – but there was Laing's *Politics of Experience* in 1967** (previously published as journal essays, *Radical Therapy* journal begun in 1968 and Chesler's *Women and Madness* in 1972 Szasz *Myth of Mental Illness* 1961.
- **Radical movement, writing in psychiatry helped spawn the survivor mov't – part of history we don't hear about**
 - This 60s era was inspiration for early psych survivor movement which emerges in 1970s (previous iterations as well).
- **Women's movement, civil rights movement, Gay rights movement (Stonewall in 1969)**

- personal is political, micro-examination of intimate context as larger social context, internalized oppression deeply felt by women, non-heterosexual people
 - many early feminist critiques of psychiatry
 - women, gays also killed, tortured by psychiatry, pathologized
-
- embarrassing bureaucratise these days like “consumer” movement, or “peer” movement, or people with lived experience – parade cooptation by eradicating language –
 - surest way to sabotage a movement is to make its language unintelligible to ordinary people
 - earliest terms were ex-patient and psychiatric abuse survivor – which were themselves toned down from ex psychiatric inmate. Our movement in its heart and soul is a *prisoners’* liberation movement.
 - secret history: we don’t usually think of patients movement being inspired by the radical doctors movement but it clearly was
 - Laing calls for patients to guide patients in 1964 “Schizophrenic Experience” essay in *Politics of Experience*
 - Judi Chamberlin *On Our Own* 1978 – 14 years later
 - Co-optation of survivor consumer movement and discrediting/dismissal of Laing closely related – they need each other
 - today co-opted movement almost doesn’t exist
 - force, drugs, diagnosis, and broader social protest as issues cut out of funding streams. Tokenism allows this. “Peers” and “lived experience”; movement become another pluralist interest group in corrupt us non democracy
 - nami moved into family blaming gap – pharma + apa + nami/media
 - groups like Freedom Center very hard to sustain, even other most progressive groups still coopted- dropped many freedom center social justice initiatives such as prison, poverty, war on drugs,
 - deeper cooptation dynamic – the violence of eradicating the voice of anger
 - secret if you want to be successful as an ex-patient in the professional world? Same as secret of how you get released from psych hospital: you have to hide your anger. I succeed in career bc I dont show angry
 - professionals immediately get offended — even ally professionals — just like a black in a white world has to be very careful to prove they are a “safe” black person and not to offend people who think they are better than the “real racists” or “those biomedical psychiatrists”. same dynamic. I have to prove myself a “safe” survivor to professionals
-
- something to think about – in US adaptation Open Dialogue risks this pathologizing of anger / exclusion

So – institutional psych survivor movements gets bought as consumer movement and other groups lose their comprehensive vision but still:

- **Psych survivor stance remains a powerful force for the repudiation of all normalized violence and a demand for a new society. How to do this we have to do it together. Always been resistance to psychiatric incarceration going back to the origins of asylums, always will be.**
- **Psych survivors most extreme eradication of experience. Most extreme form of violence**
- **We notoriously can't decide on a name for ourselves – positive indication of ongoing refusal of misuse of power, eradication of experience and denial of reciprocity**
- **Laing: *"More completely, more radically than anywhere else in society [the schizophrenic] is invalidated as a human being."***
- **movement was and I believe is an arising from a basic human affirmation against ALL violence. "you're crazy" // soul murder**
- **all systems of oppression render oppressed truth "crazy"**
- **I grew up in the South 'crazy nigger' – Blacks and whites call blacks who don't say Yessir and cross street -> lynching**

What has changed since Laing's time? Clearly we need to take the legacy and bring it up to date as this is 40+ years ago. Some key changes culturally politically:

- **disappearance of Soviet Union falsely post-nuclear war threat.**
- **failure of communes to escape to create alternatives – Laing was right – we carry it with us, within us**
 - **real successful survivor initiative is Ionia in Alaska?**
 - **the critique of bureaucracy has completely disappeared bc it has so permeated. we are becoming machines, we all have personal tracking devices we carry everywhere, excited about efficient customer service and taxi apps**

- **military counterinsurgency wars + domestic repression against 70s uprisings**
- **prison system, War on Crime = War On Blacks**
 - rollback of economic abundance – austerity reagan bush clinton
- **psychiatrization of whole society – Laing’s in his Dialectics of Liberation Congress speech he writes a “mad theory” like a psychiatric patient would bring forth and says the problem in the future will be there are *too few mental patients*. And that is exactly what has happened and the mental patients have expanded to the whole society where one in four people is taking a psych med, mass expansion of diagnosis – pharma and APA seeing everywhere too few patients and seeking to continuously expand.**
- **“Journey within” socially a failure: Oprah and Deepak Chopra, McYoga on every corner Esalen – McEsalen elite – Barring psych survivors from Laing event LSD, MDMA = Steve Jobs**

New context today: ecological movement

- Laing writing pre-Earth Day 1970 was first Earth Day, 1973, E.F. Schumacher publishes *Small Is Beautiful: A Study of Economics As If People Mattered*, Edward Abbey *The Monkeywrench Gang* 1975
- Global warming, sixth extinction, toxics threat not acknowledged.
 - before curbside recycling! before “organic” food! no bike lanes! no holistic healthcare, no acupuncture, no supplements
- **Laing is a proto deep-ecologist, didn’t have that reality yet: “*The condition of alienation, of being asleep, of being unconscious, of being out of one’s mind, is the condition of the normal man.*” Take this as an ecological statement – nature and our bodies what we wake up to.**
- prior to about 1990 there was no left social justice ecology, enviro and social justice were separated.
- Seattle WTO protest 1999 begins contemporary era where left social justice and ecology people are same push

- Where Laing talks about normalized violence and alienation, you can transpose into alienation from balance with nature
- Communication contexts – not just human actors but animals, weather, creatures around us communicating with us
- Laing was heading in direction of indigenous knowledge we can take him further

New context today: modern hyper capitalist family:

- **Laing's says "family's role is to repress of Eros."**
 - authentic feelings of child replaced by the imposed mystification of the parent. (see Ken Loach film *Family Life*. Also Loach's 1970 film *Kes* is one of the greatest of all films and allegorizes much of what we are discussing here).
 - normalized violence = induction of invalidity of emotional experience
 - *"From the moment of birth, when the stone-age baby confronts the twentieth-century mother, the baby is subjected to these forces of violence, called love, as its mother and father have been, and their parents and their parents before them. These forces are mainly concerned with destroying most of its potentialities. This enterprise is on the whole successful."*
- **Resonates in 1970 but not as much today.**
- **Parenting revolution, rebellion against spanking, A.S. Neil Summerhill- written 1960 starts to resonate in 1970s**
- **Today we have popular culture of "freedom" but – permissiveness neglect because they are left alone by parents working**
- **but still represses Eros – because it replaced authoritarian control with poverty fear based consumerism and war on crime/blacks safety – Marcuse calls it "repressive desublimation"**
- **children learn stress, fear, busy-ness, striving as magical warding off of The Dreadful**
- Mistake to see family just as a social psychological unit authoritarian unit as Laing commonly read – have to see family as fundamentally a mass media market economic unit that keeps normalized violence of market competition conformity personal get ahead plan school career retirement security
- So parents of psychotic youth appeal to the ineffectiveness counterproductive economically self-sabotaging behaviors not working not going to school. Beliefs actions are not rational economically

- **Family's message is "you can't survive in this economy unless you do x,y,x." Appeal to common sense of the commodity marketplace rat race – pragmatic – but then enforces this as the horizon of possibility no other possibility available.**
- **By demanding effective productive responsible behavior out of fear** of falling behind the task of economic independence, family becomes like a shop foreman pacing the rats on the assembly line. independent living and autonomy as consumer unit become the goals of "recovery" in the mh system, assisted by drugs and interiorized diagnostic self policing. Recovery becomes successfully internalizing the shop foreman economic cracking the whip – you demonstrate values of independence stability
- Also – west didn't invent family therapy. group ritual and community healing from indigenous cultures – excellent film: *Story of the Weeping Camel*
- Also – family therapy overlap with transformative justice movement – also drawing on indigenous healing (excellent film: *Face to Face*)

New context today: New understandings of trauma, confronting child abuse

- child abuse and Laing's work points to rise of women's movement confronting child sexual and emotional abuse. AND normalization of violence means this and much more.
- fantasies of stranger abductions terrorism gangster shootings prevail, most violence in society still the family, also car accidents, but not seen as such
- psych survivor movement failed to become child abuse prevention movement

New context today – Soteria house, Mosher drew on Kingsley

- **very important, Freedom Center part of calling for Soteria, brought Mosher to Northampton**
- **today some of survivor movement supports spiritual emergency framework – Jungian – psychosis purposeful – leave reality to regain higher integrated self through journey encountering archetypal forces that can transform**
- **Laing significantly said "some" when he talked about psychosis as a journey in *Politics of Experience* – too experienced clinically to generalize to everyone; not global theory of psychosis as journey. beware clinical gaze and new reverse diagnosis**
- **can we reimagine abstract ahistorical archetypes as historical real forces in society?**
- **Laing not just breakthrough, – also saw society needs to change. Not just new treatments**

- Kingsley the non-patients were part of encouraged to be mad and free- target wasn't helping mad but transforming everyone who was there and therefore society. "rejecting normal with"
- Kingsley was radical patient/staff eradication, Soteria drops this,
- create not so much sanctuaries for the mad, but -- sanctuaries for everyone from society
- today seen as untenable
 - Ionia does this, co-counseling seems to do this
- transforming society together rather than therapy?

With this step beyond Laing we follow in his footsteps:

- Laing says of Freud: *Freud was a hero. He descended to the "Underworld" and met there stark terrors. He carried with him his theory as a Medusa's head which turned these terrors to stone. We who follow Freud have the benefit of the knowledge he brought back with him and conveyed to us. He survived. We must see if we now can survive without using a theory that is in some measure an instrument of defence.*
- And so Laing also presents us with a challenge: Laing entered into the normalized violence of the family, the asylum, the very depths of our own selves and brought forth a prophetic voice pointing to the total social context of civilization's extermination. Now we must face squarely what he saw without our own Medusa's heads or defenses and figure out how to survive without using his ideal observer status.

Where to go now: bring Laing to 21st century

- Laing epistemology returns to recontextualization – human experience always makes sense in social context, psychiatry de-contextualizes. Mystification of experience

- Gadarene swine logical fallacy
- psychotic person called out of formation
- therapist points to how whole formation is “off course”
- yes but – ideal observer? Who says what context is?
- Karl Popper calls methodological essentialism – Speak of the true nature of things, hidden reality or essence
- Ideal observers –
- truth claims affirm power stances – foucault
- easy to project leader guru hero father prophet on the ideal observer –
- deal observer becomes object of political contention, whose Interpretation is correct?
- Works as long as we are all Us – groupthink, suppress dissent
- abandon unified clinical gaze, guru prophet leader uniformity of language
- Laing’s vision–need to recreate it collaboratively –
- Rethink knowledge as collaborative: collaborate with groups, Other, shadow, environment, animals, weather, nature as well

Future of the legacy: Political action:

- single issue dead end – [Think Upstream / my thinking upstream essay in Mad In America](#)
- Emerging overarching language of political change – anti-corruption movement issues that are off the agenda of mainstream political control
- war on drugs, slavery reparations, nuclear weapons abolition, end child poverty, ecological balance
- Purely negative protest gets dissolved unless it has crystal clear focus (Occupy dissolved, Black Lives Matter growing)

Future of the legacy: personal anti-corruption:

- if the hand that feeds you is corrupt, bite it
- in fact, just go ahead and bite the hand that feeds you so you are sure you can do it

Future of the legacy: working with the shadow

- Taking relationship as central – where the violence is, personal language and practice I do
- The moment of encountering the mad other, the way Laing asks us to encounter madness in ourselves, that unknown, that reciprocity – that is what is needed
- *“the worst violence of all is the reciprocal denial of reciprocity, the creation of a frozen, non dialectical impasse”*
- Think about how often we make accusations, attributions, even in gossip but in conflict. This is nonreciprocal and violent.
- shadow self in other
- always accusation made by the other has some truth – from their experience
- always true of you to some degree – see it at some point
- embody feeling of what like to be other by listening somatically
- always assume other has their good reason
- Laing’s polarities – asleep, unconscious, out of one’s mind – suggests place of ideal observer – move beyond this?
- We do too much diagnosing psychiatry as ill with something we call the biomedical model. In the name of ending dehumanization we dehumanize the psychiatrists in the name of ending dehumanization. We can do better than just turn the tables of the clinical gaze, role reversal with psychiatrists
- But – this is trap – doesn’t mean exile anger or become neutral white male aloof calm mediator above it all balancing both sides role
- fuck that
- Put of this trap Laing points to the Source.
- Living life is a dualistic dance to create compromises of self not self boundaries in the non dual context of the unity of experience and the embrace of reciprocity
- all I can see of the other is my own shadow, and I can only see myself through the others’ eyes.

Wrap up – back to Laing as initiated priest of Kali

take a risk of a journey into chaos and unknown

think about coming generations

In Us and Them Laing says *“there is a conformity to a presence that is everywhere elsewhere.”* One of the central ways we participate in normalized violence is the mantra, “Not me, not now”

“Don’t posture, don’t give yourself airs, don’t think you’re going to get away with it... don’t make excuses. Don’t kick it around. Who are you trying to kid? A little humility, a fraction of love, a grain of trust, you’ve been told as much as you need to know, you’ve had quite your fair share... Shut up and get on with it. Remember. There’s not much time left. The flood and the fire are upon us.” – Bird of Paradise

How do we do this?

“We can put no trust in princes, popes, politicians, scholars, or scientists, our worst enemy or our best friend. With the greatest precautions, we may put trust in a source that is much deeper than our egos-if we can trust ourselves to have found it, or rather, to have been found by it.”

from The obvious

That’s a bit woo woo fuzzy so let me make it very sharp for you:

Divided Self takes its name from William James Varieties of Religious Experience. James wrote:

“The prevalent fear of poverty among the educated classes is the worst moral disease from which our civilization suffers.” William James

The worst moral disease from which our civilization suffers. That is the Dreadful that has already happened.

Act out of guilt? No.

“True guilt is guilt at the obligation one owes to oneself to be oneself. False guilt is guilt felt at not being what other people feel one ought to be or assume that one is.” – Laing

So let me get specific: ask yourself:

Facing the full reality of our ecological collapse and social violence what would I do differently if I was not afraid of my own poverty, not afraid of falling behind for me or those I am responsible for financially.”

Meditate on that and ask yourself what would I do.

You may go where I go when I ask that. Laing asked .

” It’s a serious question: where can you go in society and scream?”

So everyone find a place to scream. It’s a natural human reaction to the dilemma we are in.

In fact, Let’s find a place right now let’s scream.

Welcome to Esalen everyone

Thank you.

