

1. European Focusing Fair EFF, Hohenwart Forum/Pforzheim, Germany 2014

Care and Share – Inspirations from Conditions of “Ubuntu”/Workshop

"I am person through other persons" (umntu ngumntu ngabantu). The essence of the traditional African moral concept of "Ubuntu" offers high chances of development even for us european focusers. The "Ubuntu" way of life focuses on interconnectedness. The "Self" is constituted not by the individual sphere of competence but by the relations between. Sensitive listening to understand not to reply, interpersonal responsibility and solidarity come first. To put it into Kantian credo: "I participate therefore I am". In this workshop we explore and share moments of bodily space-in-space experiences that open up to the non-material order in us and among us to get a taste of how "Ubuntu" inspired atmosphere might feel like.

U B U N T U crossing F O C U S I N G – Work in Progress

The meaning of UBUNTU:

There is no fixed definition of ubuntu. Definitions and perceptions of ubuntu differ but are interlinked. Still they can be controversial. The different perceptions relate to different perspectives as illustrated in the parable of the 5 blind men and the elephant (K GALUSHI DRAKE KOKA 2002).

Ubuntu can unfold in full meaning when linguistically separating the prefix “Ubu” (the abstract) from the root “ntu” (ancestor). Ubuntu hereby means “the heritage of the ancestors becomes principle of life”.

Umntu ngumntu ngabantu (Xhosa): I am person through other persons

Ubuntu ungamuntu ngabanye abantu (Xhosa): people are people through other people

I am we - I am because we are – we are because I am (GODUKA)

We are all related because I am in you and you are in me

I need you to be human. And you need me to be human. Together we complete each other (TUTU)

Regarding oneself as the observe side of reality to which one’s neighbour is the reverse (GODUKA)

African humanism, humanness, essence or fullness of humanity (BROODRYK, TUTU, SHUTTLE)

Interconnectedness, Unity in diversity (GODUKA), Bringing together in unity and creativity (MOTE NDASAH) (see his paper for EFF)

Process and philosophy of African heritage and life which the Nguni and Sotho translate into action

A non racial philosophy and value system of tolerance and compassion experienced in action that accepts that mankind is one integrated whole comprising of varied racial groups

Comprehensive ancient African world view based on values of intense humanness, caring, sharing, respect, compassion, consensus and associated values containing a highly spiritual dimension that determines and influences everything a person thinks, says and does (BROODRYK)

“For the Zulu, Sotho and Xhosa to live together, work together and pool their resources to solve common problems is what “ubuntu” (Xhosa) and “botho” (Sotho) regard as the moral thing to do. To act as ubuntu and botho teach, is in African eyes, to develop along their own lines.” (GODUKA, “Affirming Unity in Diversity in Education. Healing with Ubuntu”, 1999)

UBUNTU and FOCUSING:

Non focusers: Please visit www.focusing.org, homepage of The International Focusing Institute New York TFI

UBUNTU

a philosophy and a practise
 moral concept (moral:
 what can be put into in action)
 interconnectedness (IC)
 the one makes the difference
 explaining IC through life energy
 IC of humans, animals, plants, stones, ancestors
 intergroup communication
 consensus of voices for decision making
 completing and bringing to one
 ongoing life energy
 past, present, future is ONE time

FOCUSING

a philosophy and a practise
 experiential concept (experiential:
 what can be bodily experienced)
 interconnectedness (IC)
 each part has to be heard
 explaining IC through living interaction
 IC of humans, animals, plants
 inner relation communication
 consensus of voices to go further
 bringing to the whole of it
 ongoing living process
 past, present, future is ONE time

FOCUSING: Body as body-environment and “body-space-in-space”

Following GENDLIN, AKEMI, MERLEAU-PONTY and SCHMITZ the terms “body” and “bodily” have six theoretical implications:

<1> What we call „bodily“ is defined as “feeling without seeing, toughing or listening” (SCHMITZ 1985), including the concept of space (SCHMITZ 1982) with four dimensions of space (SCHMITZ 1998): Space as elementary space of the body, space as definition of placement and distances, space as space of emotions, and space as space embedded by cultural feelings.

<2> The body and our bodily living is a matrix or basic scheme for our understanding of room and space *in general*, as MERLEAU-PONTY (“ Phänomenologie der Wahrnehmung”, 1986) says: „Der Leib ist ... die Matrix für jeden anderen existierenden Raum.“ (The body is ... the matrix for any other space existing).

<3> There is the body as a living thing placed in the outer room with its concrete extensions and our personal feelings of extension and space (GENDLIN 2010).

<4> We experience bodily space as a space of its own, e.g. the space “inside” of our body where we can “sit down” to calmly “listen to” and feel at home with our felt senses. GENDLIN (1996) says, „Your knee is a space where you can live and dwell very well”.

<5> The body being unseparated from its living situations is unseparated bodily “inside-outside”. According to IKEMI the “internal” and “external” spaces of the body are metaphors of no real existence. IKEMI (2011) asks: „Where are you when not inside or outside your body?”

<6> As persons we are the living body unseparated from its environment. As the body *is* its own environment, it is its unlimited aroundness, and thereby living interaction first place. GENDLIN (2010) explains: “The concept of the body we talk about is a structure in space, a machine in front of us. And sure the body is like that, but the body is not ONLY like that, we also live in it, right? So there is also the same body that is the structure in space. I call it interaction first, by which I mean, there is the body and environment together BEFORE you have a separate body. And environment meaning aroundness. Before you have a separate aroundness, you have an interaction that is called living, and this process is earlier than the structure. The process makes the structure”.

UBUNTU, participating, body-space-in-space and ATMOSPHERE:

The “we” of Ubuntu, that is our participating as “I am we - I am because we are – we are because I am”, can be experienced through atmospheres. Atmospheres are expansive holistic expressions of phenomenons. They are unconcrete, vague and spread into what is called aroundness or environment (“Umraum”/space around)(FUCHS 2000). Moods referring to bodily felt “Befindlichkeit” (GENDLIN: “how-are-youness”) and atmospheres are not easy to differentiate. “We sense a special atmosphere in a room, we participate in this atmosphere, and at the same time we ourselves are in tune to this atmosphere from the inside” (FUCHS “Leib, Raum und Person. Entwurf einer phänomenologischen Anthropologie”, 2000). Being tuned in from the inside, our felt sense refers to the unseparatedness of “Befindlichkeit” and environment. “By this our space of experiencing *is* the quality of the expressive atmosphere to be perceived” (FUCHS 2000).

UBUNTU FOCUSING

Ubuntu Focusing: The way of doing Focusing inspired by Ubuntu, embedded in the spirit of Ubuntu, facilitating Ubuntu experiences and fostering Ubuntu way of life.

Ubuntu Focusing is the result of a paradigm shift. Instead of asking: “How do I feel towards this situation, all in all, as a whole?” we ask: “How does *the whole of* it show what is missing here, all in all, by any felt sense responding from anyone participating?” That what is missing is the (... ...) to complete or go further as a whole: As group or community or focusing tandem (focusing partnership). What any participant (or participant imagined/skype participant) is going to bring in is an expression of this missing part and therefore beyond valuation. It is expression of wholeness (unity) though it is unique (diversity). It is free from value as part of the heritage of human equality: We all come from the same source of living.

The paradigm shift: “We are ONE by nature (bodily, socially and spiritually). We never have been separated from each other in our unique varieties” demands a special kind of questioning in focusing groups.

Ubuntu oriented Focusing questions:

I. What of the whole wants to occur now?

- How does this occurrence show up in your body?

II. How does environment (aroundness, atmosphere) feel like now?

III. What part is missing to complete as a whole?

(alternative: What part needs to be weaved in here to complete?)

- What does the missing part long for?

IV. How does your body want to participate in the whole?

V. What does it need for connectedness to show up?

- If body nature could express freely, how would connectedness express itself now?

V. What does the whole need to be contributed by you?

VII. What wants to be contributed that only your neighbour can bring in?

- Let your body feel what your neighbour's body brings up into occurrence.

- Ask your body what it needs for your *neighbour's* body to bring it up freshly.

- What does your neighbour's body want as support from *you*?

VIII. What makes a difference to fulfilment now?

UBUNTU: Why cross a concept that is embedded in the culture of the indigenes of Africa with Focusing, a philosophy coming from European and US background? - Personal statement -

In 2011 Peggy Gabo Ntseane, professor of adult education, University of Botswana, was speaking about "Bildung" (Learning) on a panel during the 1st conference on transformative learning at University of Freiburg/Germany. As she said, "we are not interested in highly sophisticated theories. What we do is to teach our students how to practise Ubuntu, this interconnectedness of humans and environment", it hit me bodily in the inside. Here was something that made totally sense and seemed to link to Focusing. Here was something that was so right and felt alright.

The word "ubuntu" opened up a door to a dream (2000) that had told me, "crossing psychology, sociology and religious pedagogic is your field of work". The word "ubuntu" seemed to symbolize *something* of this crossing. The word "ubuntu" also seemed to fit to my deepest intention of teaching focusing. This intention was put into picture by a dream (2008) telling me to teach focusing as "Ecumenism". My understanding of "Ecumenism" includes, "bringing together various groups or people with highly differentiated believes to share a space of sacred sphere".

Transformative learning includes a change in cognitive schemes. A structural shift has to take place that affects the person on every level of existence. I hope very much that Ubuntu offers such a paradigm shift to us Europeans when related to focusing practise.

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