

'Freerangin' on ----'Who do you think-----?'

'To be your true self is the hardest thing' - so wrote a well-known female author quite a few years ago. Back along then social restrictions appeared to have been quite stringent, and particularly maybe for women. As an example, for instance, apparently church organisations used to decree exactly when married couples could 'physically cohabit'. Might, though, being, and becoming one's 'fuller' 'true' self be central for some to achieving 'life satisfaction', and as such could be important to those 'freerangers' interested in exploring themselves and their worlds - ?

Whilst some - many? - might hold individual development and fulfillment to be important, plainly society factors are also of importance, 'no man being an island', as it were, and given the existence of 'society', it would then seem that a working balance could be needed between society's needs and the needs of individuals.

Maybe the situation could be likened overall to an orchestra, in which to achieve a 'harmonic whole' each individual instrument needs to have opportunity to make its unique and full contribution, from those of 'big' powerful instruments to those of 'small' delicate instruments and with need then for a 'conductor' commanding the attention and respect of all 'instruments', to regulate and organise the diverse array of instruments so that each can play its rightful role (i.e. the government in society - ?).

Times change, but the question as to how many restrictions and pressures potentially inhibit people becoming their 'fuller/fullest' selves (therefore allowing their 'fullest' contribution) may still be pertinent, particularly for independent-minded 'freerangers', given the presumption that they are likely to be amongst those who want to explore and develop their fuller, multi-dimensional natures.

'Airwave bombardment----?'

Bombarded from many sides - TV, radio, computer, mail, for instance - with 'conditioning' adverts, subject to power plays and pressures from large, powerful organisations, increasingly controlled by quality procedures, targets, financial incentives and such in the workplace, influenced and affected by interventionist 'Big' government cultures and living in times with powerful cultural conditioning (eg. the numerous TV programmes linked to money making/ wealth seeking) - maybe in these times the 'power poor' individual has never been under so much pressure, direct and indirect, and hence maybe has more struggle to 'find' her/his self - ? If 'knowing yourself', as Socrates had it, is a key to human satisfaction/fulfillment, then it appears the individual could be up against it and an ultimately satisfying life could prove to be ever more elusive - ?

Some, for instance, have charged 'dumbing down' cultural materialistically-orientated trends with heavy emphasis on commercialism for producing individual 'unquesting' effects, limiting then the individual to his/her own 'small pool'. George Ritzer, for instance in his graphically-entitled book 'The Macdonaldisation of Society' argues that overall cultural levels and standards have lowered in this recent 'materialistic' age, and those interested in energy and energy qualities have maintained that currently energy quality levels (eg, energy wavelengths) are relatively low.

'Being oneself' and being able to develop one's fuller potential may though be of the essence to many freerangers. It could be an individual choice to take for instance a harder road, with more obstacles and challenges maybe, and with a form possibly of 'delayed gratification', going for a longer-term fulfillment,

rather than, say, any 'instant happiness'. Finding the 'road', too, may be part of it - as the German-originated saying has it :

'It's no use running if on the wrong road'

'Signposting-----?'

What, though, might the 'fuller development' of people consist of? Charles Handy, a well-known business guru, developed the concept for instance, of 'honourable individualism', in which people developed and matured with 'good' experience to the point of having their own individual 'authentic' strength and values, then accepting and practising their own brand of self-responsibility.

Abraham Maslow, allegedly the first psychologist to research the needs and attributes of healthy, productive, 'well-adjusted' people, came up with his well-known 'hierarchy of human needs' template, in which people have base-level survival needs such as food, heat and shelter, and then 'progress' up a 'ladder' to satisfying 'higher' level needs which included social needs such as social contribution and social recognition, with the pinnacle level being 'self-actualisation' (i.e. reaching fullest potential), highlighting that the 'full development' level is reached via travelling the full 'need' range.

Interestingly, Maslow did not suggest that such a need range depended on human qualities, such as, say, intelligence, rather that people if left relatively unhindered, might find their own 'levels' to fulfill their fuller range of needs. He also identified two key aspects: that human needs were 'layered' and complex, and that they did not always necessarily directly involve money. Has today's culture though, for instance, then over-simplified matters to a mainly money blueprint, limiting then fuller development potential via insufficient focus, for instance, say on higher 'social' and 'personal development' need levels - ?

People involved in the field of 'personal spirituality' have at times asserted that humans need to 'take the high road' if they are to discover meaning and life purpose and that the highest level can then consist of experiencing a joy and bliss available on attaining to an 'awareness' condition of spiritual 'oneness', a 'universal' experience in which the individual no longer lives in 'existential separateness'. Maslow himself was apparently surprised to discover many reporting cases in the USA of individuals' 'peak' experiences of intense joy and bliss during his researches, which presumably could be linked to the 'oneness well-being' state documented by the 'personal spiritualists'.

'Tidal trends-----'

Imagine though saying, for instance, in modern times, 'but I don't want to be a millionaire!'. It probably wouldn't go down as the most popular statement and quite possible cause some perplexity. And yet, this is exactly as the 'self-actualising' spec (see below) has it - the developed 'self-actualised' person is not 'enculturised', and has the inner strength to withstand any peer group pressures.

Nevertheless to go against the tide can take some doing, and in some cultures there may be real dangers in expressing alternative opinions. Even in the 'freeworld' there's been the phenomenon of 'if you're not with us your against us', hardly encouraging expression of other views. Some, though, who have resisted cultural trends in recent times and not, for instance, over-borrowed to the point of subsequently losing their homes, may now be thankful they worked things out their own way.

'Modern man----?'

Modern psychologists (eg. Prof. Cary Cooper et al) have since adapted Maslow's 'self-actualisation' concept to 'modern man', and come up with a 'self-actualisation' spec which appears to be pretty demanding, emphasising though maybe that there could be quite a bit to be won by the individual on the 'personal development 'wising up'' path, and conversly maybe, there could be quite a bit to forego on the 'dumbing down' path, as examples of the actual spec indicate:

- ACCEPTS SELF AND OTHERS INCLUDING IMPERFECTIONS
- IS AUTONOMOUS AND REMAINS TRUE TO SELF, IN SPITE OF PRESSURES TO CONFORM
- CAN BE SPONTANEOUS, ESPECIALLY IN THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS
- PERCEIVES PEOPLE AND EVENTS ACCURATELY, WITHOUT DUE INTERFERENCE FROM OWN PRECONCEPTIONS
- HAS FIRM STANDARDS AND VALUES, AND SENSE OF RIGHT AND WRONG, THOUGH THESE MAY DIFFER FROM OTHERS
- IS NOT UNDULY INFLUENCED OR TRAPPED BY THE PREVAILING CULTURE

Given the accent in recent times on, for instance, entrepreneurialism, and the seeming degree of enthusiastic uptake of it, such a trend itself could perhaps potentially act as an inhibitor to self-discovery/development not only due to the built-up power of, say, current peer opinion and pressure, but also by the degree to which it is projected by the modern tide of a considerable battery of media sources, against which 'paddling a loan canoe' may well be a formidable task. 'Self-conditioning' could also play its part, in that presumably one of the lures of entrepreneurialism could be the 'pots of dosh' syndrome, underpinned by a seemingly strong 'mass' adoption of wealth seeking.

As before, standing up and shouting out 'I don't want to be a millionaire!' may not receive the most unanimous welcome, and yet presumably many do lead satisfying and fulfilling live without necessarily being devoted to wealth seeking. Maybe these are folk who've bye-passed the modern avid profit-seeking approach, concentrating rather, say, on giving good value and services to others, maybe not then necessarily hitting the 'max profit' spots, but on the other hand, having steadier performing enterprises with more 'natural' repeat business, and achieving more sustained profit performance over time and hence the longer-term - ?

'Wising up-----'

Such a 'self-actualisation' spec as above could be said to represent a fairly advanced situation of someone who's developed over time and with experience, using a fair bit of self-discipline along the way. Presumably such an individual has also chosen this route of 'wising up' rather than following any 'dumbing down' trend, and if the latter is a prevalent trend, then might be a relatively rare beast in such a culture, a situation which could then be used to argue that the 'wising up' culture is not suited as a general culture, as the spec is too onerous.

Such a judgement, though, might then be made from a less informed position , given that the culture in place has not necessarily been facilitating the 'wising up' position. The increase in the 'control' culture in the workplace has

been used as an example, with employees having to respond to factors external to themselves - social pressure, financial inducements, quality control procedures, target gearing, use of management authority - rather than from their own internal motivation drives. Such emphasis on the individual needing to respond to external factors and prompts, with corresponding less self-motivated time and opportunity, could then represent in itself an inhibiting factor to self-discovery and development.

'Appraisal assessment-----'

'Freerangers' perhaps relate particularly strongly to internal motivation and 'wising up' work and culture conditions, and any diminishment of them could then represent a layer of potential cultural inhibitors to fuller personal development. Whilst the restriction of 'people potential' might impact negatively over the longer-term on a society's overall productivity, it could likely also be of potential importance to the individuals concerned, and particularly maybe if they are of the 'freerange' inclination.

'Forewarned being forearmed', it's therefore not necessarily too bad an idea to assess the current culture in terms of its potential 'fuller development' inhibitor factors, if they exist in the seemingly 'go, go, go' entrepreneurial modern culture. Such a 'forward thrust' geared culture could in itself, though, carry 'inhibitors' within it, in that continual forward movement maybe at times prove to not always be necessarily the most vital or wisest course of action.

'Backward forward thrust-----?'

If, for instance, such a relentlessly on-going philosophy is applied to a business, as it can often appear to be, there can then arise the danger of it becoming a fixed, 'automatic' key objective area, with the result that, for instance, business expansion could then be pursued in unconducive economic conditions, resulting in potential business 'un-success'. Objectives would appear to have a dynamic element and as such, priorities need periodically setting according not only to fulfill the needs of the people involved, but also to cope with current and likely future conditions.

Maybe, too, periods of 'treading water' and stability are also needed for people to remain secure and 'grounded' - ? In business again, at times periods of stability, contraction and/or reformation could be needed, which trends of on-going and relentless growth might not necessarily deliver.

'Minority mass-----?'

By definition, societies though, not unaturally, tend to operate on a mass basis, developing mass standards and objectives. Considering the fact that the agencies 'operating' a society are political parties and that any political party in power could in fact have a minority support of the population, the scope for such mass generated values and objectives not necessarily particularly suiting significant proportions of people could be considerable, resulting then in another potentially inhibiting factor.

'Massness' or 'collective culture' itself can no doubt be a powerful 'conforming' factor, it needing often considerable personal and individual strength (formed via experience-?) to be able to resist being swept along by the powerful on-rushing tide of 'cultural conformity' and mass momentum (it's also recently been called 'human homogeneity'). 'Might', though, may not necessarily and 'automatically' always be right, and in the freeworld, the individual has the right to think and decide for themselves, as many undoubtedly do, the process of which could then be said to be a potential source of creativity. In practice, there are organisations of course not necessarily fully caught up in any cultural aggressive drive for short-term profits, and which act for instance in the cause of longer-term care and husbandry (research, for instance, indicated that many smaller rural businesses operated in a complex fashion via

multi objectives and priorities, including an array of longer-term objectives such as 'caring for the environment', passing on key resources to upcoming generations (eg. Such as land) in good order.

'Honourable individuality' inhibitors-----?'

The 'forward thrust' era of business growth alluded to above, 'driven along' by its drivers, would then appear to have developed some limitations, as are currently being seen in various ways. From a people perspective, research has indicated that many have felt 'switched off' rather than 'on', pointing to the fact that the current 'control' systems mentioned above, offer them only negative feelings of not being valued and of even exploitation. Such workplace situations may then not particularly suit those ('freerangers'-?) who are seeking fuller expression and personal growth and satisfaction in life - ?

The strong accent on business growth mentioned above then appears to have resulted in the emergence of the 'large, powerful commercial organisation' syndrome, with them flexing their competitive power muscles in ways that have, it's now being increasingly recognised, impacted negatively on the micro-organism that is the individual (eg. the large-scale mis-selling of PPI insurance), and seemingly without over limitation from successive governments, representing then a further potential inhibitor factor.

'Winners-----and losers - ?'

Aggressive selling practices , sometimes providing misleading and confusing information, mis-selling services to people who won't be able to benefit from them, colluding with other large players to fix prices, and of course, the 'go-our-own-big bucks-way' of the financial sector, along with the 'big' bonuses and pay of those in power, have all been tasked as spelling a culture in which those not in a power position i.e. so-called 'ordinary people', are probably likely to be the less benefitted, as exemplified by their restrictions on pay in the 'austerity' period (whilst 'top' peoples' pay appear to forge formidably ahead).

Such conditions, allied to 'uncaring' workplace situations - one large corporate organisation for instance is being currently investigated for the large number of suicides amongst its employees - leads to the feeling for some - many?- that it's a pretty hostile, cold and uncaring 'Goliath' current culture, in spite of any politicians' 'Big Society'-type concepts, and not one particularly then conducive to individual growth and well-being, inhibitive then in its nature (such a 'cold comfort' culture has been predicted by several writers egs. Robert Pirsig 'Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance', Gary Zukav 'Seat of the Soul').

One analysis could suggest that the outcome of any competitivised money-focused culture would be a low-care, rationalised, power-based society wherein people are defined by externalities such as wealth and power and in which more individual-based conditions such as human values, intuition and personal spirituality might by definition find less space. Such a scenario could then be amplified by the degree of 'out-for-self' focus within it, implying then less focus on 'beyond the self' areas, and therefore a reduced ability to then take on board 'reality' situations, particularly if the 'reality' news is not over-conducive.

'The 'Big Beast' free-market jungle-----?'

The rise in large powerful firms of then 'oligopolistic' nature (eg. UK energy firms, food retailing firms), appears to imply that there's been a significant rise in large firm power and influence, moving away from one of the basic premises of the underlying basis of current commercial culture; the free market principle of many buyers and sellers, with none then powerful enough to over-

influence the market conditions.

There are, for instance, very few periods in the year when trading is not prevalent, emphasising the importance placed on it. The rationale of 'economies of scale', beloved of the larger commercial concerns is hard to argue against if purely the one-dimensional economic view is employed, but what of any potential wider effects? Currently for instance, in the UK dairy industry, small dairy producers would appear to be being squeezed by the larger and more powerful commercial firms they deal with, and for whom 'small' may be against their 'economies of scale' grain.

'D v. G'-----?

The demise of such small independent operators, Davids facing Goliath's, replaced as seems to be the plan by large-scale American style factory milk producing units (one on TV recently in the USA had thirty thousand cows all under roofs for most of the year), appears then to produce a one-dimensional style of result, and whilst economies of scale might have been gained, what will be lost?

Independent operating people instrumental in rural community, environmentally-friendly milk production, particularly in terms of animals being able to live 'naturalistic' lifestyles - a triumph of 'quantity' over 'quality', with reduced scope and opportunity for smaller-scale independent living - ?

'Human bio-diversity-----?'

'Mass' collective cultures can't by definition, easily cater specifically for individuals and their unique mix of priorities, from the big-time player interested in big money, down to the semi self-sufficients living in their own eco oasis and minimally reliant on money, to the care-profession professional interested in giving professional service, to the independent craftsman with limited money interest but maximum interest in creating beautiful objects; just a very few examples of the bio-diversity of human life in reality.

Such human bio-diversity is presumably the reason for that old saying 'the best government is the one that governs least', recognising maybe that for most people the best course of action is to let them get on with it - they know their own minds and objectives best. Recent culture operators in the UK, though, appear to have taken more of a hands-on, control approach generating cultural conforming objectives, particularly in the area of significant financial gain, which whilst maybe suited to some, but not maybe others looking to take a more complex multi-dimensioned life route, broadly following, maybe, a Maslow-type pattern, culminating in gaining the 'fuller potential' position.

'Free-range living - one answer-----?'

If there's any reality in such an analysis, which broadly boils down to the micro-small individual's unique pattern of needs getting 'more limited' shrift in a 'largist' power-based culture, and assuming that built-up power and influence of larger-scale organisations is unlikely to suddenly diminish, rather the opposite, the option left for the micro-small power bereft individual interested in their own possible potential could be to then tread more her or his 'own path', assuming too that the required degree of individual freedom can survive and thrive into a 'largist' future - ? (remember Huxley's 'de-individualised' 'Brave New World' ?)

For those for whom a fast-paced materialistically-based culture suits, then alternative approaches will likely seem unneeded. For those for whom such a culture may be a little on the 'limited-dimensioned' side, then alternative approaches whether full or partial, may be of some use in helping them unleash their fuller selves. Some, for instance, those coming to retirement or for whom

early retirement is a possibility may be able to take the fuller approach to creating conditions to suit their particular needs, as many of course do,

'In practice-----'

D and G had lived most of their lives in the southern counties of the UK and on holiday had fallen in love with the quiet, tranquillity and untrammelled space of the south Shropshire hills. On retirement they were able to sell their southern house well, to then buy a small, fairly remote farm in south Shropshire, on which they practised their further passion for rare-breed sheep. Their business did not have to have a profit target, they were content to cover costs, having their pensions to live on, which freed them from having to follow a commercial track, giving them a relaxed environment in which to carry out their desired lifestyle.

S had farmed commercially for most of his life, 'tied to a cow's tail' as the saying has it. Whilst he enjoyed his dairy herd, he found the physical effort becoming more demanding as he got older, and with pressure on the price he was getting for his product, milk, the rewards dwindling. He decided on a fairly wide-sweeping plan of action. He sold 75% of his cows to other dairy farmers, keeping the remainder to operate a small beef suckler cow herd and to make small amounts of 'bespoke' cheese. The land 'released' due to the lowered cattle numbers he rented out to other local farmers, whilst also developing a touring caravan site on a small area of it. The considerable capital raised from not only the sale of cattle but also the sale of milk quota he re-invested in property to rent. Once he was sorted, his yearly profit proved to be increased, his business was more diverse and more risk-averse, and his lifestyle greatly less pressurised and improved.

A run-down farm in a marginal UK area bought relatively cheaply formed the basis of a group's measures to take more 'freerange' control over their circumstances, values and their 'mini society'. They were able to pool their resources to buy the farm and then create independent living units from splitting the farmhouse and converting older, redundant barns. They operated as a semi-cooperative community, with the farm as their basic communal chief essential resource, providing food and fuel (wood, small straw bales, wind and solar powered electricity), with each adult member of the self-contained community committing themselves to two and a half days a week work on the collective farm (more if they chose), leaving a useful amount of weekly time to follow individual interests/needs (one couple, for instance, ran a small fishing boat operation two/three days a week). Decisions regarding the collective farm were made collectively, mainly on a consensus basis, which also helped foster senses of belonging and contribution, amplifying then a live social sense of community.

Such a 'micro' community obviously took time and effort to set up, with the community members generally claiming that the enhanced senses of both independence and community, together with a feeling of 'practical' security, had made their considerable efforts worthwhile, and that overcoming any hiccups along the way had in the end made them stronger. A striking feeling amongst them was that their operation gave them an active sense and experience of community, which they felt had been slipping away in their previous 'conventional' wider society existence.

'Back to Abe-----'

According to the Maslow-type 'ascending ladder' view of human needs approach any potential 'barrier' to the satisfaction of ascending needs, social or

individual, could then represent a significant potential barrier/inhibitor to the individual ('freeranger-?) interested in their own wider and fuller development, potentially restricting their own harvest of self-realisation and self-fulfillment. This in turn could then support the argument that the would-be fuller-developing freeranger then may have to think more 'non-mass' and pluck up some courage to tread, even a little, their own path, and to decide for themselves, which then in turn fits the older eastern model of personal spiritual development:

'mass > individual > (personal) spiritual'

the last stage of which maybe coinciding with Maslow's pinnacle-need level 'self-realisation' ideas - ?

'Self un-determining-----?'

A further modern cultural development maybe supporting the notion of the need to 'tread one's own path' could be that of the nature of the modern workplace, in which, for instance, motivational leadership' appears to be a lapsed art, which may not be too surprising when the trends are examined. Money, for instance, having taken centre stage in the modern culture, has also perhaps unsurprisingly become more prominent in the workplace, via the use of financial incentivisation, which seems to have developed hand-in-hand with the development of the use of control measures in the workplace: quality spec systems, social pressurisation systems (eg. league tables), target-orientated work control systems, along with simple control management practices (eg. one national retail chain reportedly introduced anytime staff body searches).

The sum effect of such measures appear to be that the workplace has become significantly less of a place wherein employees operate from their own motivational efforts (i.e. 'internal' forces), to a place wherein employees have to operate to influences and authority beyond themselves (i.e. to 'external' forces).

'Mining under-----?'

Whilst such a situation could negatively affect people within it in terms of reducing their own senses of self-responsibility, self-integrity and even their 'sense of self' (and may help to explain why survey's have shown large proportions of employees being disaffected and feeling 'unvalued'), the question also remains as to whether such workplace conditions act as inhibitors and barriers to people being able to experience their fuller 'true' potential?

Given that lowered levels of self-responsibility (and associated trust levels) could presumably, lead to lower self-esteem levels, and both then to lower motivation levels (which the 'control' workplace culture may have already diminished), then the conclusion may well have to be that such an 'externally' (i.e. on people) acting workplace could then act as a potentially barrier-ing and inhibiting factor to the cause of fuller, healthier, human growth potential.

'Survive---and thrive---?'

From the individual's perspective, then, especially those independently minded self-explorers ('freerangers'), there could be potentially quite a few restrictive factors operating against their self-expression and self-development needs.

'No man is', as is said, 'an island', and there presumably needs to be an effective balance between individuals' needs and society's needs. The current situation, though, as commented on above, could seem to be facilitating the larger-scale needs rather more than of smaller-scale i.e. the individual, which might also imply a loss of productivity to society as a whole in terms of

individual creativity and motivation, and as some have warned, potentially even leading to a diminution of freeworld individual rights.

The individual, though, still has freewill choice, and can counter any perceived threats with a variety of strategies : 'playing the system', but not being 'of it', developing a 'retreat' system, for example(s): via art, music etc. via their own premises (eg. eco micro-holding 'oasis'), via independent study/research, via 'mini community' creation, via own-run enterprise - the list could be potentially endless.

And might the independence, motivation, energy and drive engendered by such measures then be invaluable in terms of surviving and thriving, in a 'largist' world, which from the analysis above, could seem to contain elements potentially un-nurturing of individual potential - ?