

## Centre for Socio-Analysis



*Brian McMinn 1973*

## A Socio-Analytic Program for Professional Development and Training

### “Exploring the Power of Consultant Presence: Consulting in the Now” Workshop

**Dates: 25 – 27 August, 2010**

**64 Carlton Street, Carlton, Victoria 3053**

#### **Issues:**

**“Outcomes” as a Defence against the Anxiety of the Present. A Reflection by Alastair Bain, Program Consultant.**

As Consultants we are familiar with being asked “Well what are the outcomes?” or if engaged on a project the Consultant is there “to deliver the outcomes”. Somehow the intermediate step from the present to the future is missing, as is the uncertainty of any human endeavour. The future is “magically” brought into the present and it’s the Consultant’s responsibility to deliver. Note the word deliver – it’s as though you already have it in your hands – there’s no need for any experience, just the outcomes please!

In this vignette which is a day to day experience of consultants and managers the present moment is denied and replaced with a magical wish for a present moment in the future which is overflowing with outcomes. How does one get there?

I am not sure one does. There is nowhere to get to, for actually all we have is the present. A projected future in the form of desired “outcomes” is supposedly better than the present

or one wouldn't want them. But what is the present like? What actually is going on at the moment for the people who would be involved in the outcomes? Is it so bad that we have to leap to the future and the outcomes for fear of exploring the present? What is so frightening about the present?

Part of the fear, I think, is the dimly perceived anxiety that to work in the present is to be open to transformation, and uncertainty as to what that will bring. The "certainty" of the outcomes, however much fantasy, is preferred.

As Consultants we are seduced into an acceptance of the outcomes approach. A worry about losing work is behind some of it, but I think more fundamentally there is a collusion of our own time valencies to work in the past or the future with the Client's fantasies about a known desired future.

## Raison d'être

The Workshop explores how to establish a practice based in the present or now and the powerful opportunities for growth and transformation available to individuals, teams and whole organisations when we do so. Participants will experience what happens when we focus on what is occurring in the moment in a group and why it is difficult to stay in the here and now, what we fear and what new insight emerges when we do stay focused on the present rather than fleeing to the past or future. It will explore opportunities for using one's own reactions and feelings – how one is being made to feel as a consultant in the moment – as a powerful source of insight and understanding of the dynamics of what is happening "in the moment" with an individual or group.

The Workshop draws on ideas and experiences from Group Relations work where groups and a Consultant often have the task: "To study the behaviour of the group in the here and now". The anxiety that is aroused through an invitation to work in the present in a study group, and the defences against this anxiety, are explored in propositions at the end of this note. Group Relations Conferences are frequently regarded as transformational by participants and this is perhaps due to establishing a culture of being in the present, which is embodied in the presence of the Consultant.

Wilfred Bion, whose studies of group behaviour led to this way of studying groups and Group Relations Conferences devoted to this, later wrote in "**Attention and Interpretation**" about the need for the psychoanalyst to eschew memory (past), desire (future), and be "O" which is the present (and which he identified with Ultimate Reality).

The transformational power of being that arises from a flow of awareness in the present, the Now as Eckhart Tolle puts it, is fundamental to the mystic side of most religions: Advaita Vedanta, Zen Buddhism, Christianity, and Sufism.

The Workshop is based on the hypothesis that the consultant, through abiding in the present creates a field of awareness and energy that is potentially transforming for his client or group (and self). The potentiality becomes actuality through consultant and client, or group, continuing to abide in the present in the work they do.

## Workshop Primary Task

To establish a practice – consultancy, managerial, or professional – based in the present.

## Membership

Most managers and professionals have a consultancy aspect to their roles. The Program is for consultants, managers, and professionals e.g. accountants, doctors, teachers, lawyers, HR specialists who wish to strengthen their capacity to work in the *present*.

While some members may wish to have training in socio-analysis, and use this learning in their practice, we are assuming there are others who don't wish to train as socio-analysts but who wish for professional development to complement their professional knowledge. This Program is for both groups.

It is limited to 10 members.

## Possible Outcomes

1. Bringing work to life.
2. Increased capacity to work in the *present*.
3. Insight into work issues.
4. Deeper understanding of the socio-analytic approach<sup>1</sup>.
5. Development of consultancy capacities.
6. Development of observational capacities.
7. Deeper insight into group dynamics and one's part in the process.
8. Some integration of the socio-analytic approach in one's work.
9. Moving from a "closed" minded position of knowing and diagnosing to an approach of deep listening and wonder.

## Events

### 1. Plenaries

The Workshop begins with a Plenary for introductions; an overview of the Programme and Events; a description of the mode of learning (experiential and didactic); a discussion of entering the Programme, and expectations. At the conclusion of Day 1 and Day 2 there is a Plenary to reflect on the experience of the Program. There is a Plenary at the end of the Workshop to review the experience and learning that has been gained.

### 2. Study Groups

All members together with a consultant meet with the task "To study the

---

<sup>1</sup> Socio-Analysis is "the activity of exploration, consultancy, and action research which combines and synthesises methodologies and theories, derived from psycho-analysis, group relations, social systems thinking, organisation behaviour, and social dreaming" (Bain, 1999).

behaviour of the group as it occurs". There are four Study Group sessions of 1 hour during the Workshop. Each Study Group is followed by a quarter hour reflection on the dynamics.

### 3. Work Role Drawings

Members are invited to do a drawing of their experience of their role at work. The drawings are then shared with the group.

### 4. Consultancy Skills Groups

Consultancy Skills Groups provide opportunities for Members to explore real life work issues, take up the Consultant role, and gain observational and feedback experience. Roles are rotated at each Consultancy Skills Group Session.

Members will work in two small groups each with a Program consultant. There are 4 Consultancy Skills Group sessions during the Workshop.

### 5. Valencies Exploration

On Day 2 of the Workshop there is an opportunity to explore one's valency for working in the past, present and future. This will include reflections on the role of time in one's life experiences, and what one may hold on behalf of a group e.g. family, work organisation.

### 6. Seminars

There will be a Seminar led by the two Consultants on Day 1 and Day 3 on the theme of Consultant Presence using our experiences from consultancy and action research projects.

### 7. Individual Reflection

There is a one quarter hour period each day for individual reflection on the Program.

## **Program Timetable**

25 August

9.00 – 9.45am	Plenary
9.50 – 10.50	Study Group (1)
10.50 – 11.05	Study Group Dynamics
11.05 – 11.30	Tea / Coffee Break
11.30 – 1.00	Work Role Drawings
1.00 – 2.15	Lunch
2.15 – 3.30	Consultancy Skills Group (1)
3.30 - 3.45	Tea / Coffee Break
3.45 – 4.45	Seminar – Consultant Presence (1)
4.45 – 5.00	Individual Reflection
5.00 – 5.15pm	Plenary

## 26 August

9.00 – 10.00am	Study Group (2)
10.00 – 10.15	Study Group Dynamics
10.15 – 10.45	Tea / Coffee Break
10.45 – 12.15	Time Valencies Exploration
12.15 – 1.30	Lunch
1.30 – 3.00	Consultancy Skills Group (2)
3.00 – 3.15	Tea / Coffee Break
3.15 – 4.15	Study Group (3)
4.15 – 4.30	Study Group Dynamics
4.30 - 4.45	Individual Reflection
4.45 – 5pm	Plenary

## 27 August

9.00 – 10am	Study Group (4)
10.00 – 10.15	Study Group Dynamics
10.15 – 10.45	Tea / Coffee Break
10.45 – 12.15	Consultancy Skills Group (3)
12.15 – 1.30	Lunch
1.30 – 2.30	Seminar – Consultant Presence (2)
2.35 – 4.00	Consultancy Skills Group (4)
4.00 – 4.15	Tea / Coffee Break
4.15 – 4.30	Individual Reflection
4.30 – 5pm	Plenary

## Arrangements

The Workshop takes place at 64 Carlton Street, Carlton, Victoria 3053. Carlton Street runs between Rathdowne and Nicholson Streets and is adjacent to Carlton Gardens. There is all day parking at the Museum car park, and locally 2 – 4 hour parking.

Tea and coffee will be provided before the start of the Workshop from 8.45am, and with fruit and light food throughout the Workshop. Members make their own arrangements for lunch. Lygon Street and Brunswick Streets are close by.

## Fee

The fee for the Workshop including tuition, articles, tea, coffee, and light refreshments is **\$1240 + GST \$124 = \$1364**

The fee is to accompany the application form. It will be refunded less \$100 in case of withdrawal before 12<sup>th</sup> August. From 12<sup>th</sup> August to 24<sup>th</sup> August the refund will be for half the fee, or the fee paid can be credited to another CSA Program. There are no refunds once the Workshop has begun.

## Consultants

**Alastair Bain** B.Sc. (Econ.) Hons (London), M.A. (Chicago)

*Alastair Bain is a socio-analyst. He trained and was a Consultant at the Tavistock Institute in London, 1968 – 1983, before returning to Australia to help found the Australian Institute of Socio-Analysis (AISA) in 1983. He was Director of AISA, 1983 – 2003, during which time he helped establish group relations work, and socio-analytic training, consultancy and action research in Australia. He was Director of the Socio-Analytic Fellowship Program - a 3 year Training Program leading to qualification as a socio-analyst. He gave the discipline of “socio-analysis” its name.*

*Alastair was a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychological Medicine at Monash University, 1986 – 1998.*

*He has worked in Australia, U.K., Europe, U.S., and more recently India. Since 2004 Alastair has been a Director of the Centre for Socio-Analysis. He is a Member of International Society for the Psychoanalytic Study of Organisations, and the Tavistock Institute Association. He has published extensively. See Articles at [www.acsa.net.au](http://www.acsa.net.au)*

**Jane Lowther** BA (Hons) Melbourne, MBA (AGSM)

*Jane is a Director of Knowledge Teams International, a small consulting practice specialising in leadership and team development, organisational change and coaching. Jane works particularly with professional and technical staff enabling them to be more effective as leaders and managers. She has been a facilitator and resident coach for senior management development programs at the Australian Graduate School of Management in Sydney, at IMD in Lausanne and is currently running a research leadership program for the L.H.Martin Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Management based at Melbourne University. Jane has been a participant in a number of reading groups and workshops exploring socio-analytic theory and practice with the Centre for Socio-Analysis and attended a group relations conference with the Grubb Institute in London in 2009. Jane is a consultant to two social dreaming events through 2010.*

## Centre for Socio-Analysis

Founded in 2004 in Melbourne, the Centre for Socio-Analysis (CSA) develops socio-analytic ideas and methods pioneered at the Tavistock Institute in London, at the Australian Institute of Socio-Analysis, and by other organisations and practitioners who work in the socio-analytic tradition pioneered by Wilfred Bion. It does this through consultancy, socio-analytic programs for professional development and training, conferences, workshops, exploration meetings, and publication. See Website [www.acsa.net.au](http://www.acsa.net.au) .

What is the psychological truth for an individual, group, organisation, or other social system? How may this best be brought to light as a means for creative transformation and

growth? Socio-analysis is grounded in wonder and exploration, and it seeks to illuminate and express the interplay of wonder and knowledge in creating new realities.

The Centre for Socio-Analysis is concerned to explore new forms of community, and organisation for our society; ways of being together, and working together, that engender the expression of human spirit, and the growth of our capacities

The Centre formally defines its primary task as: **“To increase human capacities through socio-analysis”**.

**PO BOX 1296**  
**CARLTON, VICTORIA 3053**  
**Telephone: + 61 3 9347 2053 Email: [acsa@acsa.net.au](mailto:acsa@acsa.net.au)**  
**Website: [www.acsa.net.au](http://www.acsa.net.au)**

\*

\*

\*

Some propositions for reflection for the Program. They are drawn from: Alastair Bain **“On Being Frozen in Time”**, In **“Group Relations, Management and Organization”**. Eds. French R. and Vince R. Oxford University Press, 1999.

- 1.0 Everything else is a defence against the experience of the present moment.
- 1.1 The failure to realize the experience of the present moment results in the creation of Time.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.2 When a group comes together to study the experience of the present moment, anxiety about catastrophic change is aroused.
- 1.3 The catastrophic change that is feared is being one with creation (i.e. without time).
- 1.4 Anxiety concerning catastrophic change causes a dispersal of group members into the past, the future, and what is ‘known’.
- 1.5 In this they can become frozen.
- 2.0 If someone is living in the present moment he/she is regarded as a Saint (or mystic or genius).
- 2.1 For members of the group identifying a Saint is usually a defence against the experience of the present moment.
- 2.2 ‘I’, as a group member, can now live in the past, the future, and what is ‘known’.
- 2.3 Living in the past, the future, and what is ‘known’ destroys the Saint.
- 2.4 The destruction of the Saint is the creation (again) of the ‘idea’ of the present moment.
- 2.5 When the group retraces the steps from the past, the future, and what is ‘known’, at some stage the present obtrudes.

---

<sup>1</sup> I.e. past, present, and future.

---