

The Lowenfeld World "Technique Studies in Personality

BY

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WITH A FOREWORD BY

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Foreword

by

DR. MARGARET LOWENFELD

THE function of a foreword is to create a bridge between the reader and the book. In this case it is a task both difficult and delightful, because in language of unusual ease and clarity this book tells the story of the growth of an idea and its technical execution particularly relevant to the problems of today. Let us therefore examine the somewhat curious title in some detail, because even the words "World Technique" suggest a basic paradox.

The word "World", in a dictionary sense, is the planet on which we live, with its mountains and lakes, its forests and deserts, its concourse of animals, its infinite variety of people; their societies: their ways of seeing and feeling, of wishing and working, of loving and hating, different for every living individual. "Technique", on the other hand, is a technical term, a description of disciplined ways of thinking and acting, observing and dissecting.

The combination of these two words suggests a fantasy or a dream—something far removed from the serious, difficult hard work of psychology or psychotherapy, of learning to think about and coming to understand individuals and societies.

The first word "World" arose spontaneously from a group of children of various ages with whom the writer was working during the years 1928-30. In pages 7-8, Chapter 2, the reader will find a description of the events of this period as they historically occurred, summarized from a study of the records made by Miss Ville Andersen. Two points in this summary have proved to have abiding significance. First, the fact that the term "World" arose without deliberate invention or designation by an adult. Second, that it was

after careful observation of what the children did with this material that the writer was able to perceive that this had significance as communication as well as being a form of play satisfactory to the children.

The word "Technique" has had a slow growth, coming gradually into sight through many years of watching, recording, comparing and analysing records of Worlds made by children and discussion with colleagues. As experience increased, it became evident that the World apparatus offered children an opportunity to experiment, to explore, and to create structures or series of events, carrying a meaning which became intelligible to the trained observer. Further, the making of these Worlds called out an intensity and duration of concentration in the children which was a phenomenon in itself.

As time passed, the writer found that this apparatus had the same fascination for adolescents and adults as for children of all ages: thus, the World Technique as a tool for detailed informed observation came slowly into being.

To what need of human beings does the World Technique respond? Man has many aspects within his individual self. As a social animal he has created many modes of organizing his ways of social living; the forms that these have taken bear heavily upon individual men, women and children, determining for them, in advance of their own birth, what aspects of their personalities, what potential abilities, will be able to find outlets in the society into which they are to be born.

During the past century overwhelming changes have taken place in social, international and personal living. The impact of these upon men gave rise to a realization that within the individual concepts, loves, hates, ambitions, desires and creative activities conflict with one another, so that several aspects of a man could be present within himself, even in a single moment of time whether he realizes this or not.

Many writers here, in the U.S.A., France and other Western countries, have described the resulting alienation of man from himself and from society that this situation tends to produce. From stimuli arising either from without or from within, deliberate choices

come to be forced upon the individual by the society within which he lives, and other aspects of his personality slowly sink out of sight.

In the causation of that situation two factors are operative—time and space. There is in individual lives no longer time or space or even desire for quiet growth. World events in dramatic representation or in print or moving pictures make direct impact upon eye, ear and mind of children and parents, workers and administrators, artists and teachers; *there is no escaping them except by isolation*; and our experience has taught us that this condition starts in children.

As this impact is more than many can bear, the "lonely crowd" comes into being and alienation from self becomes the recurring topic of modern thought and drama. Multiplication of mechanical means of communication makes true communication difficult, whether between peoples and peoples, man and man, or one part of man's self with the other selves within him. Time and space dominate circumstance and with circumstance, communication. Many selves within a single individual, many aspects of the same situation exist together. But for true contemplation or for true presentation these have to be thought out, separated from one another and strung together in sequence on the cord of time, listened to, reassembled and memorized again in time before true discussion can take place.

Not only is this our daily dilemma, but the facets themselves we so dearly wish to isolate and see in due perspective arise in origin from different qualities of human personality. Sight, touch, hearing, taste, memory, illusion, creativity and fantasy: the moulding of objects, the use of colour, interest in texture, in sound and rhythm and the work of cognitive thought. The mind boggles at the complexity of man. Is there any way in which he can talk as a whole?, present to himself what the whole of himself is experiencing?, enter into possession of his experience, communicate this to others?

To reach achievement of such a goal a way must be found in which differing aspects of the same experience—whether in adults or children—of the conglomerative effect upon the present, of old and new experience, can be realised and presented *simultaneously*, and such simultaneous presentation recorded and studied; is this possible?

For it to be so, media must be found with which not only three-dimensional but four-dimensional aspects of experience (plus movement, i.e. time) can be presented; which must be independent of skill—otherwise the range of individuals capable of using them becomes too limited—accessible to all ages and all grades of individual development.

Such a tool is the World Technique, as described and illustrated in this book. It is a tool which makes simultaneous expression of many aspects of any situation possible, at the same time superficially and in depth; which demands no skill and only integrity of intention and care; which in these presentations can bring to light aspects of the personality or of the situation hitherto unknown to the maker.

Worlds can be made by children, adolescents and adults and, as this book demonstrates, by classes and groups of people blocked in various ways from other means of communication.

We live in a time when interest is keen in the development of new approaches to the understanding of individuals and peoples. In this book will be found studies, some by the author, some by other people in other countries, of different methods of approach and comparison between these and the World Technique.

If each chapter be held in mind separately but seen within the framework of the whole, the book itself presents a "World" of thought, invention, work and research which makes in its way a macroscopic "World".

It communicates in language the many facets of a technique born some 40 years ago.

CHAPTER 2

History of the World Technique: 1925-68

THE first part of this chapter is based on Mucchielli's book *Le Jeu du Monde et le Test du Village Imaginaire* (1960). Mucchielli traces the history of Lowenfeld's "Worlds" from the time when she was inspired to invent the World technique by recalling a book which made a strong impression in her childhood, *Floor Games*, by H. G. Wells, published in 1911 but now unfortunately out of print. *Floor Games* is an account of play with which Wells and his two young sons amused themselves for days on end. One floor of their house was used as a territory for these games, and there, with pieces of wood, cardboard, modelling clay, boxes, and miniature toys, they built and played with two kinds of construction, "marvellous islands" and "cities".

In the game of marvellous islands the floor represented the ocean, and was separated into zones belonging to each child, who constructed one or more islands in secret. When the islands were ready, a second stage of the game began—the exploration by each child of his brother's island, with a commentary, including adventures, prepared by the author. One of the two boys would begin by sending people from his island to disembark on his brother's island, whose inhabitants would receive the visitors according to their customs. For example: "The North Island has a very advanced civilization and is dominated by a temple. . . . an oriental population throngs through the courtyard and extends into the road. . . . Two grotesque monsters, made from modelling clay by G. P. Wells guard the gateway."

Wells writes of the second type of game: "We always built twin cities, e.g. London and Westminster, Buda and Pest, because each

boy wanted to be the head of his city. Alternatively a city had two quarters, Red End and Blue End. Red End had many hills, a shady zoological park, a town hall, a railway tunnel, a church. Blue End had the station, four or five shops, a little farm with thatched roof." The frontier was traced by H. G. Wells in his role of arbitrator. "The building of the city was only half the game; there were then adventures. The elephant escaped from the zoo and was captured by a military patrol. G. P. Wells, mayor of Red End, represented by a cavalry officer, visited F. R. Wells, mayor of Blue End, who receives him in his uniform of Admiral of the Fleet."

These two games are regarded as separate in Wells' book. Other games suggested are less personal and include historic scenes with strong castles, or games of war.

In 1925, when Margaret Lowenfeld moved from orthodox paediatrics to the study of emotional states in children, it occurred to her to use what she remembers from the book by H. G. Wells. She gathered together small toys, coloured sticks and pottery objects, and so made for the children "the wonder box". On moving to new premises in 1929 she added to the playroom equipment two zinc trays, one with sand and one with water; these became popular for play in association with the "wonder box" toys, which were now housed in a small cabinet placed on one of the tables. At this time the cabinet with its contents was known as "the world". However, in the summer of 1929 it appeared from the playroom reports that the constructions in the sand-tray had come to be called "Worlds". For example, in a report of a child's behaviour dated 6.6.29: "made a 'World' in sand-tray—animals behind a fence—zoo, row of people going to see it. Tree with apple on it, and vegetables on the ground." Three days earlier, the first drawing of a child's construction had been included in the files, with the words "N. S.'s World" written on the back of the drawing. Ville Andersen has written the history of these beginnings of the World technique from her study of the clinic records. Some of the reports indicated that the children were expected in those days to use the objects to make realistic scenes. Ville Andersen writes: "It is clear that as soon as the workers refrained from expecting something realistic, and from interfering or

suggesting to the children, then something new and excitingly creative grew out of the children's constructions." The first record of a story told spontaneously in connection with the sand tray was in the case of a boy who, having agreed to make a Village as suggested by the worker, then said that the King of the town had ordered it to be torn up because it was so windy that nobody could possibly live in it. He then modelled clay into caves for robbers, and said "What fun getting our hands messy!" By this time Lowenfeld and her colleagues were keeping records of the constructions either by detailed description or by drawings; during the autumn of 1929 the philosopher R. G. Collingwood sometimes visited the clinic, and if a World happened to be made, he would sketch it. Two of his drawings remain in the files. Thus the real discoverers of the World, in the sense it is now used (writes Ville Andersen) were the children themselves. "Less than three months after a metal tray with mouldable sand placed on a table, and a cabinet containing small miniature objects were included in the playroom equipment, a spontaneous new technique had developed, *created by the children themselves*." The technique provided what Margaret Lowenfeld had been seeking when she established her clinic, i.e. "a medium which would in itself be instantly attractive to children and which would give them and the observer a 'language' as it were, through which communication could be established".

The first demonstration of the World method at an international congress was in Paris, in 1937. C. J. Jung was there, and made an interpretation of the World which Lowenfeld had shown. In the same year the method was demonstrated in Copenhagen; since then its use has developed in Scandinavia through the interest of Professor Gosta Harding.

A different version, "the World Test" by Charlotte Buhler, came into being after 1935. Before 1933 Margaret Lowenfeld had been in fairly close correspondence with Charlotte Buhler whose methods of infant observation she admired. When the Hitler troubles arose Buhler left Vienna for London, where she organized an Institute for the study of normal children with the aim of training students in clinical observation. A mutual arrangement was made for Lowen-

feld's students to attend the Institute. In return Buhler visited Lowenfeld's clinic (now known as the Institute of Child Psychology, or I.C.P.) and watched children making Worlds. She became interested in comparative research, and went to Oslo, then to Eindhoven (Holland) and finally settled in the U.S.A. From 1935 to 1945 she worked at modifying the World technique in the direction of standardization to use as a diagnostic test, for which she produced a draft manual in 1949. The war interrupted contact, and it was some time after the end of the war before Lowenfeld heard of the existence of the "World Test". In the nineteen-fifties Charlotte Buhler and her husband Karl Buhler visited Lowenfeld's clinic and described their work. However, Lowenfeld finds the psychometric adaptation of her material quite alien to her own approach and best regarded as a different thing. It should be noted, however, that Buhler uses the World material in psychotherapy also, on which occasions it is not used as a psychometric test but in ways which seem to be similar to those adopted by other psychotherapists. In 1951 Buhler and her colleagues published a group of five papers under the title "World Test Standardization Studies" which will be summarized later in this book.

Meantime Phyllis Traill was using the Lowenfeld technique in psychotherapy for Chesterfield school children, and by 1950 the materials were to be found in most child guidance clinics in Scotland. In 1950 Lowenfeld visited Utrecht, where L. N. J. Kamp was using the World as a developmental scale devised by him experimentally in the schools of Topeka, U.S.A. (Spieldiagnostik, 1947). At this time a "tournament" was arranged in Utrecht between Lowenfeld and Gerdhild von Staabs, author of the Sceno-test, to demonstrate the relative values of each technique.

In 1957 *Das Weltspiel* by Henrietta Meyer was published in Switzerland. It contains a comparison of the "World technique" of Lowenfeld with the "World Test" of Buhler, and also summaries of work by Van Wylick, Bolgar and Fischer, Kamp, Harding, Eikhoff, Pacheco and Albino. There are also detailed case studies (with "World" photographs) of three boys who attended psychiatric clinics (two in Zurich and one in Portsmouth, England).

International conferences have influenced the development of the "World" by bringing about an exchange of knowledge which make possible the complementary use of different kinds of material and method. At the Sixth International Congress of Psychotherapy in Barcelona in 1958, when Lowenfeld described the World method and its uses, delegates in discussion asked for clarification of differences from Buhler's "World Test", and gave information about the "Village Test" which was until then unknown to many who used the "World" technique. In 1963 a book *Das Dorfspiel*, by Ruth Züst, was published in Switzerland. It is important, among other things, for giving "Village" records of 100 children in ordinary schools. There are almost 200 photographs, including examples of immature Village constructions and others with signs of emotional conflict. Züst does not mention the World technique, but there is a footnote about the Sceno test, which has some similarities with the World (and will be mentioned again in Chapter 25).

In 1965, at the Sixth International Congress of the Rorschach and other Projective Techniques, in Paris, an afternoon session was devoted to papers on the Village Test, introduced by Mireille Monod, who also gave demonstrations of the method during the week at round table discussions. The session included a comparative study of Worlds and Villages made by the same individuals (a sample of university students). This paper (by Bowyer and Huggan, 1965) is summarized in Chapter 25. An interesting feature of the round table discussions was the attendance of several industrial psychologists interested in using the Village for personnel selection and vocational guidance, a reminder of its source in the Worlds made in the Vocational Guidance Institute at Utrecht 20 years before. Charlotte Buhler had introduced the World material to Holland when she visited Eindhoven, where it was seen by two French doctors, de Beaumont and Arthus, who on returning to Paris made "the Village Test" as a result of their visit. It was later developed also by Mabilie (1948).

In 1966 there appeared a book *Sandspiel* by Dora M. Kalff, a Jungian psychologist, author also in the same year of a paper "The archetype as a healing factor". The book has seventy-five photo-

graphs, a number of them coloured, including one showing the toy materials arranged on nine shelves. A few of the illustrations show Jungian "mandalas" modelled in the sand. Nine case studies are presented showing the use of the World in psychotherapy; seven of these studies are of children, one is of a young woman, and one is of a young man.

Dr. Kalf, by means of lectures which she gave in Japan, interested Professor Kawai of Tenri University, and the staff of Kyoto City Counselling Centre, in the World method. A monograph was published in 1966 by S. Nagasawi and his colleagues (Shiro Takahashi, Fujio Otani, Hayao Kawai, Sueo Nishimura, Ryonosuke Nakanura, Sachiko Taki and Hiroshi Naniwa). This monograph, *Sand Play Techniques*, has an introduction on methodology and psychotherapeutic meaning; a paper on some aspects of expression through sand play, and a series of case studies of children who have had six or seven sessions of therapy with the World material. Their problems included bedwetting, obsessional states, school refusal, a tic, aggression. The monograph has 101 illustrations (photographs of Worlds or of sketches of Worlds); these are particularly useful when only summaries of the papers are given in English.

In 1967 Kamp (with E. S. Kessler) prepared an English version of the experimental study of the World technique as a developmental scale. This will be summarized in Chapter 9.

In 1968 at the Seventh International Congress of the Rorschach and other Projective Techniques in London, papers on the Village Test included one (by Bowyer and Gilmour) about the use of Village and World in social psychology (interaction between pairs of verbally handicapped children). Dr. Lowenfeld was in the chair at this session, having earlier given a paper on her own Mosaics test. Informal conversation included recall of stages of the history of the Lowenfeld techniques, and Ville Andersen looked again at the chapter which she had written in 1959. One passage seems particularly apposite to quote now: "What underlay the whole conception of the treatment of the children was that if given the right tools they would find the way to communication of their interior experience. Looking back over the years to the children's work in 1929, a

striking similarity appears between what the children did with the toys of the World cabinet and the sand in the tray and what they do now with the fully developed technique of the present day."

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