

## Remembering Ronnie

Leon Redler, Steven Gans, and Bob Mullan

[The following are excerpts from a book of conversations about R. D. Laing. The participants are: Dr. Leon Redler, Dr. Steven Gans and Dr. Bob Mullan. These conversations took place in 1998 and early 1999 in Leon Redler's therapy rooms at the Diorama Centre for Art, Therapy and Technology, 34 Osnaburgh St., London NW1 3ND, and his home, in north London. They range over many issues that bear closely on Laing's life and work, including his contributions and gifts to posterity, the deleterious effects of fame (and excessive media attention and denigration) on his public *persona* and private life, the importance Laing accorded to tradition, the discovery of the experiential roots of wisdom for (and in) oneself, recent developments in the Philadelphia Association, and finally, the relationship between Laing, Levinas and the prophetic voice. D. B.]

### Laing's Contribution and Gifts to Posterity

*Bob:* Do you want to start talking about what the work of Laing means? Is there a Laingian psychology? Is there a Laingian psychotherapy?

*Steve:* Well, you've got to start off making a distinction between R. D. Laing, and the bearer of that name, Ronnie Laing, the person. On the one hand, you've got an R. D. Laing logo, almost a brand name, to which at times Ronnie must have felt a prisoner, and on the other hand Ronnie the ordinary bloke, however extraordinary he might have been at times. First of all, Ronnie was a writer who sold books, and R. D. Laing was an important brand name that he perpetuated. What he did best as a writer was very artful and very important. He was a translator and mediator; he communicated original work of the most serious people -- people in the phenomenological tradition, the psychoanalytic tradition, the social science tradition, the Palo Alto group family therapy, pragmatics of communication - a whole range of subjects. He was a polymath -- a guy who knew a lot about a lot of things, from experience in a deep way, in a way that was quite esoteric. And yet he was able to make what he knew accessible to a wide audience. He tried to work with a whole variety of different issues, concepts, all focused on the problem of madness and mad people. How could anything we know about whatever, help us address ourselves to madness in some way that was useful, that could relieve the suffering that madness caused?

His most original contribution, the source of his inspiration, what he wrote about and where he wrote from, was the time that he spent *listening* to mad people. Before Ronnie, few psychiatrists, if any, spoke with such a good ear for madness. There were others including Freud, Jung, Fromm-Reichman and Rosen, who attempted in some

way to decode mad-speak, but Ronnie "hung out" with mad people. He was first of all a guy who, with people who were seen as mad, entered into a kind of a friendship; he created space that hadn't before opened up, between himself and the "mad." Also he was very plastic and mimetic, so he could imitate and get into other people's moods, thoughts, language, and world, including those of so-called "mad" people. And he was able to bring back and speak of what it was like to be "mad" (more or less). This gave "mad" people an enormous sense of relief. Someone heard them. They were not alone. Madness was not unreason, a total unintelligibility, a total difference between the sane and the insane. Ronnie showed that we're all in it together. There was not an unbridgeable gulf between sanity and madness: rather there is a continuum. Mad people felt that "this guy really understands what I'm going through." This proved extremely helpful for people who thought they were going mad, or who were told they were mad. So *madness was the centerpiece* or preoccupation around which he brought to bear the vast array of his *multifaceted erudition*. He took up numerous intellectual traditions as they might be relevant to a the study of madness, bringing all of these facets into the public domain and making the issue accessible, so that people could understand what was at stake. This was Ronnie Laing's great contribution, a sort of *pantheoretical* consideration of madness.

*Leon:* There's no "Laingian" psychotherapy with a particular zone and body of knowledge, methodology, and techniques that are traceable back to Laing that other people are following. He didn't teach that way. Those who think that they're practicing a Laingian psychology or psychotherapy probably missed the point. Beyond what he experienced and read, he was a creative and profound thinker, and an iconoclast, not an ideologist.

*Bob:* Dan Burston, in his biography, claims that retrospectively Ronnie will be considered to be as important as Freud and Jung (Burston, 1996). I can't myself see where he gets that from, and I certainly have very little interest in Jung.

*Steve:* I think that at one level Ronnie will be seen to be a *classic*. He will enter into the canonical works of psychology/psychoanalysis. He won't be forgotten. *The Divided Self* is a landmark work that will be read and reread, appreciated and repeatedly rediscovered in years to come. Now in terms of a kind of ground-breaking contribution, the magnitude of output, the enormity of the consequences, Ronnie does not compare with Freud, probably not. Nevertheless in Ronnie's way of putting these things I would say both were alpha plus minds.

### Fame and Infamy: Media Attention and Denigration

*Steve:* Ronnie was the first media figure in this field. The media then controlled people's perceptions about him. I think he was somewhat innocent, thinking that the

media was probably a good thing. At first, he thought he could use the media to kind of spread the importance of what he was trying to do, and maybe change things. But I don't think he counted on the viciousness of the media, how the press will build someone up to sell papers and then will tear them down to sell papers. What he started to get after his honeymoon period with the media was tremendous discredit. Once he had peaked, he suffered abuse. The media created the "reality" about him that they claimed to portray. Then Ronnie started to become a caricature of himself in public. And I think as his press got worse and worse it was very disheartening, more and more, to the point where he became cynical and said "Well at least they're saying something about me." The bitter irony in the title of the TV program he made toward the end, *Did You Used To Be R. D. Laing?*, said it all. People thought they knew in advance what he was doing-- that is, drinking. The drinking thing was important, but I don't think that he or anybody fully fathomed the place it had in his life for him. He didn't suffer fools gladly. People would often speak in ways that were discordant for him. You could see how this would pain him tremendously, almost like scratching chalk on a blackboard, and it would just send shivers through him. And I think he felt at times that his exquisite sensitivity and sensibility had to be dampened down by drink.

*Leon:* He was a fine musician with an exquisite ear, and it's as though he couldn't bear hearing someone playing or singing out of tune, or screwing up the rhythm. But I'm not sure that he took drink to dull those senses. That might have been part of the story some of the time but I remember he once said he needed it to get going, in terms of creative work. Also, against your interpretation or inference that he drank to make himself less sensitive, when he was very sloshed he wasn't any less sensitive to deception and lies.

*Steve:* I think one more thing can be said about Ronnie's drinking. Ronnie was very aware that he was a screen for people's projections and fantasies. He was constantly being taken to be a guru. Of course to some extent he staged himself as being one. But I think that he was often quite consciously trying to dismantle this idealization or group transference. When he gave lectures or talks, he must have felt that the sycophancy that surrounded him needed to be challenged, that people had to get out of this adulation of him. Often Ronnie was surrounded by people who thought that he was the fount of all wisdom. But he wanted to put things on a more equal level. I think he was driven to tearing himself to shreds, to sacrificing himself, holding himself up to ridicule, to show that he had feet of clay. Unfortunately, this only intensified his cult following. On the other hand, the more sober were not willing to hear the truth in the things that he was saying, since they were not said in a way that was expected, in an academic way. Ronnie spoke in a much more direct, experiential way, speaking from the heart, and they couldn't listen.

*Leon:* In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition<sup>1</sup> there's an injunction to attend to or listen to the teaching, not the teacher. That is, don't get hung up on judging the teacher. Attend to the teaching.

You are reminded that it's your responsibility to find and pick a teacher, and you shouldn't accept someone as your teacher, assuming that he accepts you as a student, without being careful about this matter, maybe taking some time over it, and you might have to make certain judgements, saying "for me, at this time, this teacher, as he is at this time, is not for me." Now there are some analogies with Ronnie . . . because . . . he was for some people a kind of teacher, a kind of guru. It's nothing that he ever explicitly claimed; I don't think he ever explicitly denied it either . . . And certainly he was a master of some sort, you know, like one talks of . . . being a Zen master or an adept of some kind in the Dharma tradition. At the same time, like other similar characters who aren't situated within a bounded, formal tradition, he was trying to deconstruct that all the time for people. But if someone is a great adept, the more he tries to deconstruct that, and divest others of the illusion that he is someone special, he's also confirming the fact that he's got something to teach. Now Ronnie behaved badly on many occasions, in terms of being rude or insulting or fucking-up things, but I think that he never lost a basic integrity . . .

*Bob:* Leon knew him longer than most, and the tragedy for me really was reading about him as a student, and then spending a lot of time with him at the end of his life, and I will never ever forget these final images which were just so different from all the other images-- the images of a man in exile, a man who was loathed by the establishment, a man under-rated, a man written-off, and all the time struggling with illness, being with a young child. And this had a profound effect on me, you know seeing how people can be destroyed.

*Leon:* When you say he was destroyed, what do you mean?

*Bob:* Well I think that if he was a man of a different culture, say French, he wouldn't have suffered such a lack of appreciation. I mean he really did want to be loved and respected by the establishment, as all rebels do. And of course they just could not forgive him.

*Steve:* One of the people Ronnie (admired) was Nietzsche. For him Nietzsche had the kind of ear, and the kind of sharpness and brilliance and biting irony that Ronnie most admired, and it was Nietzsche who said that people can't take too much of the truth. And I think that Ronnie was aware that he was a truth-teller, and that people couldn't take it. Successively with one person after another, he got to the point where there was an unpalatable truth that he told, that came out, that was not tolerated, and little by little he burnt his bridges. He wasn't prepared to play the game that would have given

him fortune, love, and fame; rather he got infamy as thanks for telling the truth-- he wasn't thanked for it.

*Leon:* Although he certainly wanted fortune and fame . . .

*Steve:* He wanted fortune and fame. But not at the price of giving up telling the truth, according to him.

*Bob:* Leon, one of the things that has always struck me as being interesting is your kind of magnanimous attitude towards Ronnie, given the unpleasant things he said in *Mad to be Normal* (1995) about you. On the one hand he says "Leon is a little bit different from some of the others," meaning Shatzman and Joe Berke, and that "at one time I would have called him my friend," and "he used to come around and sing with me," but it was all pretty disparaging.

*Leon:* Well I did actually comment on that, in my article for your book, *R. D. Laing: Creative Destroyer* (Cassell, London, 1997). I found it unpleasant and hurtful. But it was a difficult relationship, and we had, you know, fallen out and apart, by the early to mid-eighties. I don't think what you call my magnanimity is a function of idealizing him, of putting him on a pedestal, or a sort of unrelenting positive transference of some kind, but (rather) of respect and appreciation for what he taught and gave. He would have been either a saint or unreal if he didn't, at times, get fed up or feel let down by me. I think I was often inattentive or thick, relative to him, anyhow, and did defer to him much of the time in a way that was unhealthy for a friendship.

*Steve:* I agree with Leon that we let him down. We were inadequate to the task of confronting him enough, and in a responsible way. There could have been something more creative to come of some moments, that were quite terrifying in which he erupted and blew up. They were not actually all that terrible, except that they could and sometimes did destroy friendships . . . Ronnie was asking for some kind of engagement that would be of sufficient strength to hold him in such a way so that he wouldn't be allowed to go on a rampage. Now the guy who could really do that for him, and who did do that for him, was Hugh Crawford. And in many ways it was when Hugh (Crawford) died that Ronnie became a rogue elephant.

*Leon:* I think most of us let him down. I feel I let him down. I definitely think I wasn't responsible enough and, in no small part, that's probably why I was often on the receiving end of his wrath . . . Well, "let him who has not sinned cast the first stone."

*Steve:* If we knew then what we know now!

Wisdom, Tradition and Going to the Source

*Leon:* . . . One of the things Ronnie often said in terms of some profound learning was, "Don't get it from the Babylonian Talmud, get it from where the Babylonian Talmud got it from." Now one could interpret that in various ways. But one of those ways that I think is valid is: don't get it from any source of knowledge in terms of, say a text or body of knowledge, or any ritual, or any tradition; get it from where that's getting it from, get it at source. Now I think he did that. I've met a few people who probably are in that league in terms of getting it from source. It is a kind of wisdom and compassion. I'd say he was an enlightened being. Not one without flaws, not absolutely free and clear, but well on the way. Now I'm sure a lot of people would consider that an idealization of Ronnie, maybe including many of the people closest to him . . . Nevertheless this was a special guy . . . He was tuned-in to something, he was tuned-in to some of the greatest traditions, in the West and in the East, of deep, deep understanding. Deep understanding that can't really be separated from either wisdom or love.

*Steve:* We had a reading group in which we read Heidegger, and it was quite interesting because he would come in there with a deft kind of acuity, squeezing out the juice at the core of what Heidegger was on about, speak of it, and then that was the end of it. It wouldn't be like most people who would be discussing this sort of thing who spend eight, ten weeks dealing with each nuance and making a meal of it. He really was into getting the nourishment at the heart of it, but he wasn't into the development of it particularly for its own sake, as a kind of an elaboration. And so not only did he not write about his spiritual life, he didn't write about his intellectual life. He was a thinker, but he never really wrote about the depths at which he was thinking or the texts with which he was engaged. But when you say spirit, it's reminding me of this kind of wordplay, or word-playing, because the word "spirit" also means "spirits," the alcohol that we were talking about, but it also means spirits in the term of spooks, or being haunted-- so it's not clear what spirit really means. There's no way one can separate one kind of spirit from another kind of spirit absolutely. So I think actually that there's a way in which Ronnie was haunted by spirits of which his spiritual life was an outcome, and that he had a sense of connecting with, as Leon said, sources, and being kind of the conduit through which the legacies and the inheritances of these traditions would come. And in so far as he did that, he was prepared to pay the price. A legacy that you inherit has a cost that you have to pay. You just don't get a transmission without it changing your life. In fact many people who read all this spiritual material, or even become quite academically proficient in it, are relatively clueless as to the heart of the matter, and hence remain indifferent to the heart.

The Philadelphia Association

*Bob:* One of the things I really want to talk about is his attitude to love. One of Ronnie's quotes that I like is the one about the absence of love, or even the absence of

the memory of love, or the absence of a memory of a hallucination of love-- you know, Ronnie says that without these life would not be worth living. How was love defined in his life, and how did he live that?

*Leon:* In *The Politics of Experience* (1967) he writes about love as letting the other be with concern and affection. I think he was pretty good at letting others be. There wasn't always affection, but neither was there pretence at affection. But letting the other be is already a certain kind of affection. This is one of the things he taught just by how he was, and may be one of the most valuable things that we took away from our time with him.

*Steve:* It's not by accident that the Philadelphia Association got its name from the Greek roots -- *philia--delphos* , brotherly and sisterly love. *Philia* also has an affinity with *agape*, which is a kind of fellow feeling, a kind of kinship with your fellow man. This is a kind of leaving, allowing, giving permission, letting be. I've never really come across anyone who was less likely to lay a trip on anyone than Ronnie. He wasn't trying to induce people to conform and collude with his expectations in order to make him feel better. He was not trying to enlist others to become the supporting cast in his scenario. He was not trying to get a particular reaction from someone, to be a mirror for him to reflect back to him how he wanted to see himself. It was very liberating for anyone to be allowed to be in that way by him.

*Bob: (to Leon)* Do you think you've been elected as Chairman of the PA because you were seen as his protégé?

*Leon:* No, but maybe someone else better answer that one. I don't think so.

*Steve:* I think that Leon was seen as Ronnie's protégé when Ronnie was part of the company . . .

*Leon:* Which I think worked against me.

*Steve:* It probably did. And now I think that as time has gone on, elapsed, Leon has uncoupled from being a Ronnie protégé, but he is someone who embodies the tradition that Ronnie generated in setting up the Philadelphia Association, which was intended to be something like an academy in the Platonic sense, if you will. It was meant to be a scene in which a whole range of diverse influences would meet and perhaps inspire one another. In the days when I just came round in the early 70s there were within the PA scenes within scenes, scenes that would deal with the body, scenes that would deal with theatre, scenes that would deal with birthing, scenes that would deal with a whole range of ways of addressing mental distress and suffering, of which psychotherapy would only be one strand. As time went on, and part of the reason for

the blow-up that resulted in Ronnie leaving, and shaped the way the Philadelphia Association developed after that, was the desire on the part of some members to become more acceptable within the psychotherapy community as a psychoanalytic psychotherapy training organization. The Philadelphia Association with Ronnie, the enfant terrible, as Chair was seen as a radical organization, not properly psychoanalytic-psychotherapeutic. This all shifted when Ronnie left and the UKCP (the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy) started. We were more and more seen not only to be offering the equivalent to all the groups in terms of the rigor and structure of our psychoanalytic course, but we were also offering on top a philosophical critique of psychoanalysis dismantling some of the rather crude psychologistic thinking that is rife in psychoanalytic circles. So the PA gained more of a good reputation after Ronnie. But after Ronnie there was no one amongst the group who took the lead to orchestrate the Philadelphia Association. No one took over for Ronnie as Chair. We more or less saw ourselves as a kind of collective leadership, and the movement of the association a kind of consensus of the collective; no-one wanted to be put in the center, or put anyone in the center, and so on. Eventually we started to fall out with one another. And Leon was chosen as the one person who everyone felt was fair. Not only was he even-handed and not biased in one way or the other, but he kept alive our eclipsed tradition. As it turned out the group split. There were those who really did not want to continue in what I would consider the tradition of the Philadelphia Association. They really wanted to belong to the psychoanalytically orientated psychotherapy institution, and forget about anything else. And they saw us as die-hards, as those who wanted to preserve Ronnie's legacy and move on from there.

*Leon:* I hope I wasn't unfair. There was no question that I was completely against the Philadelphia Association being reduced to being a psychoanalytic psychotherapy training organization; it was well on the way to becoming that, or indeed had pretty much become that. That was a betrayal of the tradition, and certainly of the best of Laing, and the best of what brought us together . . .

*Steve:* But you were still fair in allowing everyone a place who wanted one, and in seeing our differences as not ultimately incompatible.

*Leon:* I was insisting that the Philadelphia Association was a charity concerned with mental suffering and the radical relief of mental suffering.

*Steve:* And you got the support of the great majority of the members who agreed with you.

*Leon:* It hadn't been sufficiently articulated until I began to articulate it.



*Steve:* No, it was eroding slowly and imperceptibly in a way that people were not really noticing . . .

*Leon:* So that even some of the members who haven't split off, who are still our colleagues, aren't wanting much more than a psychoanalytic psychotherapy training organization. They are probably somewhat suspicious and distrustful of me as Chair, and the of direction in which Steve and I both want to move: in essence, not going back to how things were, but going back to the source, to the roots of what in the association, in the name of *philia*, once inspired us and others.

*Bob: (to Leon)* I always thought the Philadelphia Association was centrally concerned with phenomenologically inspired research programs. That it was about phenomenological enquiry . . .

*Steve:* Well I agree, I think that phenomenology is the basis of continental thinking, and all continental thinking that is contemporary takes its jumping-off point from the analysis of experience started by Husserl. This is a rigorous way of looking at experience and meaning, a way of giving attention, and being mindful of how experience is constituted and how things come to mean. But I think that what happened within the phenomenological tradition, and more recently, say in the last fifty years, was that a lot of the students of Husserl and Heidegger broke away from strict phenomenology, so that you get a Foucault who talks history, you get a Derrida who talks about the complexities of language, you get a Levinas who talks about ethics, you get a whole new set of initiatives, that . . . are inspiring . . . us in various ways. So jumping off from phenomenology . . . and moving more into . . . post-modern thinking-- whatever exactly you may mean by post-modern-- is in play at the moment, and we're too involved in it to see it in perspective.

*Bob:* Leon, you passed that question on to Steve - why?

*Leon:* Probably because Steve grew up intellectually in the phenomenological tradition, and has taught in the phenomenological tradition, and is much more versed in the Western phenomenological tradition than I am . . .

*Bob:* But as Chairman, do you simply chair other people's views and intentions and interests?

*Steve:* I feel that he's being unduly modest. Leon can also lay claim to quite an education in phenomenological and more contemporary discourses.

*Leon:* I've got my own points of view, and they've been deeply informed by phenomenology. Particularly phenomenology as mediated through Laing initially, and

then more through Heidegger than Husserl, and perhaps most importantly in terms of what I would call Eastern phenomenology . . . I think . . . the phenomenological tradition was being eroded over the last few years with this concentration on and privileging of psychoanalytic psychotherapy.

*Bob:* I think we should devote an hour to Levinas, because that's clearly what you two are mainly interested in . . . I was interested when you said then that you went through the modern proponents of phenomenology and his name came up. It's not how I would have seen him.

*Leon:* Well Levinas was a student of Husserl and Heidegger.

*Steve:* Brought them to France, initially . . .

*Leon:* And . . .

*Steve:* Introduced Sartre, for example, to Husserl and Heidegger . . .

*Bob:* I thought he was a contemporary man, but he isn't obviously?

*Leon:* Levinas?

*Bob:* Is he dead?

*Leon:* A couple of years ago.

*Steve:* He lived a long time.

*Bob:* How long?

*Leon:* He lived till his late eighties. He died on Christmas day, 1995.

Laing, Levinas and the Prophetic Voice: Mullan and Redler

Bob Mullan:

Emmanuel Levinas. work derives from the encounter between two cultures: Judaism and modern philosophy. Hebrew and Greek. Born in Lithuania in 1906, he was educated in Germany as well as France, where he eventually became naturalised. He studied with the phenomenologists Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, and also engaged in Talmudic studies. Unlike his family in Lithuania, he survived the Holocaust, spending five years as a French POW in a German internment camp. The Holocaust and his encounter with totalitarianism forever marked Levinas. work.

The central theme in Levinas' life work was his abiding concern with the well-being of the other person: in particular, the suffering and powerless other, the widow, the orphan, the stranger. *L. Autrie*, the Other, refers to the alterity of this other who calls us to responsibility. Alterity can not be known or possessed, can not be made mine, including through knowledge. The Other is not just different but singular. In his work, he sought not only to describe our responsibility for, and our duty to respect the difference of, the other person, but also to place our relationship with the other person at the very center of life (Levinas, 1969). Like Martin Buber, Levinas expounded a philosophy of intersubjectivity and dialogue. But whereas Buber described the relation between persons in terms of mutuality, communion and reciprocity, Levinas described the relation between oneself and the suffering other in terms of command, duty and responsibility. In Levinas' view, the cry of the other cannot go unheeded. This response of responsibility to the cry of the other, what Levinas terms the ethical relation, makes imperative the pursuit of justice in the world at large. For Levinas, denizen of both Greek and Hebrew worlds, institutions, society, the work of justice, and philosophy itself all have their genesis in the ethical response of one person to another.

Leon Redler:

In a recent book entitled *Just Listening: Ethics and Therapy*, Steven Gans and I call for ethics as therapy and therapy as ethics. Ethics and justice are at the heart of the matters that matter between us. By "ethics," I mean ethics as articulated by the late Emmanuel Levinas, ethics arising from our being always already called upon to respond in responsibility to the call of the Other, the Other who commands us from an ethical height while beseeching us from her lowly position of nakedness and vulnerability. By justice I mean the extension of the face to face responsibility for the Other to all the other Others, that which is due each and every Other.

We have not taken to heart, not embodied or integrated into our lives the radical critiques and questionings of great thinkers, poets, prophets and spiritual teachers we claim to respect and value. We haven't sufficiently taken on board, the need to radically question our ways of being, and to put *ourselves* in question . . . and consider that most of us, much of the time, may have got the wrong end of the stick . . . or, more to the point, whether, as Isaiah prophesied, we are turned around and away backwards, turned 180 degrees in the wrong direction, missing the mark . . . living in sin and/or ignorance.

The ethical way is consistent with a 180 degree turning. It is a turn from a predominant self-centeredness, to a centrifugal flow toward the Other, toward and for what is precisely not me or mine . . . for the alterity of the Other is precisely not mine (I cannot know the Other, as knowing makes of what I know something of mine,

something I appropriate). Of course, we cannot neglect our own care, the care of the responsible one, nor is it at all likely we can ever step completely outside the circle of a narcissistic economy. But, as Jacques Derrida has said in an interview, we can open things up a bit, make the narcissism more porous and generous. In Derrida's words: "There is not narcissism and non-narcissism; there are narcissisms that are more or less comprehensive, generous, open, extended. What is called non-narcissism is in general but the economy of a much more welcoming, hospitable, narcissism, one that is much more open to the experience of the other as other" (Derrida, cited in Caputo, 1997, p.149).

Laing read some of Levinas's work. "Levinas" was literally the last word in his book, *The Voice of Experience*. He was perhaps moving in a Levinasian direction in his last, unpublished, writings. Laing was, in his own way, attuned to the prevailing ignorance and malaise and nearly driven to the edge by the denial, unawareness, spiritual stupidity, stubbornness and/or dishonesty of many implicated in contributing to it and/or suffering the consequences of it. He had the ears, sensitivity and heart to hear and respond to the call of the distressed, and to call us all on our part in generating some of it. He was a target for the old tendency to shoot the bearer of bad news, or the prophet calling for radical change in how we live with and treat one another.

He helped me to learn that it's incumbent on us to make our own diagnoses, to see through the nature of the malaise of those who seek our help and act accordingly. But like Albert Camus in *The Plague*, Laing also posed the question: what if we're all caught up in a severe *spiritual* pandemic? What if the pervasive scope and character of our malaise meant that few of us who aspire to be healers are likely either to be free of it, immune to it, or healed of it? Laing alerted us forcefully to this problematic. His work deserves to be remembered and revisited often.

### *Endnotes*

1 The information regarding Tibetan Buddhist teacher/ teachings is via personal communication with various Tibetan Lamas . . . (first heard at 3 day seminar with Dali Lama in London in 1984).

2 Bob Mullan's remarks here are culled from his introduction to *Just Listening: Ethics and Therapy*, by Steven Gans and Leon Redler. "Just listening, Ethics, and Therapy" by Steven Gans and Leon Redler will be available in July/2001 via [www.xlibris.com](http://www.xlibris.com) In case of difficulties or inquiries, authors may be contacted at [info.please@justlistening.com](mailto:info.please@justlistening.com) or [drredler@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:drredler@globalnet.co.uk)

3 Leon Redler's remarks here are culled from a talk entitled "Therapy for the madness of the day", delivered to the second annual R.D.Laing Conference at the Royal College of Psychiatry, London, in October , 2000.

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