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THE HUMANISTIC TRADITION IN PSYCHOLOGY AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR EDUCATION

In an important article pusblished some two years before his death Abraham Maslow outlined the significance for education of his particular theory of human nature. He felt strongly that the two domihant perspectives in psychology - the Behaviouristic and the Psychoanalytic - did a great disservice to the human animal. Neither allowed any systematic place in their models for 'higher' elements of the personality or the 'ultimate human values' such as love, compassion, dignity, generosity, tolerance or beauty. Almost implicit, it would seem, in the origins and growth of what has come to be called Humanistic or 'Third Force' psychology is the assumption that man is intrinsically *altruistic* to a degree hitherto denied.

Given this basic premise it would seem that one of the key tasks of any teacher is to nurture this potential by helping children to find out what is already in them. Children are too often seen as receptacles to be filled with 'knowledge', and teachers are expected to assess, reward and sometimes punish them on the basis of how correctly they have 'learned' the information which *the teacher* considers to be legitimate.

Bugental has outlined five key characteristics of the humanistic orientation in psychology, these are:

(1) Humanistic Psychology cares about man.
(2) Humanistic Psychology values meaning more than procedure.
(3) Humanistic Psychology looks for human rather than nonhuman validation.
(4) Humanistic Psychology accepts the relativism of all knowledge.
(5) Humanistic Psychology relies heavily upon the phenomenological orientation.

The implications of the above for education become apparent when we look at Maslow's two conceptions of learning:

(a) Extrinsic learning
(b) Learning to be a Person

The preoccupation of most kinds of learning theory is with the former. This is typified as 'learning of the outside', learning of 'arbitrary associations', of chunks of knowledge considered by others to be appropriate, when more often than not, such others haven't even begun to address themselves to the question of 'appropriate for what'? In this sense, the learning is extrinsic to the learner and extrinsic to the personality.

In marked contrast another type of learning is possible. This is often unconscious, and perhaps unfortunately, this happens more outside classroom than in. Such learning can be associated with the great personal learning episodes of our lives when as a result of particular experiences, we uncover a little more of

our intrinsic selves. These are apt to be unique moments, 'not slow accumulation of reinforced bits'. These are the experiences in which we discover *identity*.

Clearly even the more extrinsic learnings are likely to be more effective in conventional terms (if indeed that is what we want) if based on an enhanced self-understanding. It seems crucial though that such self-understanding is not distorted by the often cruel assessments of personal worth that are unthinkingly thrust at our children by the conventions of selection, streaming, grading and assessing etc. As a result of such practices in an elitist education system - the majority necessarily perceive themselves as 'failures'.

The 'cult' of competition which prospers in our capitalist economy also pervades our education system. Children are socialised into the desirability of being 'better' than others. This emphasis on competition can be compared with an acid which ultimately corrodes the fabric of our relationships with each other.

In terms of the ideas of Carl Rogers we need to concentrate on providing an atmosphere of acceptance of the child's nature, in a non-threatening environment, to 'bring the child out', to permit him to express, and even to make mistakes in order that he can 'let himself be seen', and that he may profit by them - rather than to enable us to evaluate him as a 'mistake-maker'. Maslow similarly talks about the necessity of helping a child to learn what kind of person he or she already is, to build upon his or her potential for goodness. Only then will he appreciate that this potential is *shared* in common with the whole human species.

This kind of help can only be provided by teachers who are

(a) prepared to unreservedly accept the child's nature,
(b) to work consciously towards providing a 'climate' which reduces fear, anxiety and defence to the minimum possible.
(c) to constantly strive for an empathic understanding of their pupils; in order to
(d) enable them to be self-motivating and self-actualizing - so that *significant* learning growth is encouraged.

In this type of climate what Rogers calls 'significant learning' is more likely to take place. By this he means *learning which makes a difference* - in the learners behaviour, 'in the course of action he chooses for the future, in his attitudes and in his personality'. In other words significant learning is absorbed into the very tissues of his existence.

From his experiences in psychotherapy Rogers is convinced that such learnings take place more often than we realize. He suggests that educators might well look to the field of psychotherapy for leads or ideas.

Clearly Rogers ideas for the kind of education he would like to see, are not part of the current educational scene. Innovations and developments in the field of education both in the U.K. and the U.S. abound. There are some encouraging developments such as the increasing acceptability of the Ideology of 'child-centredness' in our primary schools. At the same time, however, we need to be alert to the possible dangers of what might be called the 'rational objectivist school of curriculum theory' Much of the current thinking which underlies the value of planning by objectives seems to encourage a headlong plunge into conformity. Individual

autonomy is threatened at the expense of the wholesale processing of 'products' on an assembly-line basis.

The development of Humanistic as a Social movement, however is encouraging. As a theoretical model, its propositions are as hopeful as they are positive. Wider social benefits can be promoted by the removal of barriers that prevent the growth of the self. It is likely that as an individual experiences warmth and acceptance, he will learn to see himself as an acceptable person and in turn become accepting of others. The task of the teacher seems clear. Do we want our children to become fully-functioning, spontaneous, free and creative or conforming, defensive, and distrustful? If as teachers we can help them to appreciate the importance of being a person then we will have played no small part in equipping them to live in the world of *their future.*

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Personal Change through Encounter

Last year I was a psychology finals student faced with the task of producing a piece of original research for submission to assessment. Unable to stomach the strait-jacket of a classical experimental design and classical rat-man subject matter, I started looking for something with personal meaning and human relevance. I had taken part in an Encounter Group quite recently, and this had been a very powerful experience. But I was besieged by sceptics' questions and unable to give confident replies concerning any real and lasting value in the experience, or personal change genuinely effected. A friend suggested we might do a project together to measure people's change or development in some way, if any such change was going to occur. We managed to get together enough people for two Encounter Groups for the following term, easily enough. The difficulty was working out some kind of method that would be both acceptable to human beings in human terms, and also technically and theoretically