

focus an entire system of education around drama. (If you want to read about this I recommend Brian Ways' book 'Development through drama'). A simple but valuable exercise is to discover the meaning of blindness by exploring the environment without using our eyes. This exercise and a hundred similar ones help us to go further on the path of self development. They help us to outgrow the limited and habitual ways we have learned to experience the world. A boring environment can come alive, become exciting, exhilarating, simply by adopting a different focus of our awareness. This, I believe makes a drama group an energy yielding experience. Some types of group experience can drain participants' energy from them. I always come away from a drama group with more energy than I had at the start. I hope that this will also be true for all of you in our workshop today.

John Rowan

Conflict and Integration

This is an extract from ORDINARY ECSTASY by John Rowan to be published in Spring 1976 by Routledge and Kegan Paul.

One of the things which humanistic psychology has understood very well is conflict. It has a particular view of conflict which is unlike most of the received wisdom on the subject. It sets a very high value on conflict, and regards the serious pursuit of conflict as an important road to wisdom. This is clearest in some of the industrial applications, where people like Beckhard (1), Blake (2) et al, and Lawrence & Lorsch (3) have spelt out in some detail how they actually encourage conflict to be developed and fully expressed, between departments of the same firm, between management and trades unions, and between functional groups in the same organization. All these people take it for granted that groups have different and perhaps opposed interests, and are not all of one mind.

What do we do, then, faced with two parties who want apparently incompatible things? There are really only three possibilities:

Domination: one side wins and the other loses. This often leads to the losing side trying to build up its forces so that it can win next time round. It perpetuates or sets in motion a win-lose relationship of low synergy.

Compromise: each side gives up a part of what it wants for the sake of peace. This is always unsatisfying to some degree, and each side may try to get its missing bit in some overt or covert way. It tends to diminish integrity.

Integration: both sides get what they really wanted. This may need quite a bit of work to see what it is that each side *did* really want. Another way of

putting this is to say that we look for the needs behind the wants. This way, when it can be found, is the most satisfying.

So people like Lawrence & Lorsch take it for granted that the thing to aim at is the interweaving of differences, because that is what one actually has got to work with. Conflicts are then carefully brought out and worked with, rather than being over-ridden, smoothed over or ignored. And the outcome of this is that creative solutions emerge, which nobody had in mind at the beginning of the process. All growth is a process of differentiation and integration, and the differentiation is just as important as the integration. The first rule for obtaining integration is to put your cards on the table, face the real issue, uncover the conflict, bring the whole thing out into the open (4).

If we do this, and attempt to bring out differences so that they can be worked on, we run the risk that our opposition may be lessened. Once we begin to know our opponents on a personal level, we may start to understand them and even like them as human beings. We run much greater dangers of manipulation in such a case, especially if our opponents have much greater power than we have. But in the industrial examples which I have referred to, manipulation seems in many cases to have been avoided. It is possible to meet other people whom one knows to be opposed in interest and to confront them as a whole person, unafraid and ready to use whatever power one has. It is possible to be flexible and human and at the same time to stand no shit. And it seems that this is possible for groups as well as for individuals. It also seems that if we want creative solutions, this is the only way to get them.

Believing, then, in the importance of conflict and the possibility of integration, we can go out for what we want as individuals, as groups, as communities and even as members of social classes.

There is nothing mystical about social classes. They are real enough, as we in Britain know very well. But there are important differences in the ways we can look at them and experience them. The Marxian view tends to be most often expressed as holding that there are only two classes - the working class and the capitalist class, defined by their relationships to the means and instruments of wealth production. The view of the bourgeois sociologist is that there is a stratification of classes, or status groups or socio-economic groups, which may be thought of as five in number, or six, or seven or more, and are defined partly in terms of occupation and partly in terms of sentiment.

This seems a very clear difference, but in practice Marx himself, when analyzing a particular historical situation, talked in terms of nine or more social classes, defined by their particular economic interests or social position. It seems that if we want to talk about *the* working class, as a coherent entity, we have actually to create it; and much of the work of the various more or less Marxist parties can be seen as an attempt to do just that. Our own interest is not in enormous conflicts where the only possible outcome is victory or defeat, and so we do not want to create one enormous working class which behaves as a mass.

There is an important aspect of social class which humanistic psychology does have a

lot of sympathy with, however. If we go along with Maslow's view, we must agree that people need a sense of security and belonging before they can go on to get esteem from others and eventually own their own self-esteem. One of the main foundations of security and belongingness is to belong to a class of people like oneself, among whom one finds understanding and feels at home, and to know that this class is organized and indispensable enough to be a power in the land.

But this is particularly so when the vast majority of people are fixed for life in one or other class, once their school and college years are over. To the extent that we can start to set in process an educational system which will permit people to get further education as when they want it, the need for a heavy dependence on one's social class will diminish. To the extent that we fail to get this process going, social class will remain a powerful reality.

Out of all this, then, what needs to be said is that the way of working through conflict and integration favoured by humanistic psychology works best with reasonably small units, which can be easily visualised and mentally grasped.

We have already seen that humanistic psychology can handle very well the conflicts between management and unions, black and white races, gender opponents, teachers and students and opposed interest groups in local communities. Why should it not be able to handle class conflicts too, so long as these are expressed in terms of genuine demands for real needs? In fact, this outlook should make class conflict more frequent and more productive, because of its emphasis on becoming aware of what is real for each person, instead of suppressing needs in favour of what is supposed to be felt. There is only one way through: to become real, to learn to take a stand, to develop one's centre.

References

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 4. H.C. Metcalf & L. Urwick (eds). *Dynamic administration: The collected papers of Mary Parker Follett*, Pitman 1941.
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