Patience Rewarded: A Review

John Rowan, *Ordinary Ecstasy: Humanistic Psychology in Action.* Routledge and Kegan Paul. 234pp. £2.25.

ĕc/stasў - an exalted state of feeling, rapture (especially delight). 'The title is a contradiction you know', says a colleague in the Senior Common Room. So I go to my Shorter Oxford Dictionary to check it out, although I have had a feeling since I first bought the book that by his very choice of title the Chairperson of A.H.P. intended to tell me something significant about his book, about himself perhaps? And have you noticed how the word 'ecstasy' keeps popping up in the titles of books these days? There is Frank Musgrove's *Ecstasy and Holiness: Counter Culture and the Open Society* (Methuen 1974), Andrew Greeley's *Ecstasy: A Way of Knowing* (Prentice-Hall 1974), George Leonard's classic *Education and Ecstasy* (Dell 1968) - *education* and ecstasy, good heavens, this word must mean something really special, is it possible for anyone to get in an exalted state of rapture or delight over *education?* I look quickly at the content index of John Rowan's book and find that there is a chapter on education starting at page 74 which I turn up. Significant and familiar words spring out from the page - 'humanistic education', 'trust', 'relate', 'feelings', 'facilitator', 'Rogers', 'empathy', 'encounter'. Yes, this is a book for me and I feel a sense of excitement about it all ready, excitement that is, because I want to know what John Rowan *says* about humanistic psychology. I want to know too, if he is really talking about the same way of being and knowing and teaching and learning that has meant so much to me as a teacher, a teacher of teachers and as an individual person since I first visited California in 1968, and particularly since the summer of 1971 when I came into contact with the Esalen Institute at Big Sur and the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions at Santa Barbara, and later still in 1973 La Jolla and Carl Rogers.

I wish that I could somehow scan the whole book and become instantaneously aware of its contents so that I can make the comparison, but I must be patient and careful and thoughtful in my approach. One thing I delight in even before I have read it; here is a book about humanistic psychology from a British writer and publisher. I have made do for five years in college by referring students to 'summary'-type snippets describing the field in the big Child/Personality Development texts (notably for example, MacCandless and Evans: *Childhood and Youth: Psychosocial Development.* Dryden 1973) or to short journal articles, none of which give it comprehensive treatment. I have been able to send enquirers to read about specific aspects of a humanistic approach such as Tom Gordon's *Parent Effectiveness Training* (Wyden 1970) or George Isaac Brown's *Human Teaching for Human Learning* (Viking 1971) or any or all of a whole range of humanistically-orientated studies by people I know at the Center for Study of the Person at La Jolla such as Bill Coulson or Carl Rogers himself. The overall view however, has remained tantalizingly unavailable in book form, but now it is here. I rejoice on that score alone, and the fact that I all ready feel at home with this book, with John Rowan/writer/Chairperson of A.H.P. *does* make me feel a kind of 'ordinary ecstasy' (was that what he meant, have I got it right I

wonder?). Now .... what does he actually *say?*

Much later on, settling down to write this review, I find myself with a problem of selection, for I have found that John Rowan says a very great deal indeed that I would like to comment on and put before the readers of this journal. Constrained though by publishing limits and the absurdity of possibly finding myself writing a book about a book, I shall take the three main parts of *Ordinary Ecstasy* - the account of humanistic psychology, its applications, and its future, as the three broad areas on which to focus and thus to render this review task manageable.

PART ONE - What is Humanistic Psychology?

This explanatory background material is straightforward enough. Data about the areas of origin of humanistic psychology in the West (group dynamics, existentialism and drugs in themselves pointing to the 'paradigms' of the movement, the key experiences of the individual in group process, utter self-isolation, and self-transcendence) is neatly linked with similar areas of origin in the Eastern mystical experience such as are found in Taoism, Zen and Tantra. I found this section valuable for its articulate statement of the foundation premises of humanistic psychology, notably Rogers' and Maslow's 'good animal' View of man (beautifully presented incidentally in a recent illustrated teacher/student book by Vincent and April O'Connor entitled *Choice and Change: An Introduction to the Psychology of Growth* - Prentice-Hall 1974), and the vital notions of congruence and self-actualization. It was particularly pleasing to find right at the outset (pp.4-5) a clear statement of how Lewin's work has been misinterpreted, and assumptions made that doing away with hierarchical organisation leads to chaos. This is also the traditional response to many contemporary O.D. approaches today. It will be a response familiar to many readers of this journal and it is an attitude which it is extremely difficult to change by theoretical argument and discussion alone. John Rowan is right in his judgement that:-

Humanistic psychology is about change and growth, about the realization of human potential, and about being an origin rather than a pawn. This means that the reader is at every point challenged to change and grow, to realize her potential, to become more of an origin and less of a pawn. But to do this needs certain specific kinds of paradigm experiences, not just the reading of books (pp.13-14).

This point is particularly significant to me as co-tutor of a Diploma course in School Organisation and Management. There can be little doubt at all that the ultimate success of education in the future will depend upon radical changes in the present hierarchical structures of school and college organisation and management. Further, the thrust of forward trends in curriculum practice as seen in Schools' Council and other projects such as 'Man, a course of Study' (MACOS), or the Humanities Project, amongst others, *demand* a new emphasis and concentration on the potential of the individual learner, and a dynamic facilitative ability on the part of the teacher. Yet no amount of reading will achieve these objectives - teachers and heads (and pupils!) need to practise risk-taking and self-actualization in order to

experience the positive effects described so accurately in John Rowan's later chapters on Education and Organisations.

PART TWO - Applications of Humanistic Psychology

In these chapters, covering the overall humanistic approach to many aspects of man as self and in community, John Rowan really shines. Again I find the clarity of the finished product a delight, for, as with the earlier work on the origins of humanistic psychology, I have been aware of the general picture but have now had my factual knowledge and thinking made much more exact and precise by this section. One of the most misunderstood aspects of human growth process is the part played by the encounter group - perhaps because it is an area most feared by the uninitiated. Wild statements are made about its alleged procedures, dangers and morality, and on the few occasions when filmed extracts have been shown publicly these have been seized upon as exemplifying a host of elements considered to be negative and destructive to individuals and to society in general. I have tackled one such singularly uninformed but quite typical protest by Mrs. Mary Whitehouse in my article 'Humanistic Psychology and Morality' in the *Journal of Moral Education* Vol. 4 no. 2 (1975) pp. 105ff. John Rowan's treatment of the three main forms of groups - Rogerian, 'Open' and Synanon - is refreshingly simple. I wonder though if his description of a Rogerian group (pp. 40ff) is not based upon some of the rather dated examples of Carl facilitating a group before the camera rather than quite contemporary experience here, for my own experience as both participant and subsequently staff facilitator in the La Jolla Program with Carl contradicts both the 'sitting on chairs' description and the statement that there is 'little or no physical interaction' (p. 40). On another occasion I would like to write about the daily community meeting of all one hundred members at La Jolla which complements the ongoing small group encounter meetings and which has not only led to my having second thoughts about the traditional view regarding the maximum size of groups permitting genuine interaction, but has also decisively reinforced Carl's maxim that 'trust in the process' is equally true for a one hundred-strong group as it is for a group of ten. Amongst the large community group when I was last at La Jolla, there were twenty Japanese members - psychologists, business managers, personnel officers and counsellors from Hitachi and other firms - a sizeable number of whom spoke very little English. They were not only absorbed into the small groups, but a quite remarkable development came about in the community group when after a few days they stopped using their 'official' interpreter and translator and spoke only Japanese. Noone felt that this inhibited understanding, as a high degree of sensitivity, active-listening and intuition was able to be employed. Another example which indicates something of the non-static character of the Rogerian groups at La Jolla is the fact that a typical list of 'special interest' groups which follow the intensive small group encounter experience is likely to include such topics as psychodrama, sensual massage, marathon, religious experience, alternative life-styles and non-verbal communication, amongst others. However, John Rowan's *analysis* of the differences in facilitative role between Rogerian and 'Open' groups is quite correct, and this does lead me to think that there may well be an over emphasis in 'open' encounter on the facilitator's experience and personality at the expense of the genuineness of the individual member's own responses and growth inherent in

Rogerian group practice. This is a fine point, but I think it is a vitally important one, for we can accept the general principle in psychology that to be lasting and effective any change of behaviour in a person must be the result of that person's authentic response to any given situation. John Rowan certainly hits the nail on the head when he writes:-

> *The Rogerian group tends to be very slow, but very sure - whatever happens, be it very little or very much, is very real. There is no space, as it were, for phoniness to creep in (p.41).*

I see this fundamental principle reiterated in the book's later sections on Counselling and Psychotherapy, and the substance of what is being said here about the Rogerian group is precisely its value and the reason why I opted for La Jolla and Carl Rogers rather than Esalen and William Schutz. This does not mean that I cannot agree with John Rowan that Esalen, the place and its whole ethos, provides a peak experience in itself. I have a tape of Schutz talking to an Esalen group on the principles of Open Encounter, recorded traditionally and authentically as is the Esalen custom, in the open air with the roar of the ocean in the background. There is also a quite delightful account entitled 'Naked Revival: Theology and the Human Encounter Movement' which encapsulates the Esalen experience, and which describes what must have been a unique week-end there shared with Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder and the late Bishop James Pike, in Harvard Divinity Professor Harvey Cox's book *The Seduction of the Spirit* (Wildwood House 1974).

In the chapter on Education (pp.74ff) I can identify whole-heartedly with John Rowan's analysis and recommendations. Most teachers, even those in top management, feel that they are constrained by 'the system'. There are few opportunities in secondary schools (though this is by no means true of primary schools, and indeed this dichotomy serves to aggravate the position) to break through the conscious or unconscious 'putting down' thrust of most secondary and higher education institutions. Whether realised or not, the rights and potential of the individual student qua person are often violated and 'the system' prevails through its selection and grading procedures. There is a dreadful ring of truth in John Rowan's quotation of George Leonard:-

> *. . . the job-dispensing agencies are not really interested in what the job seeker has learned in the school, but merely that, for whatever reason, she has survived it (p.82).*

Can contemporary schooling possibly be *education* when so little account is given to what a pupil learns or knows in the analytical sense of these words, and so much attention is given to what and how he is *taught?* One of the most striking recent research studies in American education is David Aspy's 'National Consortium for Humanizing Education'. Based firmly in the trio of factors Empathy, Congruence and Positive Regard which Carl Rogers has been exploring and commending throughout his lifetime, and exemplified in one of his rare contemporary journal articles 'Empathic: an Unappreciated Way of Being' *(The Counselling Psychologist* Vol. 5 no. 2. 1975), this study involving some 10,000 pupils and 450 teachers has produced the first

large-scale empirical evidence of the significant improvement in levels of cognition when related to teacher skills and classroom interaction centred in empathy, congruence and positive regard. These findings cannot be ignored, and the whole venture is a striking vindication of applied humanistic psychology principles in the field of education. Aspy has now developed a programme for intensive *teacher* training in this area entitled 'Interpersonal Skill Training for Teachers', which has a close affinity with Dr. Leslie Button's intensive Developmental Group Work Action Research Project with *adolescents* (University of Swansea Dept. of Education). It is significant that this Leverhulme Trust-funded project uses Dr. Button's book *Developmental Group Work with Adolescents* (U.L.P. 1974) and also William Schutz's *Joy* as referents for the skill-training programme itself.

I have spent some time on education because this is my own field of work. Humanistic psychology principles are however essentially relevant to whatever work situation any individual person finds himself in in relation with others, as they are also to any group or organisation. I particularly liked John Rowan's discussion of various possibilities for breaking through traditional hierarchical systems and structures (pp. 91ff). This really is the acid test of the self-actualization and growth of individuals and groups, and it remains a constant challenge and risk to each one of us, the consequences of which cannot be overestimated or treated lightly.

Can we do it? Can *I* do it? I am humbled again by the demand to practise what I preach - there is a relentless thread running through John Rowan's exposition of humanistic psychology which says, 'You cannot be content with teaching *about* it, you must *do* it', and I know in the depths of my being that he is right. Yet I also know that this is the hardest part of it all.

I want to complete my comments on Part Two by saying something briefly about the chapters entitled 'Transpersonal' and 'Female, Male, Gay'. They are knowledgeable and accepting and I think that I can identify with most of John Rowan's views. Activities and states such as those he recounts as examples of transpersonal experience I find difficult to relate to, but that is a point for self-examination and exploration rather than being any sort of critical comment. When I do reflect on my response, I think it might be because I find myself prejudiced against and intensely irritated by the 'jack of all trades, master of none' approach which many Americans have towards experience in mystical and transcendental areas, and their frenetic search always for some new thing. I know that I get very angry indeed when I now read about the latest 'movements' such as aggression therapy and those of its applications which seem to be the very negation of human respect, empathy, positive regard. John Rowan has certainly made his point with me about the use of 'she' as the anonymous subject rather than 'he' (p.114). Why am I so irritated by it??

PART THREE - The Future of Humanistic Psychology

Again I learned a lot from the lucid account in Chapter 12 (pp.137ff) of the spread of humanistic psychology. I really do feel a great deal more informed about the A.H.P.,

and that knowledge adds weight to my own feeling of worth as a member of such a widespread organisation and to my feelings of value as a teacher in the field. That there is a provocative paradox in the individual isolation of many humanistic psychologists in their actual work and efforts (p.147) is undeniable. It is worth further examination and study. As a philosopher I have problems with terms such as 'the real self' (pp.153ff), although I understand the general drift of John Rowan's analysis in this respect. No doubt he would agree that he is in fact speaking about the 'real' self. I identify very much with his approval of Fritz Perls' distinction between self-actualization and self-image actualization (p.158). It is only through real effort on our part in giving attention to feedback, checking ourselves and our responses out with others, and learning through trial and error, that we can move towards ultimate congruence. One of the 'many thoughts we could pursue' (pp. 159-60) has caused me much heart-searching, and I know that it is the concern of many people who have had experience of groups as also of some who have not. Simply put, it is the question of how far I can be authentic and self-actualizing and at the same time live with the same process in others. That is, I find myself faced with profound *moral* dilemmas in this respect, and I have not seen very much attention given to this particular aspect of personal development in the writing on groups and group process. Sometimes I see a stark contradiction between my being authentic and self-actualizing in a given situation and saying and doing what I want to say and do, and the moral qualification that this might hurt, put down or fail to show care for the other person(s) involved. As I have said, this puts the difficulty very simply, and it is often not in fact so simple, but I am very aware of it and of the weight it carries with thinking, caring observers of personal growth and growth techniques. I do not feel that it has been adequately explored in the literature in general nor by John Rowan in particular, although I sense that his whole approach would be on the caring horn of the dilemma! The paradox nevertheless remains.

The final chapter on 'Directions for Society' (p.161ff) will be informative for many readers who have not fully appreciated the significance of humanistic psychology for other areas such as medicine, the many forms of possible participation in social structures and development, and the development of growth in political consciousness. In sum, human resource development conceived of as a living, existential reality. John Rowan has some brave things to say here, and he also raises some challenging points on therapy and research in the Appendix (pp.173ff). I feel a little mean in saying that I miss any reference to Lorraine and Jack Gibb's T.O.R.I. Community (trusting, opening, realizing, interdepending) which is now widely practised throughout Canada and the United States by groups in ordinary lay situations as well as those in specialised environments such as conventions, schools, communes and O.D. situations.

In conclusion, I find this a unique book. It is undoubtedly a milestone in the dissemination of humanistic psychology theory and practice in England, and this will no doubt be true of many other countries where it will be widely read. John Rowan's detailed and commanding knowledge of the field, and his ability to convey this with authority and interest, is impressive. I believe that he has achieved two very important objectives - he has provided a lucid and eminently readable account of humanistic psychology in its many forms and varied applications for those whose knowledge of it is limited, and at the same time he has offered a challenge to the informed in his

approach to some of the more controversial aspects of the discipline, which he readily admits is subjective and personal. For both groups the annotated bibliographies and suggestions for further reading at the end of each chapter provide a wide-ranging and extremely valuable check-list of sources. Some of these are familiar, some not so familiar, some completely unknown - at least to me, and they are all the more valuable in consequence. John Rowan deserves our utmost gratitude for this book.

Donald Anders-Richards

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