

**John Rowan**

## **HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY AND HUMAN RIGHTS:**

### **AN ADDENDUM**

It appears from the article by Rod Farmer in the last issue (Self and Society, Vol X, No.1) that he is unaware of the previous writers who have referred to this subject.

One of the best is Christian Bay, who in the late sixties wrote a number of pieces, the best known of which is the book **The structure of freedom**. He was a political scientist, and wrote:

I am convinced that our profession will never help us advance from our wasteful, cruel, pluralist pseudopolitics in the direction of justice and human politics until we replace **political systems** with concepts of **human need** and **human development** as the ultimate value framework for our political analysis. (1967)

He made an important distinction between politics, which is all about the power to satisfy real needs, and pseudopolitics, which is all about satisfying the vocal demands of pressure groups, no matter how narrow the interests being served. The crucial thing is not to obstruct human development:

How can people construct a society so as to provide for maximum growth opportunities and satisfaction of their needs? (1965)

Bay argues that only a society in which people are positively encouraged to reach Maslow's self-actualization level can ever be truly free. People at this level actually have a capacity to co-operate voluntarily, and not to demand controls all the time. At this level social freedom is possible, because people can set

up a structure which allows the necessary opportunities to act or refrain from acting as they desire. (Bay 1971)

Another writer who has written along these lines is David Wright, a sociologist much influenced by the research of Jane Loevinger (1970) on ego development. Her well-researched and empirically grounded work ties in, in a remarkably strong and apt way, with the more speculative work of Maslow. In particular, the final stage which she calls **Integrated** fits in very well with Maslow's self-actualization level. Wright says of people at this level that they are autonomous and genuinely individual:

Yet "autonomy" and "individuality" should not be mistaken for "individualism". There is a social context to their independence that is implied by their ethical principles. By taking everyone's perspective into account in any particular situation, they are explicitly "other-oriented" (though not "other-directed") and view their selves within a larger context of mutual interdependence. Moreover, these people have a deep feeling of identification, sympathy and affection for human beings in general and they view their selves and others as part of a common humanity. (1975)

Wright makes an important distinction between "indoctrinated control" and "voluntary co-operation" as a basis for social order, and argues that the former comes essentially from the middle levels of development, and holds people back at those levels. (Charles Hampden-Turner's **Radical man** is excellent on the whole process of psychosocial development and its problems.)

Thus, to emphasise the contrast, one basis views meaning and action as derivative from the social order; the other sees the order itself as derivative from the people's meaning and action. One postulates the society's creation and control of members; the other postulates the people's creation and control of their society. (Wright 1974)

In a major effort at theory-building, Wright uses Maslow's ideas to build a synthesis between the conflict perspective of people like Marx and Dahrendorf, and the equilibrium perspective of people like Parsons and Smelser. He points to the necessity

for social transformation involved in taking Maslow's ideas seriously:

In sum, we have presented support for the view that people located at stage 6 and the self-actualization need-level tend to actively respond to situations of perceived injustice. Thus, people at earlier need-levels will struggle to become self-actualising and, once there, will tend to act on their universal moral principles. As a result, change is ubiquitous and continuous, no matter where people are located on the need- hierarchy. (Wright 1972)

Wright therefore argues that it is worth contending for a society where this happens more readily - a society where the positive nature of human needs is better recognised:

Therefore we affirm the process whereby most humans strive and struggle for maximum gratification of their needs and thus change conditions towards this end. And we affirm the process whereby self-actualising people actively respond to perceived injustice, thus providing for permanent protest and attempts to effect change. (Wright 1972)

A third writer who has spoken of these things is Walt Anderson. He again speaks of the higher levels of human development, and of what happens when the social scientist reaches these levels.

Scientists will no longer think of themselves as detached from nature, as disembodied intellects in the sense Hannah Arendt (1958) meant when she described the rise of modern science as the discovery of the Archimedean point, the place to stand **outside** the world. Rather, they will understand and feel that they are a part - the conscious, deciding and **responsible** part - of the very evolutionary process they study. (Anderson 1973)

So he, too, comes out in favour of a society where more people are encouraged and allowed to reach the higher levels of development - Maslow's self-actualization, Loewinger's Integrated stage,

Kohlberg's level of conscience and principle - and he sees this as definitely possible:

I believe that the drive toward self-actualization is, as Maslow insisted, species-wide and not peculiar to any race, culture or sex. The predominance of white males among the historical figures considered to be examples of self-actualized people is not so much a flaw in Maslow's research as evidence of the inadequacy of a society which offers such a narrow spectrum of its members the opportunity to reach their fullest development as human beings. I would argue, therefore, that the middle-class bias is relatively superficial, and that humanistic psychology is in fact a comprehensive set of ideas relevant to the needs of **all** people. (1973)

And it is this sense of important possibilities being ignored which runs through all the arguments we have been looking at here. Society as organised at present just has no notion of human development in the Maslow sense, and holds people back to the levels at which they can play robot-like roles most efficiently.

When we look at politics this way we naturally turn our attention to the things that obstruct human development. And I believe that the most important single limiting factor is the idea which any society has about what the possibilities of human development actually are. A stunted or narrow conception of the human potential, especially when deeply built into cultural norms and reinforced by a society's art and science and philosophy, is as narrow a form of tyranny as any political institution. (Anderson 1973)

All this of course, makes us ask the question - "Well, what do we do about it?" This is the question I have tried to answer in the last chapter of my book **The structured crowd**, where I go into the question of social power, and how it can be used in productive or in self-defeating ways - a point which has also been covered in Marilyn Ferguson's **The aquarian conspiracy**, which came out recently. I suggest that work has to be done on a number of different levels, and that no one campaign, no

one change, is going to be sufficient in and of itself. As Ferguson also suggests, at this particular moment in history the best and most effective efforts may still be at the level of the individual person.

The really important things we can do in relation to other people are to open doors for them, reveal new possibilities for their lives, break down the barriers of roles and the group fears that often maintain them, encourage them to be who they really are: and in doing so, to make genuine social change easier and more likely. (Rowan 1978)

These individuals can then form networks with others, crossing organizational boundaries, reaching through conventional walls. These networks fit with the new way of thinking better than fixed structures do. They are more adaptable, more innovative; they respond more quickly to events. As Ferguson says:

The proliferating small groups and networks arising all over the world operate much like the coalitional networks in the human brain. Just as a few cells can set up a resonant effect in the brain, ordering the activity of the whole, these co-operating individuals can help create the coherence and order to crystallize a wider transformation.

Movements, networks and publications are gathering people around the world in common cause, trafficking in transformative ideas, spreading messages of hope without the sanction of any government. Transformation has no country. (1981)

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## **HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY AND THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION**

One of the most noticeable and most exciting new directions of humanistic psychology during the last year or so has been the exploration of wo/man's spiritual dimension. This has now produced - quite without planning - a kind of mini symposium on the subject which is elaborated in the course of the following six articles. It starts/started with Geraint ap Iorwerth's paper. He is a christian priest and also experienced in humanistic psychology and has set up a spiritual community in Wales. He is claiming that humanistic psychology is missing out on the Judeo-Christian tradition which he thinks would add continuity and strength. I follow this with some comments of my own and then Geraint comes back with his comments on my comments. Then - pursuing the Eastern tradition - an important review by John Rowan of *The Metaphors of Consciousness* which he calls "such an exciting book that it makes your hair stand on the end". Then comes a report of an AHP lecture by Hazel Guest on *Altered States of Consciousness* and finally a practical account of a spiritual journey by Roslyn Langdon. Then - stop press - all the above had been paged and pasted up when in came Vergil Petersen's paper linking Progoff's *Intensive Journal* - see page 143.