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SEX-ROLE SOCIALIZATION AND PERSONAL GROWTH

In 1974, I wrote a paper entitled "Some Insights into my Sex-role Socialization". (1) In it, I described some social-psychological dynamics in my childhood and adolescence that had a primary impact on my sex role and identity. I also described a secondary process of sex role socialization as occurring through increasing commitments to a set of norms and institutions that comprise the homosexual sub-culture.

Sex role and identity is a dynamic process and eight years later (1982) my commitments have changed. What I discovered was that identification with the organized homosexual sub-culture was limited in perspective. My sense of Self encompassed more than the identity the homosexual community offered. This insight resulted in cognitive dissonance and role conflict. I retreated into a dyadic relationship with another man. During this period I made little contact with the homosexual community. The bonds of commitment to the norms and institutions of the homosexual sub-culture loosened. My commitment was to my dear friend and our relationship.

These years were not fallow but led me inward to my Self for an understanding of my sex role and identity. After seven years in this relationship, I reached a painful realization that growth for myself and my friend could only take place through giving ourselves physical and psychological space.

With the gradual healing of the pain of separation has come growth. I now understand that the cognitive dissonance and role conflict I experienced in the homosexual community was an example of an essential resistance of my Self to any process that would limit my identity. I realized that I have an attitude toward the world characterized by objectivity and detachment from social influences and situations. I also have a deep appreciation of people as a "species being", essentially connected to one another and to nature. (2)

I realize that this orientation is part of a great chain of being and that the people I read and study are my role models. One recent confirmation of this attitude I received from reading Abraham H. Maslow's **Toward a Psychology of Being**. He states, "Practically every serious description of the 'authentic person' extant implies that such a person, by virtue of what he has become, assumes a new relation to his society and indeed, to society in general. He not only transcends himself in various ways; he also transcends his culture.

He resists enculturation. He becomes more detached from his culture and from his society. He becomes a little more a member of his species and a little less a member of his local group". (3)

This attitude toward the world has an effect on my sex role and identity. I am aware that all human beings have both a male and female element in their psyche and are essentially androgynous. This awareness I received from reading the book **Androgyny: Toward a New Theory of Sexuality** by June Singer. She states, "Androgyny begins with our conscious recognition of the masculine and feminine potential in every individual and is realized as we develop our capacity to establish harmonious relations between the two aspects within the single individual. These aspects may interact competitively with each other and thereby produce conflict, or co-operatively, and thereby release the energy that would otherwise be dissipated in reducing conflict". (4)

What June Singer recommends is for people to follow the trend of system theorists toward rigorous but holistic theories. "If one can follow this trend and begin to think in terms of whole systems, it may be possible to find a way out of the maze created by the old categories of 'masculine' and 'feminine' . . . The first way would be to shift the common assumption that a specific quality of the personality may be described as either masculine or feminine . . . The second way to move beyond the old categories would be to alter our assumption that since there are certain 'feminine norms' and 'masculine norms' which have been generated by a particular society, all males and all females in that society may be expected to develop in accordance with those norms. The societal images of masculinity and femininity - as something we can observe and define, and in accordance with which we can shape our behavior - derive from the very tendency to differentiate and categorize, a tendency that negates the concept of wholeness in human personality". (5)

I now consider myself simply a sexual being without having to label myself homosexual or heterosexual. I feel that my conscious adaptation in my socialization process has made the female element the primary source of identity for me. I am now searching for the male element in my unconscious in order to integrate it into my conscious identity.

It has been a great comfort and joy to discover that the commitment to androgyny is attracting increasing adherents. Networks of people organized both informally and formally are asserting their contrasexual aspect desiring growth toward wholeness and totality. People with this orientation are becoming my significant others and from this interaction I have been led towards transcending a limited view of my sex role and identity.

Notes

- (1) See **Self & Society: European Journal of Humanistic Psychology**, Vol.X No.5 (Sept/Oct 1982), pp. 233-239.
 - (2) For a discussion of the concept of species being see Easton, Loyd D. and Kurt H. Guddat, trans. and ed., "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844)", in **Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society**. New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1967, esp. pp. 293-296.
 - (3) Maslow, Abraham H. **Toward a Psychology of Being**, New York: Van Nostrand, 2968, pp. 11-12.
 - (4) Singer, June. **Androgyny: Toward a New Theory of Sexuality**, New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1977, p. 32.
 - (5) *Ibid*, pp. 225-226.
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Nick Heap

BUILDING PEACE

Building peace is the most urgent task of our time. Humankind is on the very brink of multiple catastrophe; nuclear war, environmental degradation and gross inequality threaten our very existence. Yet there has never before been so much knowledge about each other, or such opportunities for collaboration and mutual learning. The time for action is now. We have the ability to create a good future for ourselves.

Peace is not just stillness or the absence of destructive *conflict*. It implies a natural state of balance and harmony with elements of joy, exploration and excitement. Simple passivity would never satisfy human beings because we love adventure. The world is a beautiful and complex place with immense opportunities for learning, exploration and positive excitement. War fulfills no useful purpose.

The task of building peace starts within the individual. People are a blend of body, mind and spirit. For an individual person to be truly at peace with her/himself and hence able to create peace around her/himself, there needs to be harmony between these aspects. Body, mind, spirit need to be fed and to be used. The "feeding" of body, mind and spirit is about giving and receiving love. In the process of giving and receiving love, people are healed and become whole