

**Humanistic psychology:** A survey of the main branches, namely Transactional Analysis, Primal therapy, Gestalt, encounter and Rogerian groups, Bio-energetics, counselling, etc.

**Biofeedback:** Functions of the left and right brains. Transpersonal techniques are designed to bypass the rational function. EEG, alpha waves, etc. The voluntary control of physiological functions. Skin resistance meters used in connection with meditation and Sequential Analysis.

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**John Reynolds**

#### **THE LIE IN STEPPENWOLF (1)**

Humanistic psychology espouses a dynamic view of human behaviour, seeing man as an active, choosing and conscious entity coming into being as he transacts with the social world. There is also an emphasis on the optimising personality being an integrated personality. It is the intention here to argue that the idea of 'integration' is often misconceived leading to a rather diminished notion of it. And it will be further argued that this is due to a false analogy being made between the single body and the single self leading to the misleading imagery of the actualising self as somehow becoming progressively 'streamlined', shedding conflicts and 'sub-personalities' on the way. What will be stressed is that as people move towards self-realisation they are moving towards increasing complexity and that a simplistic view involving the ongoing elimination of less 'pleasant' aspects of the healthy personality must be discarded. Self-fulfilment involves working towards a higher unity where conflicts fall away to be seen as no more than aspects in correlation. Hence while the model of becoming is illuminating, when coupled with the idea of integration it must not by some slight-of-consciousness distract attention away from man's evolving manifoldness. When people respond, it is as total beings and one must not reify 'pleasing' and 'displeasing' aspects and see them as at odds with each other and in need of resolution.

To help clarify the points being made the discussion will refer at times to Herman Hesse's poetic novel *Steppenwolf*, the 'self-portrait' of Harry Haller, who feels himself sometimes a man and sometimes a wolf. There are many avenues through which one might gain insight into the complex nature of self and of course the artist's vision is one. It is not necessary to fully accept Hesse's ideas of course to benefit from his thinking.

In an interview earlier this year the Royal Shakespeare Company player Alan Howard (2) spoke of actors:

' . . . very often . . . trying to make a character philosophically consistent, which is impossible. I couldn't quite understand what a consistent character was . . . '

Hence he went on to reject the idea of a simplifying key to a part and certainly to do justice to what goes on within people one cannot but agree with him. Thus Rogers (3), writing of 'fully functioning' people, has pointed out that they usually exhibit such characteristics as not being upset by the fact that they do not always hold the same feelings towards a given experience or person or that they are not always consistent, and that in them the striving for end-states seems to decrease. He thus sees the fully functioning person moving towards a position where he is more open to his experiences in the sense of not having to always blot out thoughts and feelings and memories which might be unpleasant. Certainly Harry Haller is not a single, consistent entity, finding in himself as he does:

' . . . a human being, a world of thoughts, feelings and tamed nature, and besides this a wolf, a dark world of savagery and cruelty . . . ' (4)

But of course the *Steppenwolf* is a fiction. When Harry feels himself to be a werewolf and chooses to consist of these two hostile and opposed beings he is availing himself of a mythological simplification. As the author's voice points out:

' . . . if we appeared to accept . . . this lie which he invented for himself and believes in . . . it was merely in the hope of being more easily understood with the assistance of a delusion.' (5)

Boss (6) of course has argued that Freud, in using such concepts as the id, the ego and the superego, was merely borrowing from the methodology of fairy tales which also tend to abstract and personify:

'rendering the pleasing behaviour of adults the agency of a good fairy and the displeasing behaviour the agency of a wicked witch.' (7)

Such constructions of course are but reified abstractions and Harry Haller was not a werewolf. As Hesse comments of his character: he would at once find himself in a dilemma if he tried to find out in any single moment of his life any single act that either the man had part in or the wolf. It is then that Harry's whole wolf-theory would go to pieces. There is:

' . . . not a single human being . . . who is conveniently simple that his being can be explained as the sum of two or three principal elements: and to explain so complex a man as Harry by the artless division into wolf and man is a hopelessly childish attempt. Harry consists of a thousand selves, not of two. His life oscillates . . . between innumerable poles.' (8)

Hesse goes on to argue that it would seem an 'inborn and imperative need' of all men to regard the self as a unit, to reduce the rich and the composite to a single, rudimentary fiction. The self is, as he puts it:

'a manifold world, a constellated heaven, a chaos of forms, of states and stages, of inheritances and potentialities.' (9)

The source of the fiction, as it has already been suggested, would seem to be the visible body.

Guntrip has of course emphasised that 'internal' people, in his view, are really structured parts of one's own psyche and Rogers (10) has described self-realisation as essentially an expansion of the concept of the self to include aspects of feelings, thoughts and behaviour previously denied, ignored, distorted or avoided. What then if one is not self-accepting? What if one does seek to blot-out the less pleasant? Hesse says of Harry, that to classify himself either as man or wolf is to fail to realise that:

' . . . not all that bites is wolf, and fox, dragon, tiger, ape and bird of paradise are the also.' (11)

Yet as he points out, all of these are huddled together and shut away by the wolf-legend. Hesse seeks to illuminate the dangers for Harry in seeing himself as a werewolf in a further passage:

'Imagine a garden with a hundred kinds of tree, a thousand kinds of flowers, a hundred kinds of fruit and vegetables. Suppose, then, that the gardener of this garden knew no other distinction than between edible and inedible, nine-tenths of this garden would be useless to him. He would pull up the most enchanting flowers and hew down the noblest trees . . . This is what the Steppenwolf does with the thousand flowers of his soul. (12)

He argues then that Harry must multiply many times his two-fold being, complicate the complexities still further, and it is this that the expansion of self must necessarily involve.

Man then, in process of becoming, must go beyond the need for conclusions and the expunging of the 'less pleasant'. He must supersede the sum of his parts. Man must also go beyond the methodology of fairy tales when he seeks to understand his evolving self. As Hesse put it:

'Instead of narrowing your world, and simplifying your soul, you will at last take the whole world into . . . (it) . . . before you are through and come to rest. This is the road that Buddha and every great man has gone, whether consciously or not, in so far as fortune favoured his quest.' (13)

'Internal' people then, within the healthy, are but parts of the whole. A higher unity must be sought, an expansion of self which encourages manifoldness as one moves towards that higher correlation where conflicts fall away. The lie in Steppenwolf of course was the lie that Harry invented for himself and came to believe - that he was a werewolf. Hesse has suggested the dangers of this great simplification. The notion of 'integration' then is far richer than some would have it and we must seek to do it fuller justice if we are ever to divine what goes on within people.

## References

- (1) Hesse, H., (1965), *Steppenwolf*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books
  - (2) Sunday Times Magazine, January 11, 1891, page 23.
  - (3) Rogers, C.R., (1961), *On Becoming a Person*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, pp. 163-198
  - (4) Hesse, p. 69
  - (5) Hesse, p. 69
  - (6) Boss, M., (1979), *Existential Foundations of Medicine and Psychology*, London, Jason Aronson
  - (7) Boss, p. 147
  - (8) Hesse, p. 70
  - (9) Hesse, p. 71
  - (10) Rogers, C.R. (1965), *Client-Centred Therapy*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company
  - (11) Hesse, p. 79
  - (12) Hesse, p. 79
  - (13) Hesse, pp. 179/180
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