

split-brain stuff, where the left brain is reasonably well-defined; so everything else has to be dumped into the right brain -again with absurd results.

6. **Beware of tests** The idea of having a test fills me with horror. The paratelic part of the test would have to lump together quite unlike things, and would tend to reify something quite unreal. And presumably I could score high on the telic part at work, but score high on the paratelic part at home - the different contexts producing different replies, as well as different actions. Maybe one of my subpersonalities is telic, and another paratelic? Such a test would go the way of all other personality tests - used mainly to oppress somebody by reducing them to someone else's categories.

None of these six reasons seems to me to be highly technical, or something only an expert could understand; they seem to me rather obvious, and I'm surprised that the theory has got this far without someone pointing them out to the authors. Maybe they have? Maybe the authors have good answers to them? I'd certainly be interested to see what they have to say.

REVERSAL THEORY : A CRITIQUE OF JOHN ROWAN'S CRITIQUE

Mike Apter and Steve Murgatroyd

There are many ways in which it is possible to respond to the kinds of comments made by John Rowan in his critique of the material included in this edition of *Self and Society*. We have chosen to deal with each of the points he has made in turn. Before doing so, it is clear that some of the difficulties he has encountered are due to the limitations of space which have made it impossible to present the theory in its full complexity. Also, the decision to offer a variety of contributions rather than a simple cohesive account of the theory added richness but may have obscured a few critical points. A thoroughgoing account of the theory as a whole, including some of its implications for practice, will be found in **The Experience of Motivation - The Theory of Psychological Reversals** written by Mike Apter which is to be published by Academic Press early in 1982.

1 . REVERSAL THEORY & HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY

It is always difficult to classify different approaches to the study of the person, especially when such approaches are multi-faceted and multi-method in the way that reversal theory is. We see it as having a clear humanistic dimension, but it is not exclusively humanistic. Indeed, it has embraced and encouraged research in psychophysiology and psychometrics. It is also difficult to know when a theory is humanistic because the criteria for inclusion are diffuse. We know the theory to be humanistic in certain of its elements, but whether they are sufficient or not is a matter of taste. Finally here, does it really matter whether the theory falls exclusively into some pre-existing category or not?

It is laudable that John Rowan looked at some of the inadequacies of homeostatic models of man as long ago as 1956. It didn't have much impact - most major theories of motivation in psychology before and after 1956 have been homeostatic. Sometimes messages need repeating to be heard. It is also not enough to offer a critique of the use of the homeostatic concept - alternative explanations have to be constructed, developed and tested.

2. CONFUSION

There are a number of points to be made here. First, John Rowan highlights differences between what he takes to be different forms of the paratelic state, illustrating this by reference to Zen monks and delinquents. The states identified in the theory manifest themselves in many forms and in a variety of ways in experience and behaviour, depending on such factors as cultural location, developmental stage, gender and so on. The critical feature of reversal theory is that it seeks to describe the structural similarities between apparently different forms of experience and behaviour. What is common to all forms of the paratelic state, however manifested, is that the focus of experience is upon the ongoing activity not the goal which such an activity might have over and above that activity. At this level of analysis (what we call the meta-motivational level), Zen monks and delinquents are essentially similar. It is pretty obvious that Zen monks

and delinquents are different in such matters as the contents of their experiences and the ways in which they gain satisfactions within the paratelic state. Reversal theory goes beyond the statement of obvious. (Proposition 10 in Mike Apter's article already indicates that the way in which states vary is an essential ingredient of the theory - albeit one which there was not space to detail in this edition of *Self and Society*).

There is some tentative evidence that the childhood experience of paratelic states and the experience of such states amongst adults are different. This does not lead to a rejection of the theory, but rather suggests an area for research aimed at elaborating our understanding of the paratelic state and developing the theory further.

3. MAKING SENSE

There seems to be a general confusion in John's mind between temporary states and more enduring characteristics in relation to the theory. There is indeed a crucial distinction between anticonformity and independence, but both involve the negativistic state: the difference is that the state is brought about for different reasons in relation to these more enduring characteristics. In other words, anticonformity and independence are psychological factors which induce the negativistic or conformist state, but cannot be equated with these states. John Rowan is muddling two levels of analysis.

4. REVERSAL THEORY & PRACTICE:

The best way to deal with this criticism is to point out that reversal theory **IS** being used in practice by a number of people in a number of places doing a number of things. These include work on the following: crisis intervention; the treatment of anxiety and agoraphobia; obsessionality; stress and coping; the problems presented in child guidance clinics and in psychotherapy with long-term prisoners. We are not currently working with any Zen monks! A group of people who work in the helping professions (including doctors, psychiatrists, clinical and educational psychologists and social workers) meet regularly to discuss both developments in the theory **and** its relevance to practice. Whilst it is true that the material in this edition of *Self and Society*

provides a framework for eclectic therapy - not a bad thing in itself -the theory is not restricted to this feature. We are working on a text to describe more fully the practical implications of the theory.

5. COLOUR CHOICE

It seems strange that we are criticised for both seeing similarities underlying differences (see his point 2) and for noting clear differences (see his point 5). All theories involve doing both these!

Unless theories make distinctions as clearly as possible then they are unlikely to be of value. Reversal theory makes clear distinctions between meta-motivational states and describes some mechanisms by which a person reverses between telic and paratelic states more than once. One of us has also reversed between being negativistic and conformist. It should be noted that the distinctions which are being made are at the level of states not traits - we are not creating a once and for all people-classifier, but we are looking at states and using these states to understand the dynamics of human action.

Incidentally, John Rowan seems to be rejecting in a rather dogmatic and cavalier fashion one of the main principles of structuralism namely the analysis of materials in terms of patterns of binary opposition. Structuralism is, after all, one of the dominant intellectual forces of our age and has played a central role in recent thinking in linguistics, anthropology, literary criticism, sociology, history and philosophy.

6. TESTS & METHODS:

We are sorry that tests, and the thought of them, fill John with horror. Humanistic psychology has a long tradition of taking ideas and data from other fields of psychology and making creative use of them. Using a black and white distinction between good and bad method, irrespective of the data they generate and the way in which these data are to be used seems unhelpful. Reversal theory has made use of a large variety of methods and types

of data, including tests and group work, interviewing and psychophysiological measurement. It is eclectic in its use of method. This open-minded approach to method is more likely to prove fruitful than either a dogmatic insistence on 'tests telling all' or a blind rejection of testing.

John's comments make clear yet again that he has confused traits and states in relation to the theory. Some of the tests developed from the theory have concerned states and some have concerned state-dominance (the tendency to be in one state more than another). Evidence shows that these tests do seem to be sensitive and do seem to relate to the way in which people see themselves, both in general and at particular moments.

CONCLUSION

We have dealt with John's points as economically as possible. More detailed material will be found in the book referred to above. Our hope is that this exchange of views clarifies the points at issue. John implies that the theory is immature. We feel, in contrast, that the theory is young, vigorous and worthy of exposition and development.

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