

Problems of Development & Learning

Psycho-Therapy

3.1 PSYCHODRAMA AND OTHER DRAMA APPROACHES

There are three approaches here to be considered: psychodrama, drama-therapy and theatre games. Of these, psychodrama is the most important for a humanistic point of view. Psychodrama was developed by Jacob Moreno in Vienna during the 1920s. Moreno came to America in 1925, ahead of the main rush, and set up a psychodrama school in New York.

When the great development of group work in humanistic psychology came along in the 1960s, it lit upon psychodrama as one of the main means of carrying out its aims, from being ignored and even ridiculed for much of his life, Moreno saw his work taken up and used more than ever before. But he died in 1974 at the age of 85, too soon to see the further expansion which took place in the 1970's (Marineau 1989).

In psychodrama you take a life situation which is loaded with feeling for you – a row with the boss, being ill-treated as a child, a problem with a partner, anything at all – and act it out, using people from the group as characters in your play (Badaines 1988). The group leader is called a director, and facilitates the action by suggesting ways of making it more direct and intense (Blatner & Blatner 1988).

The director will set up the scene in a concrete way (“so the door is over here, the window is here, and there is a table in the middle...”) to make the scene as evocative as possible. After the scene has been going along for a while, the director may suggest role reversal; that is, the person who has initiated the piece of work (the protagonist) changes places with the person who was being talked to. This is sometimes quite revelatory in itself (Karp et al 1998).

Something else that may happen is that a member of the group may feel that the protagonist is not saying what they really mean. The group member may then go up behind the protagonist and talk on his or her behalf. The protagonist, if agreeing that that is the real thought, repeats it; or has the option of saying – “No, that's not right”.

There are over 200 different techniques which may be used in psychodrama (Holmes et al 1994), and it has often been remarked that anyone who wants to make a name by inventing new group techniques runs up against the Moreno problem – that Moreno probably invented it first.

Psychodrama is one of the best-developed group methods in humanistic psychology, and it has training courses, certification and all the other features of mature organization. It is virtually impossible to go to a psychodrama group and not learn something useful (Holmes & Karp 1991).

In a psychodrama group, the individual piece of work carries on until some resolution, often of a cathartic kind, is carried out. The other participants are asked about their reactions to what has been happening, and often someone whose feelings have been stirred up will step forward and do their own piece of work (Wilkins 1999).

Often there is a definite shape to each episode, such that there is a period of entry and slow build-up, followed by a rapid rise of energy and cathartic resolution, and then a period of digestion and relaxation. This involves the sharing, an episode where group members share their individual reactions and responses to what has occurred (Moreno et al 2000). Psychodrama is a very free flowing discipline, where the director has to be very active throughout. It makes quite heavy demands upon all the participants to be active and involved.

In drama therapy the same is true, but here the emphasis is more on relationships within the group, rather than on individual experiences outside the group. This means that the group becomes very much a unity as time goes on. The group's activities are relatively unstructured, and each person's interpersonal style emerges in relation to the stimulation of others in the group. The therapist's role is to help the group develop ways of examining and dealing with group problems as they arise (Jennings 1988).

The individual's recurring patterns of behaviour emerge in the role playing, and the therapist can help him or her to become more aware of these patterns, and then to experiment with changing them. Props and costumes may be used to make the action more vivid and direct.

Finally, in theatre games we use many methods originally developed in the training of actors, by people such as Anna Halprin and Viola Spolin, for therapeutic

purposes. Often they are excellent methods of stirring up certain emotional issues and enabling attention to be paid to them.

So for example we might say that the relationship of master and slave is very relevant to life in various ways. Two people are assigned to the roles, and then they play out their scene in their own way. At the end, they say what they have learned, and other people in the group give their responses.

There are thousands of variations upon this general approach – setting roles, carrying them out and seeing what happens – and this means that theatre games are a very flexible way of working (Dayton 1994). They can be combined with encounter or psychodrama in many different ways. They can be extremely basic – “Look in to someone else’s eyes for ten minutes” – or extremely complicated – “managers over here, workers over there, government over there and shareholders in the other corner.”

But when it comes to going deeply into just one thing, where one person can get some resolution to a deep-seated problem, we have to come back to psychodrama. In psychodrama we have all the flexibility of theatre games, all the group quality (what Moreno called ‘tele’) of drama therapy and in addition the ability to push right through into unconscious material if that is what the person needs. We all have to acknowledge the enormous contribution which Moreno made to the active and adventurous ways of working which we like so much in humanistic psychology.

3.2 TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

There is a real question as to whether Transactional Analysis (TA) is part of humanistic psychology or not (Berne 1961). The truth of the matter seems to be that some of it is, and some of it is not. So it is a kind of borderline case, and for that very reason can teach us something about how the borders are drawn between humanistic psychology and other approaches.

In my own experience I have found the books interesting and rewarding (Berne 1964, Berne 1966, Berne 1972), and have read all of Eric Berne’s own work, in addition to papers, chapters and articles written by other people. But I have also been to about six TA workshops and seen about six TA training films, and these I have found a big let-down and quite feeble.

Many people experience a feeling of distaste about TA because of the brashness and Americanism of the whole thing – the language and presentation is often quite

off putting. Eric Berne never contributed to the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* in all the years of its existence up to his death. Nor has there been a paper about TA in thirty years, so far as I can discover from the titles given. So there is a question mark in this respect on the issue of whether TA is humanistic or not.

TA is a theory of personality, not a method of treatment... the comprehensiveness and broad applicability of TA concepts allow for their integration into a wide range of therapeutic approaches and styles. Similarly, Dusay & Dusay (1979) say “TA... is a complete theory of personality”. They make links with many different approaches, some of them humanistic, some of them not. I am not trying to do a complete rundown of the literature, but simply to say that there is some confusion as to what exactly the status of TA is.

So there are quite a few headings here of trouble with accepting TA into the humanistic fold. I wonder if some solution could be found along the lines of talking about TA1 (the personality theory and broad *via media*) as against TA2 (the humanistic version which is taught at certain specific training centres), and TA3 the mechanistic version taught elsewhere. Then TA1 and TA3 could be outside the fold, and TA2 could be inside it. James (1995) also suggests that there could be a transpersonal version of TA, which could be interesting.

There are certainly people who are teaching and using TA in a humanistic way, and of these the best known are Petruska Clarkson (1992) and the trainers at the *metanoia* training centre (Clarkson & Gilbert 1990). Here a definitely humanistic view is taken, and has now been written up in more than one book. This is where to go if you want to find the humanistic version of TA.

3.3 BODY WORK

Again we have a number of approaches: bioenergetics, vegetotherapy, biosynthesis, biodynamic psychology, neo-Reichian work, Radix education, Hakomi therapy, Lomi body work, Hellerwork, Rolfing, postural integration, Tragering, Feldenkrais method, bio-release, Alexander technique and so on.

Much of this work stems ultimately from Wilhelm Reich (Boadella 1985), and we may lead into it by considering his approach. What Reich said was that a natural energy normally flowed through the body. This energy could be blocked at various points, usually where the segments of the body (he distinguished seven segments) joined on to one another. These blocks might have been set up originally as defences to some forbidden impulse or some painful trauma, and might be maintained as part of the person's character structure. By working on these blocks

and releasing the energy, the person might be made more healthy and happy (Totton & Edmondson 1988).

This makes it sound as if character, which we usually admire, were highly suspect, and Reich actually said that character is neurosis. In other words, we are responding to the world and acting in it either in an appropriate way, which stays in close contact with reality, or in a more rigid or floppy or otherwise inappropriate way. To the extent that it is the latter, Reich would see the undue rigidity or floppiness (or whatever) as neurosis, and would seek to undo the blocks which might be responsible.

The general approach has been adapted and extended in a number of ways by humanistic practitioners (Keleman 1985). One of the main schools where this has been done is in bioenergetics, led by Alexander Lowen, who has been to this country a number of times (Whitfield 1988).

Bioenergetics lays particular emphasis on grounding, and has many exercises concerned with making better contact with our legs and feet and what they mean to us. Stress positions are used to stir up valuable material which may be connected to the person's energy blocks.

Both Reich and Lowen think it worthwhile to say that certain patterns of blockages, certain systems of holding energy back, are very common. They draw attention to the existence of certain character types – the schizoid, the masochistic, and so on – and go into much detail as to the way of standing, the body posture and attitude, the type of breathing, the cognitive and affective patterns and contents and so on which belong to each type. One can actually do a body reading which amounts to a character reading, simply by getting the person to stand up and move about, so that one can see how the body is set in particular patterns of action (Kurtz & Presteria 1977).

This gives some very clear ideas as to how to work with such a person in therapy. One of the methods of working is to touch the body itself. The touch may be very light, as in Gerda Boyesen's biodynamic massage (Southwell 1988), or may involve pressure on tense parts, as in Lowen's bioenergetics (Lowen & Lowen 1977), or may involve deep restructuring of the muscles, as in Rolfing or Postural Integration (Painter 1986). This means that therapists in the area of body work must know the body very well, and many of them take massage qualifications, both because of the excellent education it gives on the whole body, and because of the legal requirements in certain countries. So in much body work some of the clothing

is removed to give access to the muscles and also to enable the therapist to see any changes in colour of the skin as therapy progresses – these may be very important. Not all body therapists use massage tables, but it is quite common for them to do so. Because of this emphasis on the body, and the possible sexual implications of this, it is particularly important for body therapists to have gone through their own therapy in this way. They can then work through sexual and other feelings which may arise in them when in contact with another person's skin, before ever meeting a client. Good supervision is also particularly important in this form of therapy, and very often the therapist will have a supervisor who will help in resolving any distress which occurs as a result of the therapist making any mistakes in this sensitive area.

The supervisor can also keep an eye open for any infringement of the rather stringent ethical requirements of this discipline. It is extremely important that no one does this kind of work without adequate training and supervision (Smith et al 1998).

The great pioneer of body work in this country is David Boadella (1988), and he has written and edited a number of books in this area. He is also the editor of *Energy & Character*, an excellent journal. If you want a wide-ranging rundown on a whole host of approaches to the body it is worth looking at Nicholas Albery's (1983) book. One of the problems with the body therapies is that they seem to lead to a proliferation of individual practitioners each with a method about which he or she is completely dogmatic. For some reason, this seems to be much more the case in the body therapies than in any of the other approaches. It is quite a relief to come across someone like Boadella, who has a lot of knowledge and quite wide-ranging sympathies.

Anyone who goes in for body work should be aware that it can get you into very deep material quite quickly. If you are ready for that, because you have done a good deal of more conventional therapy already, and are feeling a bit impatient with it, this may be fine. But it is in any case important to make sure that your therapist is a well-trained and well practiced person, who has worked on themselves for at least five years (Rothschild 2000). It is also well to check that the therapist is in supervision. Most good body practitioners recognize the need for supervision in their work. This is, of course, desirable for all therapists and compulsory for members of the AHP group of practitioners, AHPP, and also for the other practitioners who are recognized by the UK Council for Psychotherapy, and to be found on their National Register (Staunton 2002).

The body therapy techniques developed by Reich and Lowen and their followers, and described above, involve much stressful and often painful work, such as hitting, kicking, screaming, intense breathing, stress-inducing positions and movements, and deep pressure applied to tight musculature, referred to as one's body armour.

In contrast to this approach is the body work developed by a few German women, including Elsa Gindler, Magda Proskauer, Marion Rosen, Ilse Middendorf, and Doris Breyer (Moss 1981). Their work promotes mind/body awareness and integration using such techniques as movement, touch, natural breathing, sensory awareness, and voice work. These are much more nonstressful and nonpainful practices. See also Kogan (1980).

3.4 PRIMAL INTEGRATION

This is a form of therapy brought over to this country by Bill Swartley, although it was also pioneered here by Frank Lake (1966). It lays the major stress upon early trauma at the basic cause of neurosis, and enables people to regress back in time to the point where the trouble began, and then to relive it. For this reason some people call it regression-integration therapy. Some of the crucial steps in understanding these early periods in a person's life were pioneered by Grof (1975), and one of the most important early accounts came from Verny (1982).

It puts a lot of emphasis on the whole person, and aims at getting body, feelings, intellect and spirit into some appropriate harmony (Rowan 1988). That is why there is so much talk about the integration aspect. It is not enough to relive primal events, and so change one's personality accordingly; there is then the long task of exploring all the implications of the change one is making.

For this and other reasons this approach is different from that of Primal Therapy (Janov 1983, 1990). Primal integration is one of the heaviest forms of therapy, in the sense of going very deeply into unconscious material (Grof 1988). Accordingly, it is not recommended as a first approach to therapy – rather it is for those who have done some form of therapy already, and who now feel ready to go down into the very roots of their neurosis. Because it deals with old and strong emotions – often in situations which the person felt were too much to take – there may be a good deal of pain involved (Albery 1985).

However, there is primal joy and primal love, as well as primal pain, and there is also a spiritual aspect to the whole thing, often missed or even denied by some other approaches in this area (Laing 1976, 1983). It seems that the deeper one goes

into primal material, the more likely one is to have spiritual experiences too. And these can help a great deal in the process of integration, where we are calling on all the resources we can to build the person up again from scratch, without the harmful assumptions of one's previous approach to life.

Primal integration sets very little in the way of limits for where the person can go to in the process of therapy. Some people may never get further back than childhood, some go back into infancy; some go back to the birth process (Chamberlain 1998); some go back into foetal life (Ridgway 1987), or even further back than that (Peerbolte 1975). Each person is encouraged, with no help from hypnosis or drugs, to go into whatever most concerns them, in a direct and straightforward way (Noble 1993). There are no special rules such as isolation periods or abstinence.

Useful work can be done with children (Emerson 1984). Both group work (usually with two leaders of opposite sexes) and individual work are carried out. This is done in a very active way, often with several people in the group participating. The group work is good for bringing out and working through traumas, and the individual work is particularly good for working up to that (preparation), and for working through the implications of what happens in the group, and enabling integration to take place (consolidation). An interview is usually required before people are invited to join a group.

A great deal of research has now been carried out on all this (Fedor-Freybergh & Vogel 1988) in a number of countries (Blum 1993). Some fascinating work was carried out by Piontelli (2002) on the connection between behaviour in the womb and in later life. Rossi (1994) did work on the psychobiology of foetal life, showing how such memories are possible. Verny (1994) is more interested in the actual process of psychotherapy.

3.5 TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Transpersonal psychology started off within humanistic psychology, and then became more distinct, with its own separate journals and conferences. One interesting overlap is the work of Jean Houston (1998), an ex-president of the Association for Humanistic Psychology who calls her work in this field 'sacred psychology'. So here we have something which goes beyond the borders of humanistic psychology.

Transpersonal experiences involve an expansion or extension of consciousness beyond the usual ego boundaries and beyond the limitations of time and space

(Grof 1979). Maslow (1973) talked about peak experiences, and these form a good entrance point for understanding the transpersonal. It is very important, however, not to fall into the one-two-three-infinity theory of the transpersonal, where we say that one is the body, two is the emotions, three is the intellect, and everything beyond that is one great mish-mash called “the transpersonal”. As the chart demonstrates, there is more than one realm within the transpersonal, and these distinctions are quite essential if we are not to misunderstand our own experience.

Progression from one level to the next is not easy, because it is, as Wilber (1980) has emphasized, a dialectical process involving the negating of the previous phase. Many of us have had the experience of seeing the mental ego, with all its rules and roles, as quite ugly and wrong, when we first came into the stage of authenticity. And just in a similar way, we have to renounce the sense of a separate self with clear boundaries when we move on to the stage of the Subtle self or soul (Hillman 1989).

This is a rich realm, full of symbols and myths, archetypes and visions, multiplicity and imagination (Rowan 2005). This is where we get in touch with the higher self, the deeper self, the transpersonal self, as Assagioli (1975) called it. Robert Assagioli (1991) was a great pioneer in this area, taking off from Jung and developing his own approach, which he called psychosynthesis. In many ways this is an advance on Jung (1966), and is certainly much more approachable and understandable. It takes over from Jung the notion of the collective unconscious, and this is a very important concept at this stage.

One way of using symbols deliberately is in the form of symbol drama, also known as a guided fantasy (Ferrucci 1982), directed daydream or path working. What we do is to use a simple scene or story to enter what Hillman (1975) has called the imaginal world. For example, we might say – “imagine a meadow”. Already in that simple thing each person will imagine a different meadow, and by exploring and analyzing further, much can be discovered about the person’s needs at the level of soul. The very form of the symbol drama will help the person to open up to the transpersonal realm. It gives a hint, as it were, on the symbolic level, which the person can take up if he or she is ready to do so. Similarly, experiences of love and sex can open us up in the same way (Wade 2004).

Because of the emphasis on manyness at this level, places such as wells and standing stones become very important, and we can be inspired by sacred sites. They can nourish our souls and open our hearts. Shamanic work (Mindell 1985) can help at this stage, working with imaginal journeys and so forth. The feeling for

nature which this may inspire can result in a deep ecological awareness (Fox 1990), where we feel part of nature, and nature as holy.

The great way of entering and developing within this stage is through ritual, where deep forces are introduced in a controlled way. If entry to this stage comes suddenly and unawares, however, this may result in a spiritual emergency (Bragdon 1990), which is sometimes hard to distinguish from psychosis. This needs careful handling, and can come out very well if this is done – it is the difference between breakdown and breakthrough (Field 1996).

But when we want to move on again to the Causal level, the level of spirit, we have to leave behind symbol and ritual, and use meditation as the prime method (Goleman 1977). Here again there is a renunciation of the previous stage, which can be painful and difficult. Now we are in the deep water of spirituality, where we have none of the comfortable warmth of the previous stage. As with all these matters, it is safer to meditate with others in a school, rather than thinking that this is something to do on one's own. Meditation is almost tailor-made for self-deception if we work in an isolated way.

Some people speak and write as if the Causal level were the only transpersonal level, and that everything else is subordinate to it. It is certainly very important and worth pursuing, because the purest mystical experiences are to be found here (Underhill 1961). Nondual consciousness finds its natural home at this level of development (Wilber 1977).

Although it is possible to go in for transpersonal work at any time in one's life, Jung thought that it is more appropriate in the second half of life, when there has been time for the other levels to develop fully. Certainly it seems that it is safer to postpone any very deep entry into this realm until the real self has been contacted. Otherwise there is a danger of projecting mother stuff, father stuff, womb stuff, birth stuff, shadow stuff and so on, into the spiritual world, which can lead to frightening experiences. Taken at the right time, however, the transpersonal can be one of the best experiences in this whole field.

One point which Wilber makes, and which again helps to clarify all this, is that when we repudiate a previous stage, we do not lose it. Psycho-spiritual development is like a set of Russian dolls or Chinese boxes, one within the other. We do not lose the mental ego, we simply do not let it run our lives or need its image any more. We do not lose the real self, we simply do not take it for granted, and we do not need our self-image any more. We do not lose our soul, we

recognize that it does not have to be central, and we do not need our soul-image any more. Much of the talk in this realm about losing the ego is quite confused and unhelpful. It is never lost – rather it is questioned in one way and expanded in another.

So far as psychotherapy is concerned, most transpersonal therapists work at the level of soul most of the time, in practice (Boorstein 1996). But all therapists have to work at all levels of which they are capable, at times. And some therapists say they obtain a lot of strength and inspiration from their own work at the level of spirit. In recent years some therapists (e.g. Brazier 1995) have found that it is possible to do therapy at this level.

There has been a great deal of work done on the relation of the transpersonal to psychotherapy, and one of the best general texts comes from Brant Cortright (1997). A more specialized, but quite brilliant text is by Fukuyama & Sevig (1999). Another brilliant book is from Donald Rothberg & Sean Kelly (1998), which present discussions from all angles on the work of Ken Wilber, and helps to show how useful that kind of examination can be in this field.

One of the most challenging contributions has come from Jorge Ferrer (2002), who has presented a re-vision of the whole existing field of the transpersonal with some striking observations, causing a good deal of controversy.