THE SOUL IN HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY
AND DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY

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In the Humanistic field we turned to Gordon Allport to see how we can relate to this “self” involved state of “Inspired Fellowship.” The inspired person is “caught up in” inspiration, involved and moved by another or a moment or a relationship which persists through time and adversity. There are many conditions under which this lasting and resilient thread, inbetween persons involved, that creates a bond. In Allport’s writings concerning the dimensional characteristics of the personality it is called “ego involvement” (Personality and Social Encounter).

In various traditional experiments which Allport surveyed he found that: “…it turns out that one group of subjects (who are personally aroused and committed to a task) behave in ways quite unlike other subjects (who are not so committed),” In instances where subjects were “called out” or had something “personal at stake,” i.e., where they were “ego-involved,” they manifested both statistically (or quantitatively) significant differences or even qualitatively describable changes in their behavior or activity. This 50 to 60 percent discrepancy is attributed specifically to the degree of being actively ego-involved. By “ego” Allport means what was historically defined as soul, at least until Associationistic and Mechanistic viewpoints of human reality emerged and removed the “soul” from human existence in the field of Psychology at least!

Allport argued strongly and convincingly for the reintroduction of this concept of self, back into the psychological field of theory. He uses the term to explain the coherence, unity and purposiveness of human behavior and mental acts. Certainly, in understanding the intentional acts or intentionality in the field of existential phenomenology we are describing these three aspects of experience from the point of view of the actor, the one who is doing the experiencing, from the embodied subjectivity.

At any rate, the “ego-involved” individual as Allport describes to us says that in being so involved in activity it does matter and in this state of being involved in intentional participation changes what one does, i.e., one participates in the situation differently, one is motivated in a new way, a dimension which holds more value because of one’s tie with it. This seems apparent if we reflect on our everyday activities (and lies behind a good deal of today’s lack of meaning in bureaucratic activity, technocratic attitude and mechanistic view of human values). This also
seems important in the area of therapy which explores the “existential vacuum,” loss of meaning and search for meaning.

Allport’s description of being “ego-involved” puts the one who is experiencing back into the psychological arena, saying that one does indeed have something to say about what one does, how one does it and what it means. This also speaks intimately to the experiences of “shared enthusiasm” or of common-participation inbetween individuals or groups of individuals. We can surly posit this “ego-involvement” as an important perspective as true from our own personal experience. Yet we still feel unsettled in some respects. It seems the more we research the more the field expands and proliferates. It is very difficult to get a grasp on this phenomenon in a substantial way.

With Allport’s insistence on the reintroduction of the “soul principle” (without the theological implications of course) in the term “ego” he set into motion the self-actualization trend in psychology. With his insistence that we put the individual back into Psychology he has moved our understanding of the individual in a way which lets us see that one must be in one’s aspirations to be meaningfully involved with the whole of Being. This wholistic attitude is most often relegated to a back seat in both the theoretical constructions and the psychological praxis of contemporary psychology (in the “traditional field”).

Primarily it is seen to be a “metaphysical problem,” not a scientific one, i.e., it is in the “meta-field.” It appears that this move towards total individualization has left the individual “out on a limb” so to speak unless one has an existentially supportive context in which to be free to actualize “loftiest” or meta-aspirational possibilities. The prolific literature dealing with the rampant sense of anomie and the isolation of contemporary human beings attests to this. But for our present purposes, at this point we are still concentrating on the individual as is, actually in one’s possibilities. We will extend these insights to the social context which best provides for the physical manifestation of these possibilities (by physical manifestation we mean the “situatedness” which encourages and fosters growth potential, positive transformation or re-orientation through a community of speech with others).

What we are concentrating on here is looking for ways to speak about how we come into harmony with our aspirations, moved by our inspirations, how we can be “self-actualized.” These terms hover around the concept of motivation as we understand it from the psychological point of view.
Abraham Maslow has extended the motivational field to include what we are speaking about here with his term “metamotivation.” Metamotivation is experienced by individuals who are gratified in all their basic needs (belongingness, affection, respect, self-esteem) and who are open to motivation by “higher” needs, i.e., by what he calls “B-values.” These values are the ultimates, the ineffables, beauty, truth and devotion. “The characteristics of being are also the values of being” (Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*). They are the “fully human” dimensions of human possibilities. These values come into play among the psychologically “healthy” individuals who are open to existential choice. It is the “unitative” style of consciousness, a “letting be” for the expression of the intrinsic nature of things, i.e., the unveiling of an essence.

Maslow’s “metamotivation” speaks to the creative attitude, to the areas of knowledge and experience which have the least quality of denseness, the poetic and the artistic. It is in this metamotivational aspect that Gabriel Marcel’s “permeability” and “reverberation” seem most at home. Also, he is looking into an area of “healthy” individuals, he is offering not only a way of understanding what is happening now but pointing to a direction of where we might move to expand and actualize our possibilities for freer and more open circumstances which promote “healthy attitudes” through creative, self-chosen, mutually inspired living situations.

This is a new way of seeing “ordinary everyday people” as those who are living out their Being-values, their most fulfilling possibilities and who are embodying what they believe, there is a consistency inbetween what they say, what they believe and what they do. They are embodied values of the “highest order.” Maslow expands the purposefulness of our activities here to being caught up in them, swept away by them or surrendering ourselves over to that which “calls” to us. It is a discovery rather than a fate or destiny, here one feels, more the element of duty, obligation or responsibility of being compelled helplessly to respond no matter what one is planning to do. It is more “I must, I have to, I am compelled than I want to” (Maslow).

In this context Maslow also introduces a term which is developed in Social Psychology literature which emerges from this perspective: Synergy Acts which permit the full development of the individual and which are at the same time for the good of the group are said to be high in “synergy.” Those which are for the individual only, are said to be low in “synergy.” This is a way of looking at the cohesiveness of the group, of looking to whether or not it is a communally satisfying living situation for the peoples involved in its constitution.
What we are looking toward is a place whereby individuals can live out their various and self-chosen life styles, values and at the same time, provide an existentially satisfying and mutually inspiring environment which fosters the development of all our fully human possibilities. Now that we have looked to the “height” dimension of “lofty” motives, there is another group of investigators and theory builders who look to the “depths.”

James Hillman (Re-Visioning Psychology) begins with a “psychology of response” through imaginative psychology, i.e., he says we are to look for a “poetic basis of mind,” the soul as imagination. Psychology, he says, is soul-making. Actually, what he is speaking about when he says Psychology as soul-making is Carl Jung’s process of individuation. One finds through the myths one lives out the archetypal roots of existence, one finds a way to link up with the wholeness of being in its most diverse aspects. “By soul I mean first of all, a perspective rather than a substance, a viewpoint toward things rather than a thing itself” (Hillman).

The archetypal perspective which he assumes from the point of a depth psychologist fosters the attempts to deepen and to intensify experience since archetypes are “the deepest patterns of psychic functioning” (Hillman). We are engaged in the act of personifying, a way of being in the world and experiencing the world as a psychological field, where persons are given with events, so that events are experiences that touch us, move us, appeal to us. He is speaking here of Jung’s Theory of Synchronity as an acausal principle, of action.

What we are interested in here is that he is speaking to “experiences that touch us, move us, appeals to us.” He speaks of the personifying act as an “ensouling” by tradition as a necessary mode of understanding the world and being in it. This act is a way of admitting the many and multi-various modes of existence (which lie in archetypal images in our unconscious), into existence and giving them space by which to manifest themselves. It is this imaging things in a personal form by which they find an avenue of loving to reach the heart, to touch us, to move us. Words are seen as charged with affect, with emotive meaning, again we touch upon the power of the word to transform. For Hillman words are “angels” in a sense because they are the carriers of soul, as we would like to say inbetween people. It is in the community of speech that we tell our stories and create our histories together. In telling our story, we speak of the others which have made us be. Our lives could not be told without unfolding those with whose meanings that are mutually embedded. “Without the inherence of soul in words, speech would not move us, words would not provide forms for carrying our lives and giving sense to our deaths” (Hillman).
We live in a psychological nexus of meanings by which we unfold the ultimate meanings of life and live out their multi-dimensional and perspectival “personae” life. We tell the story of soul-making by the process of living out mythical themes in a metaphorical existence. Hillman says that by the process of individuation we give full play to each of the “multiple-personality images” in each theme. We are all characters, all personalities and only by providing a “psychological inner space” for their manifestation and affirmation may we be called to take responsibility for the meanings and the actions of life.

This is done by an imaginal process. It is by allowing the inhumane this psychological freedom in the imaginal process, as well as the humane, that our inhumanity can be tamed by dreaming. So we could speak of it as imaginal psychodrama, by this process of individuation, we give room to the inhuman qualities of humanity. Only by allowing them to speak are we able to tame them, to take from them the power to erupt unguided and to overpower the humane, to make themselves manifest in pathology. In fact, for Hillman, this is the road to understanding pathological conditions, our imaginations are the roads which take us to the heart of the power structure of mental illness but it is also the road out of this same situation by understanding these demands by the soul to be heard. It is asking for a creative space by which we can explore our depths and give voice to the most complex and infinite richness of soul possibilities, the longing of and for “anima.”

Notes


