# CONCEPTS OF INDIVIDUALITY

14 September 1954

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INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE OF THE ARMED FORCES

Washington, D. C.

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COLONEL BAIRD: General Niblo, members of the class: The ability to wear two hats by the same person may be considered as indeed a supernatural trait in the field of human endeavor and human behavior. At least this classification is individualistic and is therefore related to the second phase of our course this morning in executive development, namely, the concept of individuality.

We are honored this morning in having with us a talented, versatile, and capable military leader, though retired, whose services are still in demand by the Department of Defense--a leader in the field of educational psychology.

Having had the personal pleasure of association with our guest speaker on educational matters, I know that he is very anxious to talk to you on human behavior--on how individuals act or react under divergent circumstances. I can assure you that he is exceptionally well qualified to speak authoritatively.

It is therefore a pleasure for me to introduce to this college at this time General Don Faith, or Professor Don Faith, Associate Professor of Educational Psychology at the George Washington University. General Faith.

GENERAL FAITH: General Niblo, Colonel Baird, and gentlemen: I had a little trouble recognizing myself when the Colonel was talking about me. If you know him as well as I do, you won't take what he said too seriously.

I hope I am not going to disturb you too much if I tell you that what I want to talk about this morning is neither very new nor very profound. My concept of my task with you today is not one of leading you into new fields. I would rather ruminate with you in terms that you and I have been talking about for a great many years. Maybe I can put them together a little different from the way in which you have been putting them together. Maybe I can throw a slightly different focus on them. Or maybe all I will be doing is to reinforce in your minds some things that possibly you have been thinking for a good many years but have been reluctant to say aloud. I have no inhibitions at all.

The purpose of this talk is to make some suggestions as to ways in which you can get more work out of people; and, incidental to that, also get better work and have happier people.

I do think I ought to make a couple of points right at the start. I am not a social reformer. Let me make it perfectly clear that I am one of your own kind. My background is just the same as yours. I do hope we will get a better world for my children and grandchildren, but I am not engaged in that this morning. I am engaged in the very prosaic business of talking over with you ways in which we can get more work done.

This talk is not going to be a long-haired talk. I do have a right, I guess, to call myself a psychologist; and I am not a bit ashamed of it, although I have known people who considered that a dirty word. But when I talk in this field, I want it clearly understood I am talking of purely practical things. The things we are talking about are based on good theory--they wouldn't work otherwise--but they are also based on the soundest practice of some very fine military leaders, practices that are in use in many of the very large corporations nowadays.

I am going to be talking in an area that I like to call human relations. Many books are written on this subject nowadays and a large number was written particularly in the past five years. Many fine books have been written on this subject, and just about every one of these books has its own definition of human relations. I suppose they are all good. I want to give you my definition--not that I think mine is any better than any of the others or any better than the definition that you have in mind. I just want to give you mine, so that you and I will know the things that I am talking about this morning.

For our purposes and in these 45 minutes, then, human relations is an area of study and action that is devoted to two goals. The first of these goals is achieving maximum understanding of why people act the way they do in their relations with other people. Then the second goal is making the maximum ethical use we can out of that understanding once we have received it. That is what you and I are going to be talking about.

I have studiously avoided talking about leadership; not that I feel that leadership is a bad thing to talk about. But the things I want to talk about this morning--and I have experimented with them a lot--work just as well whether you are the big black dog or one of the boys on the low end of the totem pole. I am going to talk about playing on the team.

There are two extremes in the philosophy of handling people. One of these is, quite unfairly and quite wrongly, referred to as the traditional military extreme. The other one is being advocated more and more nowadays by somewhat radical social reformers.

The so-called traditional military extreme works fundamentally on a philosophy of fear motivation. It starts out with the thesis that people are no d--- good. It enunciates that if you give them an inch, they will take a mile. It operates on the philosophy of "Catch them young, treat them rough, and tell them nothing. You will do it because I tell you to do it."

This system works. Let there be no question about it--an awful lot of work can be done that way. The Pyramids were built that way. I venture to say that the remainder of the Seven Wonders of the World were built in exactly that same way. Just about all the worthwhile work in all the countries of the world up until about 75 years ago was done by making people afraid not to do it; moreover, it has many advantages. You don't have to be very smart to do it. All you have to do is be strong, be firm. You don't have to be particularly intelligent.

The other extreme is one that people like you and me are more likely to run into in our travels across the country--your children get into a school which calls itself a school operated by progressive education. And let me make it clear that I believe very deeply in progressive education. But I do not believe in the extreme variety of progressive education that says if your little Johnny or my little Jenny wants to play on the sandtable the whole first year at school, we must let them stay at the sandtable lest we ruin their unfolding egos. Or, if a child wants to finger-paint the whole year--and I believe in finger-painting--we must let him finger-paint the whole year lest we spoil his personality. I don't know what you are thinking about that system, but I think it makes a bunch of little stinkers.

Now, my thesis with you this morning is that there is a middle ground between the so-called traditional military approach and the social reformer extreme. In this middle ground, if you and I practice it--and you and I have been practicing it for a good many years--we do get more work done, we get better work done, and we have much happier people on the team while it is being done.

This is the thing that I like to refer to as the modern concept of human relations. And I would like to submit to you at this time that

if you and I are going to do a good job playing in this middle area of handling people, we are going to have to accept four rather fundamental principles. I want to tell you what these principles are; then I want to spend the rest of my time discussing these four principles:

Number one.--People differ, each one from each of the others. And then I think it follows that if this is so, it means that you and I have to treat each one of them differently from the way we treat all the others.

Number two.--You can get more work out of people by helping them feel important than you can by making them feel afraid.

Number three.--The actions of all people originate more often as a result of habit, training, desire, or emotion--or for some other reason rather than a logical reason. I say most of the things that you and I do originate from some nonlogical rather than logical reason.

Of course, if this is true, it is terribly important. It means that you and I can't just provide logical solutions to situations. If the situations are emotional situations, we have to take that into account.

Number four.--We have to like people before we can do a worthwhile job of playing on a human team.

These are my four fundamentals. With your permission, I am going to spend the rest of my time talking about them.

Number one--and the one which I think Colonel Price hopes I will spend most of my time on, because it is the one that fits in most nearly with my assigned topic--is that people are different from each other. I suppose anybody in this psychology racket which I practice would say that every man is the result of some sort of combination between his heredity and his environment. If you go any further, you get into a row; some think that heredity is more important, while others think that environment is more important. I have my own opinion on the matter, but I don't think it is material to the issues before us this morning.

Not all people have the same heredity. Two brothers do not have identical heredity. Only identical twins have the same heredity. And no two people in this world have the same environment. I think it follows fundamentally that no two people are precisely alike.

Let us go a little bit into how people are different. Any schoolboy, any layman, will agree right now that some people are tall and some are short; and that there are advantages and disadvantages in each of these physical builds. Being tall is very convenient for people who want to be basketball centers. We have learned long ago, again in the area of physical build, that some men are burly and strong, while others are wiry; and we have found that there are advantages in each of those physical builds. I suppose almost everybody in the United States, since World War I, is familiar with the fact that all of us vary, each from the other, with regard to intelligence. During World War I we gave intelligence tests to many millions of people.

In World War I different intelligence tests were given to something like 10 million people. You are all familiar with them. Each one of those men went back home and most of them talked to 10 or 20 others about what happened to them. So our whole population knows something about intelligence. We have all long since recognized the fact that you do not treat the brilliant men and the stupid ones in precisely the same way.

But I want to go a little further than that. At least let me suggest to you that there are many other areas in which we differ each from the other--take sensitivity.

You remember that old boy who used to work for you, who had an elephant hide? You practically had to knock him down to get it into his head that he was not behaving the way you wanted him to. Then you remember that sweet little girl who came to work as your secretary, who cried if you suggested that a comma would look a little bit better than the semicolon she had put in. Are you going to treat Mr. Elephant Hide and the little stenographer the same way? I don't think so.

Let us take another case--the willingness to accept responsibility. I like to recall to you things out of your own experience, because these are things out of your own experience. Do you remember the lad who sat back of your desk as your deputy or executive officer, who was Mr. Efficiency right from the minute he came in? He asked you questions about this and that. You thought he was just the thing, until all of a sudden you woke up one morning and discovered that he was stealing the floor right out from under your desk. Mr. Empire Builder. Do you know that laddie? Don't tell me you don't.

And then do you remember Mr. Spineless? He is the one who, when you gave him a job to do, would just get out the door, and then turn around and come back in and say: "Colonel, I am not certain about this. You say you want me to do so-and-so?" "Why, yes. That is what I want you to do." About five minutes later he would come back and say: "I have been thinking about these things. How would you like me to do so-and-so?" The chap without any backbone.

Are you going to treat the empire builder and Mr. Spineless the same way? Again I say we would be very stupid if we did.

One more example--the amount of energy that people have varies. Do you remember the human dynamo who used to work with you? He would go out with you on an inspection tour. He would do all the work and you would just be going along. By the time a few hours had gone, he would have you all tired out, while he would be carrying on just beautifully. Then do you remember Mr. Drag? He drags to work in the morning, drags through the day, then drags home at night. Are you going to treat all those people the same?

So all I can say to you is that, as regards possibly 50 and possibly as many as 100 different traits, the people on the teams that you and I are working on vary. They don't just vary on a yes-or-no basis. They vary from Mr. Drag, who drags all the time, to the fellow who has a little more speed, to the one who is about normal, and on up to Mr. Dynamo. And you and I are going to put the brake on Mr. Dynamo and try to rig an accelerator on Mr. Drag.

I suppose all of you are agreeing with me thus far, but this is just about the time when you come into the "yes" phase, where you say: "Yes; that is all very fine; but where does it get us?" Here, I think, is where it gets you: I am talking now more about the jobs you were doing before you came to this college and the jobs you will be doing after you graduate.

Each of you is a member of a team. On that team there is certainly the boss. There are probably 3 or 4 colleagues. There are probably 6, 7, or 8--I hope not 10, 12, or 15 subordinates. These are the people with whom you deal day in and day out, the people together with whom you get things done.

I would suggest that as soon as you find yourselves back on a team, you make a study of the personality of each one of these people a primary project. Find out how they react. Find out whether this particular

person is the kind who reacts well to praise or gets a swelled head. Is this the particular kind of person who about once every three months has to have a kick applied in a properly selected place? Study what kind of stimulus is going to work best with each one of these people. And then apply it.

It is now time to talk again about principle number two, which is to the effect that you can get more work out of people by helping them to feel important than by making them feel afraid. Of course, this is heresy from the historical point of view. We believed most sincerely until about 50 years ago that the only way we had of getting work done was to make people feel afraid. The Hawthorne Studies in 1927 broke some ground on this new theory. We have been getting places ever since.

It seems to me there are probably at least two reasons why this philosophy of helping people feel more important rates the place it does in any discussion of human relations. The first is this cultural ailment that people have, that is very commonly, though rather improperly referred to as an inferiority complex.

I am not going to try this experiment on you, because it might embarrass you somewhat. But I want to say that I have tried this many, many times; and I do know what the result would be. I am going to tell you what the experiment is. Then I am going to tell you what the result would be.

If I were to ask you if during the past year, not just once or twice, not even three times, but half a dozen times, or maybe more times than that, perhaps in the middle of the night, perhaps in the early morning after a bad evening, or perhaps just in the course of the day, this feeling came over you: "Look, Joe. You are not very much of a muchness. You have been fooling people a good, long time. People think you are a pretty fine person. You have a reputation for getting things done all right; but if people really knew what kind of a bozo you are, things wouldn't be so nice for you." Do you know the thing I am talking about? Don't tell me you don't. If I were to ask you that question: "Does that thing kick you maybe four, six, eight times a year?" if I were to ask for a showing of hands, do you know what I would get? About 90 percent would hold up your hands; and, if you will permit me, the other 10 percent would be falsifying.

This business of feelings of inferiority is just as common as a bad cold. All of us have them. I am not a bit ashamed to admit they come

over me. I have found out that it happens to everybody. They are not too serious as long as we don't let them get to the point where we let them control us, or to the point where we get to downgrading ourselves aloud. If you tell people you are a no-good so-and-so, some of them are going to believe you. However, it does mean that people need to be helped to feel important. Even people like you and me need to be helped out that way.

There is one other thing--have you ever gone over your checkbook in recent years to find out where your money goes? I know that the price of coffee has gone up, and most of us eat more hamburgers and less beefsteak than we used to. But if you take a careful check, you will find that an awful lot of your money goes, one way or another, into helping you look more important than the fellow next door. It goes maybe into a bigger house, or one more newly painted, into a larger automobile, or a better-looking wife. If you think I am fooling about that "better-looking wife," just look at how much of your money goes to beauty parlors these days. You might be surprised.

This is what I am trying to say: In the culture that you and I live in today, the absolute necessities of life come pretty easily. And it is a pretty well-established fact that when the animal needs are met, then we come in for the social needs--the prestige needs--which means that people are suckers for this business of feeling important.

How do you go about helping people feel important? Praise them? Yes, within limits; but not too often. Certainly not if they don't deserve it--undeserved praise is like stale beer; it is pretty flat. Everybody knows what is going on.

Some other ways--recognition, participation, ask his advice and take it.

I like, when I am talking in this field, to have just a little fun telling my formula for turning an acquaintance into a friend. You are close to beginning a school year down here. You have run into two or three people that you sort of like the looks of. You would like to turn them into friends. How do you set about it?

Invite him and his wife out to your house for dinner, or for cocktails on Sunday afternoon? Take him to the National or to Olney for a good show on Friday or Saturday night? Invite him into your car pool?

Oh, no. Uh-uh. No, sir. Get him to invite you and your wife out to dinner. Ask him if he can get you into his car pool. Why? You are helping him feel important.

Do you think that is silly? I have two answers. The first is: Try it out. The second is this: Go back into your experience. Take two people. Take someone senior to you, who has been a considerable amount of help to you, been your patron. Now pick out someone junior to you whom you have helped out and for whom you have acted as patron. Now, examine your soul deeply. Which one of the two do you like the better? The guy you have helped, not the guy who has helped you. Maybe it shouldn't be that way, but that is the way it works.

So let us help people feel important.

I have gone about as far as I can go without facing up to the ethical issue. I have been telling you to butter people up. How much buttering can you do before the butter turns rancid? How much of this kind of business can you do and still retain your own self-respect? I don't know. I feel certain this is an individual problem. I can tell you what is true for me. I can say a lot of this as long as I mean it, but I can't do much if I can't sincerely say it.

I consistently go out of my way to say pleasant things to people, to invite them in to participate, to salve their ego, if you want to put it that way. I do a great deal of that. But I never do it if I don't mean it.

I think there is an ethical reason for that. I couldn't live with myself if I did anything else, and I have to live with myself all the time. I have to live with other people only from time to time.

So each one has to figure out for himself how far he can go. Frankly, I don't think you can get by very long with buttering up people if you are not sincere about it. With the guy down below, you can't get by for even 15 minutes with it. He knows about it. With the boss you can get by for quite a while. I have been amazed all my life at the susceptibility of boss men to flattery. But even they catch up with you in time, and then it doesn't pay off.

Before I leave this saying that you get more work by helping people feel important than you do by helping make them feel afraid, I have to take up just one slight exception. It has been my experience that in most groups the prestige motivation, that is helping people feel important, achieves results with all but a few of those with whom I have dealt.

It may be as low as 2 percent in some groups. In others it may go up as high as 5 percent.

It would be very silly for me to stand here and talk about idealism to the point where you thought I wasn't telling the truth. My practice in the past, when I ran into the laddie who could not be handled by being made important, was to revert right back to the old fear motive. I made him wish he had.

Maybe that is not right. I suspect that probably a great deal of it is due to the fact that I am just not smart enough to take care of the last 2 percent. Or maybe they have been conditioned from past experience to the point where it is hard to unlock the door. But I thought I had to say that, because I would rather level off with you. I think it is a very small group. Well over 9 men out of 10 can be influenced to play on the team with the prestige motivation. There are very few who cannot.

Now let us go to principle number three. An awful lot of human behavior, particularly what people call social human behavior--that is, human behavior where more than one human being is involved--stems out of habit, training--particularly training--emotion, desire, the way we see the world, and areas like that, for other than logical reasons.

Many of the things we do in this world arise from other than logical reasons. I know of a strike that occurred in a mine out West because there was ketchup on the foreman's table and there wasn't any ketchup on the miners' table. It took the management quite a while to find out what was really wrong.

My point is this: If we are going to handle human beings, when the behavior of some man is not the satisfactory kind of behavior, you and I can't be satisfied with just seeing what he does. We have to dig into why he does it.

That brings me to number four. This isn't in fourth place because I think it is the least important. I think it is vitally important. You can't play on the human team if you don't like people. There was a time when the social psychologists believed you could divide people into three groups--those that like people, those that like things, and those that like ideas. That didn't hold up. I am sure you can understand why it didn't. Because all of us like all three, to a greater or less extent.

I think it is still practically true that here and there we find people who put the greatest focus on ideas. Those are the ivory tower boys. Then we find people who put the greatest focus on things. They are the people who have done a great deal in the way of the essential engineering in the world. Then there are the common folks like you and me, who like people. Let me make it plain I am not suggesting that the fact that you and I like people makes us any better than those other people. I don't think it does, but it makes us different. It does qualify us in a better way to play on teams instead of being lone wolves.

If there be one among you who is a little bit in doubt about this thing, let me suggest that it is not very hard to like people. People are a lot of fun. I am sincere in that, and I want to tell you why.

Three or four times a year at least I spend a most enjoyable hour. I am supposed to be a permanent resident of Washington. I am, therefore, subject to this ailment which Washington residents have--of visiting relatives and guests from out of town. I am sure some of you know what I mean. Well, when these guests or relatives come in by train, it becomes my duty to go down to the Union Station to meet them. I always try to make it down there about an hour early. Then I sit down on one of those hard benches and I start watching people.

I don't know of any show, I don't know of any classroom, that is more educational or more delightful than that. And I am not laughing at them. I am enjoying them. Sometimes I enjoy with them. I had an engineer come sit beside me once; he and I chatted about 30 minutes on what are the advantages and disadvantages of running a locomotive. People are a lot of fun if you just accept it that they are.

It seems to me that anyone who has the temerity to use as much time of as many highly paid people as I have used in the last 40 minutes ought to be able to generalize a little bit; ought to be able to come out with one or two fundamentals out of this rambling that I have been doing. So I will try to come up with a few.

The first of these is that there aren't any rules for dealing with people. There aren't any hard and fast formulas. There isn't any short system. People are different. That is what you and I have been talking about these 40 minutes. The only approach is what people in my racket call the clinical approach. That is the approach toward the individual.

We can have some principles. These are only principles, part-time rules--rules that will work more often than they will not. They are rules which, if used in conjunction with three or four other rules, will almost surely work. But none of these principles is a formula. It isn't a sure thing.

I have been talking to you about four of these principles. Let me make it quite clear to you before I leave it that these are only principles. These are only part-time rules. These are only guides, which I think will work more often than they won't.

I like to lay this on fairly heavily, because one of these days some laddie is going to come around to the important place where you are going from here and tell you that he has the good system, in capital letters. I say to you, beware of that man. He is no doubt a quack.

One last generalization: If there is a central principle--and I think there is--in the business of dealing with people, that central principle--is that you have to think of people as individuals, treat them as individuals, consider every problem as a problem involving an individual. Then, if you go one step further and get yourself inside that other individual's head, stand in his boots, use the thing we call empathy, you will have a fine chance of coming out right.

Gentlemen, I have used your time this morning on four principles which I gave in the early part of my lecture. We must keep in mind that people are different from each other. You and I as members of a team must not forget that, because it means that everybody else is different from us. We can't treat them all alike. It is silly to talk about formulas in connection with people. You can't use the same technique in playing the harmonica and the violin. You don't treat different people the same.

I have enjoyed being here. Thank you very much for asking me down.

(28 October 1954--750)S/gw