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EDITORIAL

EDUCATION AND HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY

This month we have a number of articles on the subject of education. They do not present a planned symposium but a series of individual experiences and ideas from people working or interested in education. They range from the idealistic to the abrasive. Later - possibly in conjunction with the AHP's seminar on education which is planned for the autumn, we would like to return again to this vitally important subject.

It would help if we could have some feed-back from you, the reader. Your response, your understanding, your communications, can help to produce a living and cooperative forum of ideas - rather than a monthly text-book.

Vivian Milroy

Discussions about education usually rely on a mental picture of an educator in relation to a group of those who are to be educated and include proposals to modify or change institutions, methods, purposes and ideas. It is invariably a question of the educating few in relation to the educable many, and criticism of the implicit power structure involved often means the speaker would like to substitute his own form of power structure for the one criticised.

In my view, this is as true of people within the human potential movement as it is of those outside it, and it is something to be both aware of and on guard against. Critics of the educational system are tempted both to adopt and project viewpoints which are conformist within the alternative system, and this is only natural since any framework of ideas has to exist in the context of a wider culture which is already well filled with competing and conformist systems.

In practice education, like most other fields, rests more upon the individual people concerned than upon the framework within which they have to work. There are both more and less effective doctors, psychotherapists, motor mechanics and dustmen, regardless of their qualifications or experience, and this is probably nowhere more important than among those who are actively engaged in cultivating the minds of others.

The best teachers are those who make a subject interesting, but how do they do it? Presumably by communicating their own interest whether it be in the subject, the teaching situation, the personalities of the students or the canoeing holidays they had ten years ago. The important thing is that the student's interest is aroused, whether because of his relationship with the teacher or for some other reason, and he is therefore most likely to learn in the best sense of the word.

What this amounts to is that the student is largely educating himself, his own energies acting as the main driving force in the learning process. With this approach he can go on learning and growing all his life.

So where do we begin? I suggest with ourselves. Instead of saying 'I know about humanistic psychology because I have participated in encounter groups and read books, so now I can improve the world' why not continue to learn and grow both in groups and outside them?

If you are an educator, and you are still learning, you not only stand a better chance of stimulating your students into educating themselves, you also help to break down the false distinction between you the teacher and them the pupils, and with it the rigidifying power structure whereby our culture is made so oppressive.

This should surely be the message from the human potential movement let us aim for the minimum viable power structure, the maximum encouragement to self-education, and a loving rejection of those who no longer want to grow themselves but only tell others what to do.

Neville