

Dear Sir,

I wish to start something in the fields of Self And Society simultaneously, namely a University of Life which I am calling 'Option' and which will work an alternative culture for a suburban population - in my own case that is N.E. Surrey, but the idea is for export.

We will meet in our own houses (or some of them) at flexible times. Absolutely no fee will be involved, no matter how large we get, since the creation of this new life will be an exercise for me no less than for others. (You shouldn't have to pay a fee to *live!*)

In the first phase of the work, individuals will have the opportunity of a peaceful and friendly exchange of notes on serious ambitions, ideas and emotional requirements. The focus, as always with this 'University', will be creativity - in our duties, in chosen pursuits on in creating a life to suit our true nature.

The second phase, which will still include the first, will be the practical development of creativity in our lives, using the informal study of psychological principle left to us by the greatest of the ancients, such as Ghankava, Lao-tse, Buddha, Socrates, Jesus and others, in their pure form before they were made into popular religions. Material drawn from modern science will also be used where helpful, but *creativity will not be reduced to behaviour.*

Moreover, on no account will any sort of mental violence be condoned.

The third phase, which is to go on including the other two, will be the creation of an alternative culture for the local environment. That cannot be predicted in detail, since it will be a collective creation. My vision is partly for the future when women will be as economically free as they choose, when medical science will have mastered contraception and sexually transmitted disease and when people will be able freely to opt for their favoured position in the spectrum of heterosexual behaviour, so that marriage in the traditional sense will be a free choice and not the regular early means to security or sexual gratification or an escape from parental restriction. In the future that I wish to plan for, divorce would be obsolescent and children would not so often be betrayed by parents unable to get all their happiness from one another.

I am 40, married, a mathematics teacher with an M.A. in engineering. For 15 years I have studied the practical implications of the great spiritual teachings, especially the 'Fourth way'

Sincerely,

Philippe R.S. Epps
Surrey

A. Orchard

Myself, education and change

I am 24, an English teacher. I arrived in the Grammar School for boys in South London (the girls live on the other side of a short divide) in September 1972. I was so anxious to fit in that I spent most of my time with my mind spinning around like a treadmill in a rat's cage: preparing, rehearsing, planning, making sure everything would run on very straight rails. I nagged my head of department for his support which he coldly resisted, fortunately for me!

So, I walked into the classroom, my head reeling with ideas as to what the boys ought to respond to in terms of themes. Immediately I was caught in a net of nostalgia for the school where I had previously been working, a school for maladjusted children in an idyllic setting in Cornwall, where, on one of the rare occasions in my life so far, I felt I belonged to some corporate body. I wonder, today, at that label 'maladjusted' - who was more 'maladjusted' - myself or

some of the children? I only know that those trodden-on souls gave me a wealth of love and affection as well as hate, anger and grief sometimes. At the Grammar School, the 'web of nostalgia' immediately started to make me moan and complain: I was not suited to playing the role, to fitting in with a tight classroom schedule, to the traditions that insisted I kept my distance from the boys, and not get too 'friendly' with them. I remember one thing my interviewer (the Deputy Head) said to me (it was evidently most important to him). *'Would you be able to reprimand a boy if need be, despite your personal feelings in the matter?'* Planned schizophrenia in the name of duty, I wonder? Of course, I (topdog) mumbled a reply in the affirmative - my need to be safe, to be stamped with approval was too great.

All these obstacles seemed like a wall - surely a school for maladjusted children, or a free school, would suit me better? So I escaped for a while and that mechanical, false self marched on giving out essays, teacherly clichés, pretending to agree with my colleagues about the importance of keeping a 'healthy psychological distance' between myself and 'them'. They (the boys) were, in the nature of things, mostly irresponsible, not to be trusted, apathetic, immature and didn't know what was best for them. They had to be guided, cajoled, tempted, humoured, of course, it was sheer folly to take their point of view, to see the world as they saw it. This was to succumb to the weakness of 'child-centred' education (and I still don't know what that phrase means!)

In those first two weeks, I was rigidly authoritarian: only my ideas were acceptable and any suggestions for creative work from the boys was treated with extreme mistrust by myself. So they

soon gave up - what's the use of bothering - he's always right, always wants things done his way, rigid with anxiety and fear, a living corpse shuttled around that school, until . . .

Until one day, in December 1973, a group of my rebellious and cheeky third year came into the classroom cowed and frightened. They had been bullied by some fourth years. Somehow, I unlocked *myself* and showed concern and respect . . . By the end of January, the 'miracle' had happened, the tide had turned and that part of myself which had been tragically entombed for two months, the energetic receiver of truth of 'what is', emerged again. I wanted to live, to be fully myself in the classroom and I have been taking small steps towards this ever since.

In October 1973, I used Hunter's book 'Encounter in the classroom' as a guideline (again, I still do depend on authorities, or guide lines just a little). We discussed discussions. My first years from was violently competitive - discussions were shouting matches. We began to explore ways in which those who were left out could be brought into a discussion. From there, we *talked about* feelings of being left out. Some were, however, quite confident in the fact that they had never felt left out and that the best solution was to herd the quiet ones together, that the more aggressively verbal members of the form would not have to restrain themselves unduly.

Then the crucial break came. There was one boy in the home who was obviously an outsider: fat and podgy, he edged around the room like some wary wild animal, paralysed with fear and paranoia, obsessively trying to figure out where the next teasing blow would come from. He was graced with a particularly terrifying

baleful stare and whenever he approached me, he would do so with his eyes peering up at me from underneath his eyebrows, like some sinner supplicating mercy.

Rigid and tense, he could not let himself go either in drama or in creative writing. What made it worse was the reality of my own feelings towards him at one point. I thought I ought to act out the 'kind and tolerant teacher' role - underneath I wanted to shake him sadistically, to 'knock some life' into him. I despised him - as I despise those qualities and behaviour in myself. Afraid of my own fear, I was about to sacrifice him.

But then, one particularly open and honest boy, John, broached the matter of the ostracism of fat David. And immediately wished he hadn't done so, for David spent the next half-hour in tears. The camp was then split roughly in two, one half asserting that it would have been better not to have touched the matter, out of respect for David's feelings, the other feeling that one should not sweep dirt under the carpet. I found myself vehemently supporting John and at last things were moving.

Since then, we have spent many lessons exchanging our feelings in the 'here and now' towards each other and many have found the courage to be true to themselves and to the ceaseless, moment to moment flow of life within them. I have used some Gestalt techniques, which many have enjoyed tremendously: fantasy journeys, reversals, criticising one's mirror image and rebelling, comparing fantasy impressions of others with the reality.

Of course, it's not all plain sailing. There are those like Peter, who can let go enough to yell out, so that all can hear, 'You must not wet your bed!' and can afterwards express his anxiety about

exposing himself quite openly. But there are others who still insist on playing the game of 'trying to please me' (perhaps part of me still wants this to happen) trying to be liked by as many as possible, so great is their fear of rejection and need for affection and acceptance. And of course, they still balk at expressing 'unacceptable' feelings towards myself: they apparently wouldn't like to hurt my feelings, a common-enough phrase in middle-class usage and it still doesn't make sense to me. But, one did manage to say he felt jealous, because another boy he particularly liked was going with someone else. That really made me warm towards him. Another (John) came to me at the end of the lesson and said '*I feel depressed because I've had my hand up for a long time and you wouldn't let me speak*' (Come to think of it, is it necessary for them to stick their hands up? - I still want to control, apparently) I replied: 'I'm sorry' and immediately felt like kicking myself. What I was really feeling was: 'I feel a failure - please don't reject me'. So firstly, I learn that I need to accept their love and affection (often lavishly and movingly bestowed) as well as being able to give it. Strangely, I find the former much more difficult than the latter. Secondly, I learn that, if I keep my mind free from superfluous junk, like preconception, assumptions and automatic role-playing, I can learn about them and about myself and be truly creative and alive: i.e. by jumping into the realm of the unknown I want them to grow, to be themselves and for that to happen I have to have the courage to let go and be myself in class. I write poetry in floods outside school - why not inside school, I ask myself. Why do I have to 'wait' on the children. For a long time I have had the no doubt naive vision of the 'ideal' (naughty boy - that's a naughty word) teacher being the type of artisan around whom the interested children

come of their own will to learn and observe as the man is involved in his work. Perhaps I have even to free myself of this ideal, to see 'what is' a little more sharply.

In my fourth year, I expected more resistance, but to my surprise, did not get it. I warmed to the very majestic and inspiring sight of a 15 year old blushing and crying in anger at being teased and felt an aggressive need to validate his release of emotions. I also managed to tell them that I dislike my face rather a lot of the time and need continual reassurance in this respect. '*What's wrong with your face?*' said above-mentioned 15 year old rather gruffly, but quite failing to hide his affection and concern. And a group of four others seemed reassured at the fact that they all disliked themselves for letting their self-condemning fantasies get in the way of their marching up to a girl they fancied to ask her for a dance or a date.

Of course, at school I often rage around inside my head at the 'powers that be' in the school, but really the 'problem' is inside myself. Part of myself is my dominating grandfather, who crushed my poor father and who tried to strangle me in jealousy of the affection my mother gave me, the other is the angry, grief-stricken child, with the will to live and be myself confronted with the temptation of role-playing. I can play subtle tricks with myself when I'm with the kids and I would love to meet any teacher who could give me support in the classification of my self-awareness.

But above all, I feel I can never adjust to a situation in which so much value is placed on the 'excellence of the intellect', on role-learning and on the pre-eminence of the printed word (*so why do I want to*

get this printed, I ask myself?) What about the body and the feelings and the crucial problem of 'ego-building' which seems to be the 'in-thing' in most schools. Should I build up the kids' egos - should I film over their feelings with a membrane of words, partially blinding them to their experiencing? Do I want to? I say no, but (so do I really say no?) can I change anything in this monolithic system by opting out? Is it a monolithic system, or is this yet another of the fantasies I use to stop myself growing? Dare I take the risk of letting out my anger, of telling myself in the staff-room. Can I withstand the onslaught of patronising and pitying comments which I fantasize might follow? Why *withstand?* Because of the ego's need to defend itself, to maintain security and self-control? Dare I fully expose my grief and anger and self-control? Dare I fully expose my grief and anger to the kids? What about their fear of expressing their warm and tender feelings and that very crippling fear of being labelled a 'queer'?

At bottom, I am aware that it's the need for power and control which distorts and corrupts in schools and it is that need which is the main obstacle to my own growth. And yet by becoming a teacher, I step into a role which expects me to control others. Until compulsory schooling is brought to an end, I do not feel that I can ever be completely myself in the classroom, for the kids have never chosen to *be* with me. Surely a child of any age can be responsible for himself (physical needs aside) and by insisting on their basic irresponsibility, helplessness and 'not knowing what's good for themselves', we create a needless dependency in them and stifle in them that which is 'genius', the free evolution of the self, the unknown, the nameless, love. Where now for me?

Perhaps I can best answer by quoting from John, aged 12; he says it better.

'I was there now on top of this cliff perhaps a deadly cliff for me or perhaps beautiful. The overcast day nearly made me decide. The sea down below looking so natural and *Alive*. That word, I didn't want to know it but it came on ringing *alive, alive, be alive*. The rocks they are being slowly murdered by the sea at least my way would be quick. A gull came flying past. It looked hurt, disabled, its eye, it only had one eye. Why doesn't he

kill himself - happiness to be alive, I suppose. Why can't I be happy to be alive? The sky had changed to bright blue now. The rocks perhaps healed by now (the smoothing sea). They are happy, *Happy Happy* now. I began to feel happy as if God wants me to live. Energy was flowing back into my body. Will to *Live Live* and be happy. I was gay again. A ship went by - the name: The Mary Celest - mysterious ship, I thought. My death wasn't going to be mysterious. I've got the will to live mate. Singing out aloud *I'm going to be alive!*

List of Therapists

We are hoping in future issues to publish a list of therapists working within the Humanistic Psychology field. In order to make this as comprehensive as possible, may we ask all our readers to let us know if they are themselves working as therapists or if they know of anyone who is. We aim to make this as broad as possible including all forms of Body Therapy, Gestalt, Transaction Analysis, Co-counselling, Rogerian Counselling, hypno-therapy and in fact anything up to but not including traditional psycho-analysis and verbal group therapy.

There has been considerable discussion recently within the Association of Humanistic Psychology about the necessity and political implications of the accreditation of therapists. The recent

banning of the 'Church of Scientology' was seen to be a somewhat dangerous precedent and although the idea of establishment approval, letters after the name and the general pomposity of authoritarian medicine was foreign to the philosophy of most of us, it might well be that in a practical sense, discretion would be the better part of alternative therapies. We are often asked to suggest people who specialise in particular areas and, accreditation apart, it would be extremely useful to have a comprehensive list of people working as therapists.

Could we have as much information as possible both about methods of work, qualifications if any, and preferred type of patient?

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