

AP Activities

ENCOUNTER GROUPS AND HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY

In July, Carmi Harari and his wife Zaraleya came over to visit. He told us a little about what was going on around the world. He is the chairman of the international committee of the AHP.

The Scandinavians have just had a big conference on humanistic psychology in education, attended by hundreds of delegates from Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland, and held in Oslo. About a quarter of the presentations were politically radical, and often very critical of much of what goes on under the name of humanistic psychology, particularly in the United States.

It seems that in many countries, humanistic psychology is more or less identified with encounter groups. It is possible, however, to be deeply interested and involved in humanistic psychology and at the time to suspect or reject encounter groups. People like Arthur Koestler, Jean-Paul Sartre and Herbert Marcuse are examples of people who like humanistic psychology but do not like encounter groups.

This is an important point to make, because encounter groups are a very visible phenomenon, and it is easy to take sides about them. It is all too easy to dismiss encounter groups and, by so doing, to mistakenly think that one has dismissed humanistic psychology.

As an obvious example, take the work of Abe Maslow. He developed a whole basic theory of human needs, which has now had impressive research confirmation from the work of Kohlberg and Loevinger. He is one of the two or three key people who developed the whole approach of humanistic psychology. Yet his work is seldom or never referred to or used in encounter groups. This is not to argue that it is good or bad, but simply to point out that the two things (humanistic psychology and encounter groups) cannot be equated.

Other areas where humanistic psychology is working include parapsychology (telepathy, clairvoyance, psychokinesis, dowsing, etc.), transpersonal and religious experience (ecstasy and other altered states of consciousness), work with organizations (autonomy programmes, organization development, etc.), work in the personal/political area (female/male relations, community development, etc.), and many others. A glance at the booklist (free to AHP members, 50p to others) makes this plain.

To indicate some of the questions which those in humanistic psychology are actually trying to tackle at the moment, here are four points from an AHP education conference taking place at Stanford University in November.

1. What is the 'reality' that persons need most to learn and see? Isaac Newton, Don Juan and Karl Marx see very different 'worlds'. After several centuries during which the nature of reality seemed self-evident to all but a small minority of people in our culture, we are bewildered by the evidence that 'normal' perception is a learned and artificial action.
2. What are the processes in the person that must be strengthened or inhibited so that a particular 'reality' can be perceived? This question goes quite beyond the issue of affective and cognitive domains, at least as that issue is usually conceived. Beginning with the nature of what is to be known, it considers the question of what knowing is and how it comes about.
3. What are the interpersonal situations in which these processes take place best? The familiar humanistic distrust of structure and authority squares badly with the rigour of so many of the spiritual disciplines that form one wing of contemporary humanism.
4. What practical actions can we take to create institutions or programmes in which humanistic education, as articulated in terms of these basic questions, can be practiced?

Encounter groups can be extremely important and extremely beautiful, and nothing that has been said should take away from that. But let us be very clear that they represent only one point on the spectrum of humanistic psychology activities.

G R T A CONFERENCE .

The annual conference of the Group Relations Training Association will take place in Birmingham starting on the afternoon of Thursday 12 September and finishing at teatime on Sunday 15 September. There will be papers or presentations by Mel Berger, Ray Cadwell, Anne Schutzenberger, Michael Reddy, John Southgate, John Heron, Eve Godfrey, Ken Winter, John Rowan, David Clark, Ken Harrison, Rose Evison, Michael Armstrong, Jacquetta Bloomer and others, together with films, etc. Details from Lynne Muir, Social Administration Department, University of Birmingham, P.O. Box 363, Birmingham B15 2TT.

You are invited to find out how humanistic psychology helps to generate a way of life, not only for the person himself in his own private psyche, but also for the same person as a social being, a member of society.

The subscription is £6 per year, which includes a subscription to *Self & Society*, or £4 for mailing members. Mailing members receive *Self & Society* and all communications from the AHP and will be entitled to attend all meetings but without discounts.

To: The Treasurer, Association for Humanistic Psychology,
62 Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1 0AU.

I would like to join the AHP in Britain, and enclose my first year's subscription.

NAME

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OCCUPATION

QUALIFICATIONS

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GROWTH CENTRES

BRISTOL ENCOUNTER CENTRE

28 Drakes Way, Portishead, Bristol. Tel: Portishead 847490. Weekend Encounter Groups, Meditation, Creativity Groups, Mini-Society Work, Co-Counselling, various On-Going Groups. Directors: Ken Waldie, John Crook.

THE CHURCHILL CENTRE

22 Montagu Street, W1, off Montagu Square. (Nearest tube: Marble Arch) Tel: 402 9475. A centre for human relations training, emotional education and group therapy, set up by Ken Holme, a consultant psychologist.

EAST MIDLANDS AND FURTHER NORTH

Anyone interested in getting something together anywhere between Birmingham and Newcastle, please get in touch with Brian Cranwell or Alan Byron at 74 Banner Cross Road, Sheffield S11 9HR, or telephone 360435. The idea is for occasional get together and the exchange of information about what is going on encounter-wise in the area.

SELF-DIRECTED ENCOUNTER GROUPS

St. William's School, Market Weighton, Yorks YO43HA. 06962/2218. Encounter groups with an emphasis on trust in the group process. Groups tend to be more on 'community' than 'therapy' lines. Small charge (£1.00) to cover costs. Other practical details, or more information on the groups available from Marcellus Guyler.