

'One of the most important things I got out of the Programme was the realisation that I could listen to people and that was much more important for them than talking to them. Now, in my work as student counsellor I am more focussed on my client and her needs rather than on my own needs to show that I am 'good'. I feel more confident, patient, and also more effective in work. (student counsellor girls' school).

'A dramatic change has taken place in me. I now find that I treat my employees as human beings. . . and it works'. (Company Manager).

'In the short term I found that the Programme had helped me a lot, but now it's too difficult. I can't maintain the change in the outside world. I am sad about that'. (Personnel Manager).

'During the Programme I wasn't affected at all. I came into it with the assumption that feelings were dangerous and should be kept out of my work. Now I realise that feelings are a part of my work with others - there's no way human beings can avoid feelings. It's even a logical impossibility. I wish I had realised this simple fact before the Programme.' (Headmaster).

'Suddenly other people weren't so much of a threat to me.' (Social Worker).

ARE WE DISABLING?

For quite some time now I have been concerned about the way in which humanistic psychology and humanistic psychologists have tended to set themselves apart from both the academic community and from the community generally. In particular, I have been concerned about the expropriation of the notion of 'growth' by humanistic psychologists and about the entrepreneurs of humanism. I hope, through this short note to explore some of these concerns with others and open a dialogue with fellow AHP members about our activities.

Let me say a number of things right away. First, humanistic psychology provides the only meaningful framework for me to make sense of the psychology I know. Psychology is about people, their interactions, beliefs, attitudes, values, enthusiasms and trauma's - it is not about statistics, rats running mazes, diagnosis or theories *except* in so far as these things help us illuminate our selves. In promoting humanistic psychology I am therefore concerned to demonstrate its use to people in finding out about themselves - humanistic psychology as self-appropriated learning makes sense.

Second, there aren't really any humanistic psychologists. That is to say there are only people who are developing their selves through the exploration of what psychology has to offer: Humanistic psychology isn't a profession, it's a commitment to relate psychology to the self.

Third, some of the techniques by which it is possible to explore more of one's self need to be taught. It is difficult to know how to do dream-work or image-work or a q-sort unless you have been shown what to do. But the teaching of these craft-skills does not require a professionalisation of humanistic psychology or a dependence upon highly articulate practitioners.

Having made these brief points, let me air three concerns. These are:

1. That there is strong evidence that humanistic psychology has been exploited by a cadre of key practitioners who secure their living from teaching others simple craft skills at vastly inflated costs and in environments which are divorced from the customers real life space. This is made possible by the fact that humanistic psychology is promoted largely amongst a bourgeois population eager to explore 'the self' within boundaries which are 'tight' and in circumstances which permit pretence.
2. Following from (1), because humanistic psychology *as a movement* appears largely as an exploitation of persons by facilitators (persons who receive fees) and because self-appropriated learning is affected largely in hotels and at specially convened courses rather than in pubs, bingo halls and bus queues the movement is isolated from a very large section of the community.
3. Furthermore, because of the methods often employed to promote self-appropriated learning (sensitivity training, for example) we tend to alienate colleagues in teaching situations in extra-mural departments, adult centres, universities, colleges and polytechnics because we do not attempt to negotiate with them the reality of the experience of learning.

Those of you have read some of Illich's writings (especially *MEDICAL NEMESIS*, Calders-Boyars, 1975) will recall that the concerns raised here parallel the concerns raised by Illich about the teaching, legal and medical professions. It is time that we ask ourselves about (a) the extent to which we disable and disadvantage others through our practices and (b) the extent to which we are guilty of some of the things we accuse others of.

My purpose has been to provoke. I hope that I have been successful in this, for unless humanistic psychology becomes more sensitive and recognises its limitations and tries to grow through them we are all growing into a grave.

STEVE MURGATROYD
