HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY, HIGHER EDUCATION, AND *HEART*

Reflections with a little help from Jung

by

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1. The seeds of humanistic psychology find the ground of higher education remarkably dry and stony. Almost any institution you can think of - IBM, the BBC, the Prison service, the Church of England . . . - seems potting compost in comparison. In a quarter of a century, the movement for human potential has made amazingly little impact on institutions fundamentally concerned with just that.

This article starts by considering why this is so. I discuss the ideology or value-system which dominates the institutions of higher education. I then argue that the system is unbalanced and that it is both vital and - in spite of appearances - realistic to attempt to balance it. I describe an idea for bringing about change - HEART, the Higher Education Action Research Team, arguing that, given the nature of the system, change can only happen in the bottom-up way that HEART represents. Finally, I invite readers to take specific initiatives and to participate in a piece of action research.

2. It is not easy to understand and to describe the value-system of any group or organization, not least because of the co-existence of a set of front-stage values with other back-stage values which are often those which determine real behaviour. Higher Education is no exception. But the front-stage values are very clear, very powerful, and consistently determine organizational behaviour. Jung's four function theory seems the most useful aid to understanding. Anthony Storr (1) complains that Jung's definitions are confused and they certainly fail short of mathematical precision; moreover Jung is thinking of individuals not organizations. Nevertheless, I find he offers an appropriate language in which to describe what happens in Higher Education:

> *I distinguish four functions:* ***thinking, feeling, sensation, and intuition.*** *The essential function of sensation is to establish that something exists, thinking tells us what it means, feeling what its value is, and intuition surmises whence it comes and whither it goes. (2)*

We can say that in Higher Education the **thinking** function has one-sided

sensation, feeling, intuition. In the process of outward adaptation everything except thinking has been excluded. As Jung puts it,

> *"The process of adaptation, requires a directed conscious function characterised by inner consistency and logical coherence. Because it is directed, everything unsuitable must be excluded in order to maintain the integrity of direction. The unsuitable elements are subjected to inhibition and thereby escape attention. . . . If, for example, I have a thinking orientation, I cannot at the same time orient myself by feeling, because thinking and feeling are two quite different functions. In fact, I must carefully exclude feeling if I am to satisfy the logical laws of thinking, so that the thought process will not be disturbed by feeling . . . the other unsuitable functions, so far as they are incompatible with the prevailing attitude, are relatively unconscious and hence, unused, untrained, and undifferentiated". (SW, 62)*

The goal of Higher Education is to achieve adaptation by using rational processes - the manipulation of abstractions, the making of clear distinctions and logical inferences, the creation of theory. Prominence is given to language, specifically verbal language which is the essential tool for making distinctions, but also mathematical language which is the essential tool for making inferences.

This thinking "attitude" has a powerful effect on relationships within Higher Education. In theory, the personal is excluded; thought is timeless and universal; any individual, faced with the same data, would come to the same conclusions by the same processes. The first person is eliminated from academic discourse; statements are objective truths from which the blur of individual subjectivity has been removed as far as is humanly possible.

It might be claimed that this value system operates only in the pure sciences. One could conceive of 'Faculties' (and the use of the word in Higher Education is intriguing) which would be based on Jung's functions. Each would have a dominant function, but the whole institution would be, In Jung's **sense**, **balanced**, able, that is, to adapt to a changing environment with the appropriate faculty. The reality, however, is that thought is dominant in **all** the faculties of Higher Education. In the Social Sciences, quantitative research is the only respectable, fundable kind; Cartesian rationality (dividing something up into its constituent parts) dominates even the study of social groups and individual personality. The observer is assumed not to modify what is observed. Even in the humanities, in the study of literature, for example, symbolic objects - poems, plays or myths - are approached solely via the intellect. The dominant movement today is critical **theory.** In Higher Education, the narratologists take precedence over the story-tellers, poetics over poetry. In all faculties, all critical matters - appointments, promotions, publication decisions, research grants, degree classes,

University entry - are decided on criteria which are almost exclusively cognitive. "What a brain!" is the highest accolade.

In reality, of course, interpersonal relations cannot be conducted on the basis of pure reason. But, since the myth is that they can, the process of patiently recognising and negotiating difference and the irrationality of belief is rarely undertaken. Each individual is rational within his or her system: but the confrontation of these (partially incompatible) rationalities - a confrontation which would destroy the assumption of universal rationality - is avoided. Relations are individualistic and competitive. The denial of the personal and the subjective at the theoretical level of the value system has implications at the experiential level. The actual application of the universalist epistemology takes place in lonely isolation. The enlightenment myth of shared rationality is no substitute for the absence of collaborative work, and the 'invisible college', composed of scholars reading each others' books and articles all over the world, is no substitute for the lack of colleagues talking and listening on one's own corridor; a book may be reviewed by someone in Melbourne but is ignored by one's colleagues - as an eminent professor and author put it to me: "As a writer, I feel spectral".

This is a value of the system. This in individualism is enacted in the actual architecture: lecture theatres are arranged so that one solitary performer addresses a crowd of individuals, each taking private notes. It is true that the students are there for one purpose; they are not like the crowd crossing Westminster Bridge in the evening, but they are still an example of Sartre's 'serial group', no more a real sentient or task group than people in a bus queue. After the lecture, students go to the library with its individual carrels and the lecturer goes back to his private office. The value system requires above all the ability to tolerate loneliness and the system's rites of passage test this value, specifically in the PhD rite. (Women's reluctance to conform to this value, incidentally, is one of the main reasons why there are so few of them in Higher Education).

3. It is clear why Higher Education is not exactly fertile soil for humanistic psychology. As an institution, it is split and its dominant function - thought - represses and defends against feeling, sensation and intuition, functions which humanistic psychology is particularly concerned with. Other organizations are less split because they do not select so rigorously for one function and also because they are less able to put a **cordon sanitaire** around themselves: the two owners of the back street garage which keeps my car on the road ("the white and rust one over there?", said the AA man) cannot concentrate exclusively on "sensation" because they depend for survival on customer loyalty which requires feeling and intuition. This applies to my other examples: IBM, the BBC, the Prison Service, even the Church, have to adapt to a changing world. Higher Education has been able to protect itself from the outside world for a long time.

The 'Ivory tower' accusation is not without justification.

Can the **cordon sanitaire** remain in place? The thinking function can survive one-sidedly in a situation where the chaos of the outside world does not impinge too much and where there are not many demands for action. So long as the outside world remains convinced that it is to its advantage to have an institution whose specialised work task is thinking (or so long as the institution is so small and insignificant that no-one cares - and this was virtually the case with Universities before 1945) the one-sidedness does not need to be rectified. Institutions, like individuals, can, in certain circumstances, survive without changing. It may also be that society is prepared to make a modest contribution to the upkeep of institutions whose task is to symbolise permanence and tradition in the midst of chaos and change (monasteries, monarchies, museums).

However, all the signs today are that this no longer applies to Higher Education which is simply too big, too expensive and too powerful to be ignored. The crisis in Higher Education is provoked by alchemy at the boundary: Ivory has turned to Glass; the world is looking in. This means that Higher Education will have to adapt and change, and for that to happen it will have to cease to specialise in one function.

4. There are powerful reasons why it should change. If Higher Education were only academics, the notion of a group specialising in thinking might be defensible. But Higher Education contains students, and very few of these students will become academics. It is impossible to justify a situation where a group serves as a coercive model of one-sidedness for young people whose work in society will not be in an Ivory Tower and which may require any or all of the functions. I am not even considering the responsibility which Higher Education has to students' balanced growth aside from their eventual adapted societal role.

Higher Education is a continuation of secondary education whose values it controls to a considerable extent. The successes of secondary education are the students of higher education and the students of higher education become the teachers of secondary education, perpetuating the one-sidedness. But Higher Education also forms all the other professionals and most of the politicians. Its role as a selector and legitimator of values is central. By acting backwards into the schools and forwards into the professions it acts as one of the principal determinants of value in society.

The front-stage value is, as we have seen, the virtue of intellectual ability. But organisations give out covert messages as well and one of these has to do with authority and dependency. The intellectualism and the individualism produce teaching forms which stress dependency and power, over authority, collaboration, autonomy and spontaneity. Every lecture is a message to submit now, but ultimately to go forth and harangue passive throngs. Do to others as you were done unto.

Change is inevitable because the boundary with the outside world is now permeable. Change in Higher Education can certainly produce long-term change in society. But what will be the nature of the change? In 1958 the belief was that Higher Education could be in the van of humanistic change. But one has to go back to the sixties for publications expressing this point of view. (3) These are the 1980s. The University Grants Committee has just ranked Universities solely on the criterion of research, ignoring everything else. The resources available for Higher Education are being cut. The outside world is not clamouring for more humanistic education. One could say that the demand is for the development of the sensation function:

*There are people for whom the nominal accent falls on sensation, on the perception of actualities, and elevates it into the sole determining and all overriding principle. These are the fact-minded men, in whom intellectual judgement, feeling, and intuition are driven into the background by the paramount importance of actual facts. (**SW**, 145)*

Surely this means that the values of humanistic psychology are even less likely to gain acceptance than in the past? From the Ivory Tower to the commercial R & D outfit.

The question I am asking in respect of one part of society (Higher Education) is of course the same one which is being asked of society as a whole. When a certain value system is clearly no longer tenable there will be change but the direction of the change is unpredictable - it could be for the worse.

To understand how the institutions of Higher Education might serve human potential and might play a role in post-industrial society is an enormous challenge, not only to the intellect but to the feelings, since hope is long-sighted and despair is always lurking close by with a hammer.

Ultimately, whether one believes that balance is possible, that it makes sense to devote energy to bringing about change is not a rational matter. Rationally, one should be able to look at a range of options and choose the one where one's energy is most likely to be effective; one should avoid quixotic gestures and lost causes. In practice, energy is not so easily commanded. As Jung says "Psychic energy is a very fastidious thing which insists on fulfilment of its own conditions". If I were practising entryism, looking around for an institution ripe for takeover by humanistic psychology, I would not choose Higher Education. But the question of entryism does not arise because I am already in. My concern is with my own workplace, with my own institution, what it does to and for me, to and for my colleagues and students, to and for the rest of society. So ultimately my belief that balance is possible is not based on rational assessment. But it is not an act of blind faith either. A situation where adaptation is required is more hopeful than one where stasis is an option. Crisis is an opportunity. To quote Jung again "Without necessity, nothing budges, the human personality least of all. It

is tremendously conservative, not to say torpid. Only acute necessity is able to rouse it". (**SW**, 197)

For example, considered solely in terms of facilitating institutional change, the number of early retirements produced by the cuts is certainly a positive aspect. Institutional change does not usually take place because the proponents of it convince the opponents, but because the opponents withdraw their opposition or themselves. Max Planck put it bluntly, "A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it". (4)

The Government has instigated 'New Blood' posts, and this is a step in the right direction though it is nowhere near enough to deal with what is the major cause of stasis in Higher Education - an inadequate supply of young people crossing the boundary and entering the profession. Departments are ageing and not being renewed. In many departments the Benjamin is pushing forty. Higher Education is basically staffed by middle-aged men and this is a major source of imbalance. And yet, here too there is potential for change. Jung points out that in the individual the desire for balance, the wish to "solve the problem of opposites" is a feature only of maturity. Young people are concerned rather with separation from the parents:

*"For young people a liberation from the past may be enough: a beckoning future lies ahead, rich in possibilities. It is sufficient to break a few bonds; the life urge will do the rest. But we are faced with another task with people who have left a large part of their lives behind them, for whom the future no longer beckons with marvellous possibilities and nothing is to be expected but the endless round of familiar duties and the doubtful pleasures of old age". (**SW**, 166)*

Anticipating Jaques' 'invention' of the 'mid-life crisis', Jung describes what can happen:

> *"The nearer we approach to the middle of life, and the better we have succeeded in entrenching ourselves in our personal attitudes and social positions, the more it appears as if we have discovered the right course and the right ideals of behaviour. . . . One's cherished convictions and principles, especially the moral ones, begin to harden and to grow increasingly rigid". (**SW**, 73)*

This is certainly a very real possibility for academics. But Jung also sees individuation or integration as a possibility for individuals in middle age who have achieved successful outer adaptation and now require more. I think it is possible to believe that higher education contains a high proportion of such people. I recently interviewed fifty academics at some length. That they were all articulate and fluent was of course no surprise. More surprising was their readiness to talk to me (and my tape recorder) about quite personal matters. Many commented on how quickly the time (over 2 hours in some cases) has passed, how satisfying they had found the experience. In fact, all I had done

was to ask general questions about how they had chosen their academic subject and what their experience of it was and then listened to their answers without interjecting views and experiences of my own. Such an experience is rare, it seems, in academic life. Some used it to speak of their sense of dissatisfaction, their awareness "that the social goal is attained only at the cost of a diminution of personality". (**SW**, 72)

I have also been involved in various workshops for teachers in Higher Education. It is true that there has also been a higher level of competitive 'intellectualising' than one gets from other professional groups, something that humanistic psychologists find particularly irritating, "You're up in your head"; Anthony Storr comments that "Dons are notorious amongst analysts as being difficult patients since they are apt to exhibit obsessional intellectual defences against expressing emotion". (5) Nevertheless, when the design has been right - which means when a secure, non-threatening environment has been created and when what they already are - intellectual and verbal people - is accepted and valued, then they are prepared to move into other modes with surprising rapidity and great creativity. While it is true to say that academics are extremely reluctant to take their shoes off in public, it is not true to say that the cognitive impulse has definitively repressed all the other functions. I could take up a great deal of space describing some quite remarkable workshop experiences at DUET, DIA or Gregynog. (6) I am reminded of Liam Hudson's findings in **Contrary Imaginations**. His very convergent people suddenly become divergent and inventive when they were told to role-play divergent people. The other functions are always there: it is a question of making it safe and rewarding for them to emerge.

The nature of the job requires creativity. In the past, it has been relatively easy to avoid that requirement. But it has always been there in the form of pressure to do research, to have ideas, to teach more imaginatively. Today, as a result of the outside looking in, the pressure is less easy to avoid. But creative people need to interact with others, not necessarily only for support (the BBC is apparently a very confrontational place), but simply for response. While the rhetoric of the 'frontiers of knowledge' is probably less accurate than Kuhn's idea of Universities doing 'normal' science, and while a great deal of humanities research is fairly risk-free synthesising, even so, academics are often out on a limb. The act of writing takes some nerve. Even standing up and giving a lecture takes some nerve. To sustain an intellectual argument takes some nerve. Although the culture requires that we should be able to function in solitude, the need for challenge and support is obvious. While the culture requires that we should be good at thinking, the need for other functions is obvious. Creativity and sustained energy are not possible if an individual is split, has a one-sided development, is solitary

Higher Education is in many ways a prime example of a schizoid, split

institution. But the relation between institution and individual is complex. The institution is certainly other than the sum-total of its individual members, the value system certainly encourages the continued repression of various functions; what Jung calls the psyche or the inward adaptation is certainly neglected at the expense of outward adaptation. Nevertheless, because of who we are and because of the nature of our job - research and teaching - individuals can safely be assumed to have a desire for collaboration in growth and development. Furthermore, the value-system is after all not that of big business or of commercial television. The value system entails the disinterested, impartial pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. The 'invisible college' itself is a remarkable example of altruism: I have written at various times to dozens of scholars and these individuals, whom I have never met and probably never will meet, have taken time and trouble to respond because of a general commitment to furthering knowledge.

One final reason for optimism as regards the potential influence of humanistic psychology is that institutions of higher education are organizationally hybrid: they are administered in hierarchical ways (and the Government would like to see this reinforced), but the collegiate, community model which forms the invisible college is also present in the real institution. An institution of higher education is an inactive network.

6. It would be a great mistake to set the feeling function of humanistic psychology against the thought function of Higher Education in a process of mutual denigration. What is required is balance, and, as regards Higher Education, the challenge is to find ways of enabling individuals and therefore institutions to achieve that balance.

One thing that has not worked is top-down training methods. Higher education teachers (like all teachers) have a problem with authority; mature dependency or followership is particularly hard for us and staff development programmes tend to founder on this rock.

Another thing that is counterproductive is denigration of the intellectual function. When someone has made a particular 'attitude' the basis of his or her whole life, attacking it directly in the name of another attitude simply produces greater attachment and greater resistance. I find Gustafson's critique of the Tavistock Group Relations Programme very valuable in this respect. (7) The traditional consultant interprets 'intellectualising' in the group as resistance and makes comments such as "the group is avoiding looking at its own feelings of envy (rivalry, depression . . .)". Gustafson suggests that the group is actually testing, checking to see what is safe in this particular environment. I was struck by a comment made by a participant in a DIA workshop reflection group. She said, "Most conferences that I go to suffer from intellectual snobbery. I wonder if this one doesn't suffer from emotional snobbery". It is very tempting to people who have learned

to some extent to express their feelings to lord it over those who haven't, as those who express ideas lord it over those who can't.

7. The rest of this article is devoted to a description of an idea for encouraging change in higher education. This is the Higher Education Action Research Team, HEART. Its main characteristics are that it is bottom-up not top-down and that it does not confront the authority question head on: its form is not a pyramid but a network.

The origins are in an annual conference organised at Gregynog, the University of Wales Conference Centre in mid-Wales. The conferences, which started in 1973, were originally 'Anglo-French' - an attempt to cross one disciplinary and cultural divide. The form was the traditional paper and discussion one. Over the years, the focus shifted to the form or the design and papers gave way to groups of various kinds. The emphasis was on experience: in 1981, the experience of modern language teachers, using a Grubb-Tavistock intergroup design; in 1982 the subjective experience of literature with David Bleich from Indiana University. In 1983, the experience of writing; in 1984 the experience of higher education; in 1985 the experience of disciplines through story-telling; in 1985 gender-roles. (8)

From 1984 on, the workshop was initiated by a team in Cardiff who christened themselves the Higher Education Action Research Team (we thought at one time of founding a parallel group, Higher Education Academic Development!). The difficulties encountered in the team as it planned and ran the workshops made us see that the practice of collaborative team work, of colleague relations was crucial in higher education and that we were not very good at it. The failure of so many innovations and interdisciplinary attempts and the weakness of so much group teaching stemmed, it seemed, from this. So, instead of writing a manifesto, forming a committee, deciding on membership fees, we chose initially to meet together as a group and look at the problem of colleague relations.

All that was specified in advance were the boundaries:

- *Of members - a fixed membership (7)*
- *Of place - a neutral room (not an office, no telephone but a working place, not a pub)*
- *Of time - a one and a half hour meeting at the end of a working day.*
- *Of frequency - weekly.*
- *Of extent - ten sessions.*

No task was specified and there was no group leader.

It would probably be a mistake to give an account of what went on in the group except in the broadest outline. The strength of the HEART idea is that within the basic framework given above (but these fixed boundaries are absolutely indispensable), anything can happen. In our case, as we struggled to maintain the boundaries, we reflected a great deal about boundaries and freedom in higher education, the way that the freedom to choose and the lack of boundaries

References: Evans

1. A.. Storr, **Jung**, Fontana, 1973, p.77.
2. A. Storr, **Jung, selected writings**, Fontana, 1983, p.144 (**SW** - references to quotations are given in the text).
3. For example, N. Sanford, **The American College**, Wiley, 1962. It may be relevant that my copy of this book, purchased second-hand, is marked "withdrawn from University of Sussex Library".
4. Max Planck, **Scientific autobiography and other papers**, quoted in T. Kuhn, **The Structure of Scientific revolutions**, 1972.
5. A. Storr, **Jung**, p.77.
6. DUET - The Development of University English Teaching project - holds annual six day workshops at the University of East Anglia. DIA was 'DUET in Austria' a workshop held in September 1985. Gregynog is the conference centre where HEART holds workshops. See note 8.
7. Gustafson, P. and Cooper, L. 'After basic assumptions' in Pines, M. (ed.), **Bion and Group Psychotherapy**, RKP, 1984.
8. There are various published accounts of HEART workshops at Gregynog: 'Understanding innovation through group-relations Study: the Grubb-Tavistock approach', **New Universities Quarterly**, 36, 4, 1982. 'Academics writing', **Quinquereme**, Bath, 6, 2, 1983. Peter Scott on Gregynog 84, **THES**, 30.3.84.
9. 25-27 March 1986. Convenor - Dr. Beatrice Avalos, University College, Cardiff.