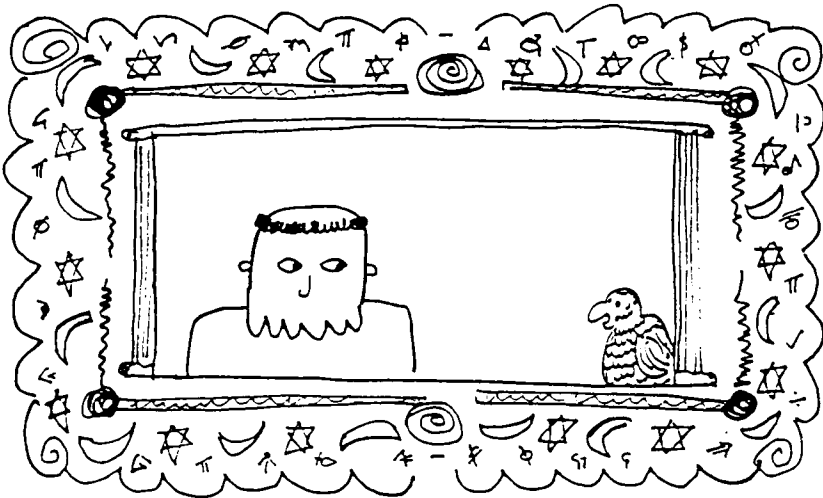


PROFILE of The INSTITUTE for the DEVELOPMENT of HUMAN POTENTIAL (IDHP)



Socrates and the Parrot

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The INSTITUTE for the DEVELOPMENT of HUMAN POTENTIAL (IDHP)

A modern organisation, committed to using humanistic methods in its own working, which promotes and develops the human potential movement. It has run nearly three dozen two-year courses which enable participants to develop their own skills as experts of the human potential model.

SOCRATES AND THE PARROT

A dialogue

The old man and the parrot

The old man understands but does not speak

The parrot speaks but does not understand

In this dialogue only one has the words;

They are the words that were taught whilst the old man could still speak;

The words have been learnt correctly, the intonation is perfect.

But where is the meaning?

The old man struggles to find a meaning in the words of the parrot.

The parrot does not understand the meaning of meaning.

He does not care. He has control of the words.

There lies more interest in the borders.

These two are framed, enclosed, in one moment - which may or may not be quite pointless - what has been forgotten in this pointless dialogue is the richness of the frame beyond.

Course-work extracts by Jenny Pepper

WHAT IS IDHP?

Introduction by Denis Postle

What is IDHP?

IDHP is a loose confederation, presently of 20 people, with ties to a variety of institutions ranging from independent growth centres to universities. At the time of writing three, two-year diploma courses are in progress, three more courses are due to begin later in the year - a two term group skills course and two diploma courses. Most but not all, the members of the IDHP committee are previous graduates of IDHP courses. While this might seem a little circular, it is important to realise that the diversity, both of course population and of the local flavours of courses, is very wide. A collusive singularity of view and purpose has never seemed to me to be a danger in IDHP - however, counter-acting the tendency to centrifugal fragmentation, common to groups of highly innovative people, does absorb a lot of energy.

Anyone who puts up a course and has it validated becomes a full member of the IDHP committee. Membership continues after completion of the course, either through taking on a 'support' 'rattle and shake', or 'course supervisor' role, or through continued attendance at committee meetings. While we have no 'officers' as such, a core group of four people with rotating membership, one of whom is treasurer, holds continuity and undertakes tasks as the need emerges.

Except for course facilitators who are often directly responsible for course finances, supervisors and visiting facilitators (who are rarely IDHP members) no-one is paid, however, anyone facilitating, or supervising, is entitled to claim expenses for IDHP committee work. Participants pay course fees direct to the bodies who are running their particular course and IDHP committee funding rests at the moment solely on a £30 per year from registration fee from course participants, which seems adequate for our current scale of operations.

While the IDHP is not accountable to any external body, all committee meetings are open to all current course participants and this is a frequently exercised right. Some of our current preoccupations, such as, for example, a more formal commitment to an equal opportunity policy, have emerged as a result of feedback from participants. Since at any time half the participants of IDHP diploma courses are, in the second year, members of self-governing peer groups, their influence over both the economic and educational aspects of their learning experience is considerable. However, a disadvantage of the low level of IDHP administrative structure, and something to which we are presently giving attention, is that, after a course ends, we tend to lose contact with graduates more quickly than seems desirable.

One of the virtues of our present structure is that since in effect, all courses are external to the committee, the financial aspects of a proposal are evaluated as part of a whole, which means at least in my experience, that distortions, due to having

to run courses to keep the institution in business are minimised. The positive learning in this, as it seems to me, is that keeping courses economically distinct from their validating body can have a lot of virtue.

The present two year courses sit on the end of a series stretching back in London and Guildford to 1978 and in Bath, Leeds and Cornwall to 1981. A total of 29, each with a population ranging from 12 to 20 or more people.

How do IDHP courses begin?

The sequence of course initiation usually runs something like this. Someone, though for a diploma course more usually two people, put up to the committee an initial signal that they would like to offer a course. The proposal at this stage is likely to name the facilitators, the type of course, diploma, or otherwise, its length, fees and some indication of the venue. If the committee accept the broad shape of the proposal, initially a 'support person' and if the proposal progresses, a 'rattle and shake' person is assigned to the proposers who are then invited to develop a full course contract which will outline the course aims and objectives, contents, cost etc.

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This course contract, along with a CV and a detailed self-assessment, is circulated to the committee, following which the facilitators attend a self and peer assessment with committee members. While the committee may make mandatory amendments or additions to the course design (and for diploma courses there are a set of guidelines for the core curriculum) the committee's primary role is validation of the facilitator/s as competent to deliver the course they have proposed. If and when the committee agrees to validate the facilitator/s, a supervisor from the committee is assigned for the duration of the course.

Who goes on an IDHP course?

The population of IDHP courses has been extremely diverse. The courses are highly relevant to anyone who works intensively with people and they attract people who are involved with the management of care, responsibility, conflict, stress, supervision, and co-operation, especially where deep feelings and emotions are

likely to arise. Recent courses have had participants from the Police; British Telecom; NHS; the Richmond Fellowship; The Cabinet Office; The Training Agency; Social Services; County Councils; Merchant Banks

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Social Services; County Councils; Merchant Banks. Participants have included therapists, osteopaths, businessmen, film producers, doctors, psychologists clergy, nurses, managers, nuns and priests.

Where is IDHP going?

IDHP is in perhaps the fourth phase of its development, a time when the founders and early consolidators of the institute have either left, or moved off to a distance. The two year diploma in Humanistic Psychology, with its strong emphasis on an educational model for personal and professional development, is flourishing and is likely to continue as our core offering. However we are actively interested in supporting other course designs and purposes so far as they are compatible with the broad tradition outlined in the following pages.

Does IDHP promise more than we can deliver?

IDHP is a very modern institution. It has existed for 13 years yet it has no premises, no telephone, no filing cabinets, no single leader. The down side of its modernity it seems to me is an undeveloped sense of its own strength and value and alongside that, in common with other strands of humanistic psychology, a limiting scepticism about political involvement. At their best the people skills and process skills of an IDHP - educated facilitator are unlikely to be bettered anywhere. And yet the very breadth and depth of this education can make it difficult for participants to manage change at a local level in their organisations. It also seems to me that IDHP may tend to over- function in favour of participants who enjoy and relish mould-breaking change and is less enabling of people whose vocation is 'holding' and improvement.

The task of creating, holding, developing and accurately transmitting a tradition is an onerous one. Creation can become imitation, holding can become strangulation, development can become moulding, transmission can become ineffective. As a relative newcomer to IDHP it seems to me that while it is not without shortcomings, it provides creative, responsive and effective transport for its tradition of a primarily educational approach to personal and group development. I've always liked Trungpa Rinpoche's definition of a good teacher 'the teachings should have the quality, the aroma, of freshly baked bread'. Above all else that is something which IDHP courses can and do deliver.

If you would like to put forward a course with the support and validation of the IDHP contact Mike Eales who can be reached at 16 Dolphin Court, High St., Petersfield, HANTS.