A humanistic philosophy of education as applied to the teaching of an introductory psychology course.

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A HUMANISTIC PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

AS APPLIED TO THE TEACHING OF

AN INTRODUCTORY PSYCHOLOGY COURSE

A Thesis Presented
by
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PSYCHOLOGY
A HUMANISTIC PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ............................................. 1
Abstract ......................................................... 2
Introduction ..................................................... 3

PART ONE: A HUMANISTIC PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

Toward a philosophy of education ....................... 4
The context of education ................................... 12
The content of education .................................. 18
Congruence in education .................................. 21
Confluence in education .................................. 22
Affective development and education .................. 24
Education and self-knowledge .......................... 28

PART TWO: FROM PHILOSOPHY TO PRACTICE

An introductory psychology class ..................... 30
Student reactions to a course .......................... 46
Some drawbacks .............................................. 51

Summary .......................................................... 54
References ....................................................... 56
Appendix .......................................................... 62
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ABSTRACT

This is an effort to describe how a psychology class might be taught in a humanistic manner. The first part will be devoted to exploring the bases for such a teaching style, relying upon both philosophical perspectives and diverse psychological theories. Emphasis here shall be placed upon how education might promote the growth of the different potentialities of the learner. The second part will discuss how this method might be applied to the teaching of an undergraduate introductory psychology class. Following the course description will be some student reactions to such a course and a consideration of some of the weaknesses of this teaching method.
INTRODUCTION

There is a growing discontent with our educational system. Students complain that teachers fail to deal with relevant issues, while teachers bemoan the lack of student responsiveness. It is time for all parties involved to take a close and critical look at our educational alternatives.

One alternative, a humanistic approach, is being developed by teachers excited with its promise. Humanistic educators attempt to further the development of the whole student. Addressing feelings and action in addition to knowledge, they hope to provide an experience in which students might grow. By learning in a personally significant way, students may come to educate themselves.

What follows is my account of what humanistic education has to offer the teacher of psychology.
Education does not take place in a vacuum. When it does occur in the classroom, there is a set of shared principles which govern interactions between teacher and student. Although every class operates under a philosophy of education, it is nevertheless valuable to examine it for each class. In a rare class, teacher and students will work together to establish a consensual philosophy of education; occasionally, the teacher will explicitly describe the approach that will be followed in that class; all too often, however, a class will behave according to an unexamined, implicit philosophy of education. The traditional classroom is an example of the last type. It usually abides by the following rarely questioned assumptions: Power and authority reside in the teacher; objectives are set and evaluations made by the teacher; mastery of material and compliance to authority are the overriding aims of education. And yet, we must keep in mind that this traditional, authoritarian philosophy is only one of many possible alternatives.

It is crucial that we offer many different types of learning experiences. This need arises from the individual differences between students, and even between teachers. Educational options could reflect both student needs and
interests, and teacher skills and abilities. Perhaps what is most lacking in education is what Mogar (1969) has called the "congruity approach,"--a sincere effort to match teaching and learning styles. It is desirable, if not imperatve, to produce, provide, and promote alternatives in education. This is not to say that schools should be permissive, but pluralistic; and it is not to say that school should be optional, but compulsory with options.

Alternatives in education offer several valuable outcomes: First, alternatives can reflect genuine differences between students, between teachers, between subjects, and even between approaches to a given subject. Second, they can provide the opportunity for personal choice by both student and teacher. Third, they can allow for the learner's self-determination. Fourth, they can, therefore promote one's self-awareness. Fifth, they can lead to the flexibility requisite for experimentation in education. And sixth, they can both encourage the discovery of new methods and facilitate change. There is a real need for exploration and evaluation in education. Fortunately, alternatives are now emerging.

One of the alternatives currently being developed is humanistic education, which is directed at promoting the growth of the individual student as a whole person. Accord-
ing to this approach, education can be seen as the process by which students learn to increase their tendencies to interact effectively with the environment. While this definition is similar to White's (1959) notion of "competence," a closer examination is necessary for a more full understanding. Education is an ongoing "process" rather than the static knowledge gained by semester's end. Students might "learn" actively if they are less often lectured at. "Tendencies" encompass both competence and performance; we must go beyond merely developing potentialities to prompting action. To "interact effectively" one must bring about desired results; productive activity, such as tutoring in the public schools or volunteer work in institutions, could supplement the covering of material. The "environment" includes the objects, events, and people which influence one's life; it is hardly limited to the four walls of the classroom. Education is thus how one comes to function meaningfully in the world.

Education can be seen to consist of three component processes--learning, valuing, and acting. Through learning, we augment our cognitive understanding; through valuing, we discover and develop our attitudes and convictions; through acting, we behave in accord with what we learn and/or feel. Through learning, valuing, and acting, we come to think, to feel, and to do. Inasmuch as it includes forethought
and intentions, education leads to measured, purposive behavior.

Just as James' (1962) thinking, feeling, and doing are essential, so are cognition, affect, and volition. A full undergraduate education would include Jordan and Streets' (1973) cognitive, affective, and volitional potentialities. Each contributes to the others in a spiral effect: As we learn more about something, we are prone to develop our attitudes toward it; as our attitudes and feelings intensify, we are more disposed to act; and as we act, we are more likely to learn. Or, more simply, thinking may promote feeling, which may promote doing, which may promote thinking, and so on. It is necessary to strike the appropriate balance between cognition, affect and volition. To this end, Fantini and Weinstein (1972) have called for the III-tiered school which would try to concurrently develop the related facets of skills, interests, and action. Others (Borton, 1970; Brown, 1971; Cole, 1972; Medway and Fulginiti, 1973; Shpizner and Wagschal, 1974) have proposed and adopted educational practices designed specifically to fuse the cognitive with the affective; learning with valuing; thinking with feeling.

In American education there is an imbalance between these processes; we stress learning at the expense of feeling and doing. That we emphasize learning to such a degree
is in many ways a result of the times: 1) Cognitive capacities are stressed to provide us with the technical knowledge necessary for scientific advance. 2) Cognitive products are more "teachable" as they are specific and factual. 3) Cognitive skills are more "testable" as they are more amenable to being objectively evaluated as either right or wrong. 4) Cognitive ability has long been the goal of traditional education. 5) Cognitive functioning is the mode most appropriate to established teaching methods. 6) Cognitive styles meet the needs of large bureaucracies. 7) Cognitive dominance helps to perpetuate the existing class structure. Is it any wonder that the cognitive domain would reign supreme in the United States today?

The overemphasis on cognition comes at the expense of both affect and volition. To the degree that we demand and train students to learn, we tend to suppress their valuing and acting. Yet some pockets of experimental education have recently concentrated upon developing values through affective exercises. *Values and Teaching* (Raths, Harmin, and Simon, 1966) and *Values Clarification* (Simon, Howe, and Kirschenbaum, 1972) are two excellent source books in this area. They provide instructional techniques aimed at helping the individual uncover and evolve personal feelings and attitudes. Others have recently begun to explore the world of action. It is becoming common practice for high schools and colleges
to grant academic credit for more real-life experiences than those the classroom can provide. Students are increasingly turning to work-study programs, volunteer services, and community projects as basic ingredients in their education. Some schools, the "Schools without walls," are making every effort to move the class out of the classroom and into the community. These approaches focus on learning by doing.

There must be a balanced attack on all three domains: Thus in the cognitive, we come to learn by thinking; in the affective, we come to value by feeling; in the volitional, we come to act by doing. McMurrin (1967) points out that each of the three is crucial if we are to truly educate,

Our decisions must be made in the light of the total impact of instruction upon the individual, centering upon knowledge and the rational intellect but not violating the claim of the emotions and volition.

In conjunction with learning and knowledge, the educated person can be seen to possess three skills. These correspond to three aspects of the questions and problems studied. 1) The solution entails the ability to arrive at an answer, and an awareness that one has met the objective. Indeed, most of traditional schooling rests on knowing the answers. 2) Educators have recently begun to work on the approach to and attack of the problem. Students are just now learning to generate, pursue, and evaluate alternative
routes to solve a problem. 3) Yet very little effort has been devoted to asking the question, "What should we study?" Ironically, what should be the starting point is often neglected.

Different philosophical models help demonstrate these and other points. Archambault (1972) has discussed two models, the authoritarian and self-actualization ones. The fundamental difference between them lies in who has the responsibility to set the aims of education. Under the authoritarian mold, the teacher dictates the aims and objectives to the students. This is typical of our traditional schools, with the teacher acting independently or as a tool of school or state policy. In the self-actualization model, students have more responsibility in determining the directions their education will go. This policy is most often found in open or free schools.

Some have eagerly argued for the transition of power from teacher to student: Kozol (1972) has condemned teacher use of "arbitrary power of position," and Humphreys (1974) has defined and defiled "teachism" as the "arrogance of unwarranted power." Mann (1970) has more specifically discussed the roles teachers can play and the functions they can serve. He assails those roles which seem to align exclusively with the teacher as a power, (expert, formal au-
authority, and socializing agent); however, he argues for those roles portraying the teacher more as a helper, (facilitator, ego ideal, and person). In observing four college classes, Mann found that the stance the teacher takes can play a significant part in the educational process.

Other teacher attitudes are coming to the front now, with a new triumvirate replacing the old three R's. We are at last beginning to give some attention to respect, responsiveness, and responsibility. Each of these is a two-directional entity: Both teacher and student should respect the other as an individual; both should be responsive to the needs and concerns of the other; both should share the responsibility for determining the course of education. (In the past, the existing power structure established and maintained a one-sided affair. Students were expected to show respect for, be responsive to, and surrender responsibility to the teacher. But why should not the teacher, in return, respect the students as individuals, be responsive to those seeking an education, and share responsibility with those trying to become respected members of society?) Neill (1960) and other sensitive educators have adopted these attitudes in an attempt to help develop happy, healthy individuals. The new three R's hold the promise for reform and revolution in education.
THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION

An often overlooked aspect of education is the context in which learning takes place. The physical environment, the structure of a course, and the very nature of the experience itself are three elements of the educational context. Keeping in mind what a great influence these factors can have, teachers should use them to the advantage of the class. In a humanistic class, for example, each can be employed in a beneficial manner.

The physical environment. First, the environment must be a comfortable one which will facilitate communication and promote learning. The room should be of appropriate size. Windows, moveable chairs, and a rug can be used to create a more human atmosphere; wall hangings, posters, or even magazine pictures can add a nice, lived-in feeling. Should the students provide some of the furnishings, there is the added advantage that they may develop a sense that the room is theirs, a product of their own creation. Facilities for communication might include a place to post notices of coming events, relevant quotes, or a list of interesting books to read. And, of course, the chalkboard should be visible from all seats, providing a means to display information; and yet, it should not dominate the room.

Students must be able to see and hear the teacher, al-
though the teacher should not maintain an overbearing posture. There are two guidelines a teacher might follow to avoid assuming (or being assumed to have taken) an authoritarian stance: Try not to occupy the "front" of the room too often, but rather move through the class either from day to day or within class periods. Don't stand behind a lectern or on a podium; whenever possible, sit with the students. These suggestions are intended to minimize the pedestal effect,—the tendency both teachers and students have to feel that knowledge, wisdom, and better judgment always reside up there with the teacher, rather than moving around, through, and even from everyone present.

The class structure. A second major side to the context of education is the structure,—the topics to be covered, the work to be done, and the evaluations to be made. What is crucial is that the decisions made in this area be shared. Similar to the approach Toussieng (1971) has taken in the therapy setting with his clients, the teacher must encourage the students to take control in setting their goals and techniques. An effective means to accomplish this is the individualized learning contract, through which students determine their own out-of-class work assignments, subject to the instructor's approval. This practice may help to meet what Lindgren (1956) sees as the "needs for creativity, self-direction, and initiative" which tend to be
ignored by our more traditional teaching techniques. The contract provides the opportunity to make education relevant to the self of the learner. And by offering such work options, we can individualize the learning experience.

The possibility of choice concerning the course structure facilitates student self-determination as well. Kolb and Boyatzis (1971) have argued that self-directed goal-setting can play a valuable role in promoting self-awareness and behavior change. Furthermore, Raths, Harmin, and Simon (1966) see choosing as the driving force of education through value development. The contract decision is also good practice in the exercise of volition; the process necessitates the progression through Assagioli's (1965) five stages of the will,--purpose, decision, affirmation, planning, and execution. Contracting also offers students the opportunity to work to a greater degree from their own personal motivation. In this way, it might further what Harrison and Hopkins (1971) see as a goal in education,--to "develop in the student more independence of external sources of decision, information, problem definition, and motivation."

Internal motivation, however, is threatened by the all-too-often opposing force of grading. By evaluation, I refer to the diagnostic assessment of performance; grades, on the other hand, the objective estimate of the quality of the performance. Evaluation is essential for change,
improvement, and growth; it is therefore a good. Evaluation should be made by both teachers (because of their expert judgment) and students (because of the benefits of self-examination). Grades, however, tend to induce anxiety, demand external motivation, interfere with teacher-student relationships, and generally get in the way of learning; grades therefore often stand in the way of humanistic education. They are a necessary evil.

The nature of the experience. "It is not what you say to people that counts; it is what you have them do." Here Postman and Weingartner (1969) are trying to highlight the importance of what is actually done under the auspices of schooling. Just as Dewey (1938) argued for an "organic connection between education and personal experience," it is crucial to consider the nature of the classroom experience itself.

For example, there are several practical ways to extend the source of knowledge in the class. One, the presence of undergraduate teaching assistants, both promotes the feeling that there is more than one authority and provides alternative perspectives. A second tactic is the workshop, where other instructors, graduate students, or even class members present special topics to a small group. A third technique to broaden the scope of persons-as-resources
is the discussion group. Much research has been done in an attempt to compare the lecture and discussion formats. After an extensive review of the literature, McKeachie (1972) concludes, "When one is asked whether lecture is better than discussion, the appropriate counter would seem to be, "For what goals?"" Rogers (1961) continues in trying to single out the relative merits of the "teacher-centered" and "student-centered" classroom styles. With regard to the student-centered class—characterized by acceptance, group determination, and exploration of affect and attitudes—Rogers concludes,

Factual and curricular learning is roughly equal to the learning in conventional classes. Some studies report slightly more, some slightly less. The student-centered group shows gains significantly greater than the conventional class in personal adjustment, in self-initiated extracurricular learning, in creativity, in self-responsibility...

I have come to realize, as I have considered these studies, and puzzled over the design of better studies which should be more informative and conclusive, that findings from such research will never answer one question. For all such findings must be evaluated in terms of the goals we have for education.

Research has shown that not only the goals, but also the very nature of the students themselves can be a crucial factor in determining which classroom style is the most effective. McKeachie (1972) observed that independent, flexible students with a high need for achievement perform best in the student-centered class. Domino
(1971) found an interactive effect between type of student and teaching method; he accordingly argued for a match between the student's and the teacher's styles, with respect to the opportunity for independence or conformity.

From the evidence, it would seem that the optimal type of class would depend on two questions,—Education for what? Education for whom? This can be seen to support the proposition that we need alternatives in education.

Perhaps the most fundamental aspect of the classroom experience is the style of the teacher-student interaction. We should minimize the amount of formal teaching to passive students and maximize the amount of active learning that takes place. In this vein, Rogers (1961) attacks teaching, as it leads students to distrust their personal experiences; on the other hand, he applauds the "significant learning" which results from "self-appropriated" discovery. As Gardner (1963) so aptly put it, "All too often we are giving our young cut flowers when we should be teaching them to grow their own."
THE CONTENT OF EDUCATION

The content of a course is typically thought to be of prime importance. One consideration is that it should be presented in a well-planned sequence, moving from the basic fundamentals to the subtle and intricate complexities. Psychology itself has provided two major perspectives for viewing the cognitive structuring of a subject matter.

One is Gagne's (1965) hierarchy of the types of learning. It includes, in order, signal learning, stimulus-response, chaining, verbal association, discrimination, concept formation, rule learning, and problem-solving. The last five seem most relevant for educators, for they delineate the order in which specific, requisite skills can be mastered, leading up to the highest level, problem-solving. These skills would develop, respectively, a familiarity with the terms describing concepts and phenomena, the ability to distinguish and differentiate them, an understanding of their meaning, the capacity to transfer general principles regarding them, and the expertise to manipulate them to a desired end. Gagne's analysis thus suggests a step-by-step procedure designed to facilitate problem-solving.

Bloom's (1956) cognitive taxonomy, on the other hand,
is a specific description of a hierarchy of educational objectives. Its levels include knowledge (ability to recall), comprehension (basic understanding), application (use of abstractions in a specific case), analysis (breakdown of a whole into its elements and relations), synthesis (integration of elements into a whole), and evaluation (judgment of merit). Bloom, Hastings, and Madaus (1971) have even presented sample test questions which may be used for diagnostic and evaluative purposes at each cognitive level. This theory also argues for a stage-wise development of cognitive skills, paralleling the hierarchically-arranged objectives. Gagne's and Bloom's cries for the ordered presentation of material embrace the first principle governing the student's encounter with the subject.

A second rule regarding the student-subject interaction in humanistic education is that it occur under natural circumstances. Bruner (1972) has condemned the tendencies schools have to "decontextualize" learning. Rather than study something in the artificial style prompted by the sterile classroom, we should become involved in as authentic an activity as possible. This would advance Dewey's (1938) goal that education originate in experience promising application and transfer to subsequent, real-world experience.
curiosity. Psychology theory suggests three ways to accomplish this: Arouse curiosity by presenting new stimulus information (Berlyne, 1960); promote it by confronting the student with cognitively dissonant elements (Festinger, 1957); play off whatever natural curiosity has not been quashed in previous schooling (Holt, 1967). Rogers (1969) has made an eloquent plea to harness this force in the name of education,

To free curiosity; to permit individuals to go charging off in new directions dictated by their own interests; to unleash the sense of inquiry; to open everything to questioning and exploration.

This exhortation links curiosity with a fundamental consideration in the planning of content, the self. The connection between subject and self is critical; for, without it, education has no significant, personal meaning. Becker (1967) has concluded,

There is one way to cut through the miasma, one way to bring order into the fantastic redundancy and trifling, one way to place the student above the flood of facts. And that is, to make the whole thing meaningful to him in his individual life.

This leads to the notion of the self as the starting point in education, which is the subject of the next section.
Glasser (1969) has lambasted our educational "philosophy of noninvolvement, nonrelevance;" Lee (1968) has implored educators to respond to the "demand for relevance and personal involvement in the learning process;" Fantini and Weinstein (1972) have urged us to employ "content that is most closely connected to the learner's reality;" and Drane (1972) has advanced the "curriculum which makes the problem of human existence central." If schools are to retain any real purpose, they must reflect the needs, concerns, and perspectives of the student. Put simply, education should be congruent with the self of the learner.

According to Borton (1970), the champion of congruent education, the school should help the student learn "increasingly sophisticated processes for coping with concerns about his inner self, and the outer world." Fantini and Weinstein (1968, 1972) have also stressed the persistent and pervasive nature of concerns, singling out three crucial ones: 1) control—the sense of mastery and power, 2) identity—the sense of self, and 3) connectedness—the sense of relatedness through interaction. Education, they argue, should be designed to help students cope with anxieties stemming from these concerns. School must become responsive to what is occurring within the individual; true education starts with the person.
CONFLUENCE IN EDUCATION

The hands are skilled and the heart is dead and the conscience is in exile. 
(Kozol, 1972).

One might very well attribute the cause of Kozol's observation to the schools, for they give students "practice in fragmenting their lives" (Leonard, 1968). A main thrust in today's liberal reform movement is to help the learner become more integrated as a whole being. Confluent education is designed specifically toward this end. Its major spokespeople have called for merging the "cognitive" with the "affective" (Brown, 1971; Fantini and Weinstein, 1972; Jordan and Streets, 1973; McMurrin, 1967; Shpizner and Wagschal, 1974), a "synthesis of values and beliefs" (Newcomb, Koenig, Flacks, and Warwick, 1967), and the involvement of "feelings as well as intellect" (Rogers, 1969).

Rather than dichotomizing these two realms of existence in a Narcissus vs. Goldmund fashion (Hesse, 1971), we face the task of uniting them. In teaching a high school psychology class, Medway and Fulginiti (1973) attempted to "integrate cognitive psychological material with the affective concerns" of their students. In fusing cognition with affect, knowledge with value, idea with feeling, we can help those processes flow together as the waters of
a single river. Such confluence is necessary for the emergence of the student as a "feeling-thinking human being" (Brown, 1971). The outcome might be a well-rounded person, capable of functioning in the real world.
AFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

Values are the stars by which men steer their lives. (Kirschenbaum and Simon, 1969).

The affective domain, wherein values reside, offers another interesting perspective. To gain a sense of what role it can play in education, three theoretical outlooks are helpful.

Smith and Tyler (1942) advanced an approach addressing affect as appreciation. From a questionnaire tapping "overt acts and verbal responses," they formulated the following levels of appreciation:

1) satisfaction in the thing appreciated
2) desire for more of the thing appreciated
3) desire to know more about the thing being appreciated
4) desire to express one's self creatively
5) identification of one's self with the thing being appreciated
6) desire to clarify one's own thinking with regard to the life problems raised by the thing being appreciated
7) desire to evaluate the thing appreciated.

Their is a system designed to appraise a student's propensity toward the object of study.

A second and closely related system is that of Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia (1964). They conceive of affective development as the result of internalization,—"the process by which the phenomenon or value successively and pervasively becomes a part of the individual." Their taxonomy
demarcates five levels in the development of affect: receiving an idea, responding to that idea, valuing it, conceptualizing a set of values surrounding that idea, and becoming characterized by those values. Development here implies that one's attitudes become both more internalized and more self-determined. For Krathwohl et al., affect might be described as the product of the relationship between the student's attitudes and the object under study.

The third approach is that of Raths et al. (1966). They envision a valuing process, resting upon specific, requisite behaviors,—choosing freely from alternatives, with a consideration of the consequences; prizing the choice and being willing to affirm it publicly; acting repeatedly in a pattern, on the basis of that choice. According to this model, it remains the task of teachers to facilitate the valuing process, by encouraging the free and responsible decision-making of the individual learner.

The above suggest three portrayals of affect,—value-as-a-propensity (the student's appreciation), value-as-a-product (the resulting student-subject relationship), and value-as-a-process (the evolving activity of choosing, prizing, and acting). Educators must come to accept student values, build the curriculum around them, and cherish stu-
Several models have been advanced which link affective development to moral growth. Stewart (1973) has embarked on an ambitious program called "values development education," while Jordan and Streets (1973) go so far as to actually define education as "value formation." To promote moral growth, others have proposed and practiced such specific techniques as examining moral aspects of a people or society (Havighurst, 1962) or posing moral dilemmas for students to discuss (Turiel, 1966).

But perhaps the most comprehensive strategy is that adopted by Shpizner and Wagschal (1974). By uniting the valuing process (according to Raths et al., 1966) with the task of moral development (as described by Kohlberg, 1964), they have synthesized "values reconstruction." First they help the students to clarify personal values, and then they confront those by exposing them to supposedly higher values. The aim is that students might reconsider their personal values in light of higher moral principles; the hope is the possible reconstruction of their existing value systems. In a similar manner, Dewey (1939) observed, "Improved valuation must grow out of existing valuations, subjected to methods of investigation that bring them into systematic relation with one another." Values education
is a difficult and never-ending challenge; may we be up to it.
EDUCATION AND SELF-KNOWLEDGE

The central problem of values is first the discovery of self. (Fielder, 1967).

Many have called for the study of the self. One claims that self-knowledge is the greatest possible contribution education could make (Kubie, 1949); another has revived Socrates' dictum "know thyself" as a standard for education (Becker, 1967); a third has argued for inclusion of the learner's self as part of the curriculum (Combs, 1961). Extending this last point, Newberg and Levin (1972) have subdivided course content into the domains of personal, interpersonal, and public knowledge.

Weinstein (1973) has underscored the importance of personal knowledge; Alschuler and he (1974) are pursuing a field called autology, the study of self. The self is defined as "your conscious experience of your thoughts, feelings, actions, and sensations." Their road to self-awareness follows the raising of one's consciousness of the stimulus conditions leading to certain behaviors, the actual responses one makes, and the consequences of those actions. (Weinstein currently teaches an undergraduate course toward this end, titled Education of the Self; his objective is to help the students focus in on and get in touch with central behavior patterns).
Weinstein and Alschuler are constructing a test designed to measure the development of self-knowledge. It relies heavily upon the cognitive capacities underlying Kohlberg's (1964) theory of moral development and the personal awareness of causality and motivation underlying Loevinger and Wessler's (1970) theory of ego development. That such a test should be suggested by a couple of humanistic educators at first would seem paradoxical, but there are many significant benefits in the offing: 1) the clarification of the concept of self-knowledge, 2) the encouragement of its use as a behavioral objective, 3) an index for measuring student progress, 4) a test tapping skills other than the overemphasized cognitive ones, 5) a test which will represent open education in its strongest light, and 6) added legitimacy to the self in our educational system.

We are finally beginning to recognize the coming of age of the self in education, as evidenced by the following quotation (Joyce, 1969):

Because self-organization is the central mechanism in human functioning, the goals of education (the Mission of the School) naturally become the enhancement of that self and the development of the kind of flexible, seeking organism that will find new knowledge, new problems to solve, new learning goals that will lead it to a better and more full level of function.
AN INTRODUCTORY PSYCHOLOGY CLASS

This section includes a description of how an undergraduate introductory psychology class might be taught, using a humanistic approach. It would be suitable for a class of between thirty and one hundred students; any larger and these techniques become impractical, and any smaller and they become unnecessarily formal and impersonal. The following subdivisions are devoted to the different aspects of the teaching method.

Orientation

It is the first class meeting; the students are sitting silently, facing the front, awaiting the arrival of the instructor. Five minutes pass. Ten. Then a voice from the third row breaks the silence,

Perhaps the most valuable lesson of the semester has just occurred. What has happened? Well, sixty of us are sitting passively, waiting for the Instructor. How many of us are ready to educate ourselves? How many need a teacher? Can we learn or do we have to be taught?...

Despite the fact that I am in many ways uncomfortable with the role, I am the teacher for this course. Welcome to Introductory Psychology.

As a humanistic class is likely to be the exception rather than the rule, it would be useful for the instructor to convey how the class will be different. To properly orient the students, there should be a description
of the nature of the forthcoming learning experience: More student initiative and responsibility will be expected; there will be a greater emphasis upon self-determination through the use of individualized and independent work assignments; the affect as well as the intellect will be addressed. Yet beyond words, the introduction to the course style should be as experiential as possible. The opening situation described above offers a means of demonstrating the usual student dependence upon the teacher. Another exercise helpful on the first day is allowing people to get to know each other on an informal basis. For five minutes they might turn to their neighbors and talk, exchanging names, majors, interests, etc. This brief interaction can help to accomplish much: establishing a personal and human atmosphere, promoting the acceptance and appreciation of others, setting a precedent for communication and sharing, and inviting the self of the learner into the educational experience.

In addition to orienting students to the style of the class, the humanistic educator has two other tasks to perform on the first day. One is to relate to the class as a human being, describing such things as personal interests or hopes for the course. This enables the students to know the individual they will be interacting with, and it fosters a more comfortable climate. Another task before
the teacher is to make clear what the specifics of the course are,—lecture topics, readings, assignments, due dates, office hours, grading policy, etc. Preparing an explicit syllabus is helpful, but it is only half the battle; it must be impressed upon the students that the syllabus contains important information which should be referred to from time to time. It can serve both to highlight their awareness of their responsibilities and to familiarize them with what is to come.

Course content

To provide the student with a sufficient background for more advanced psychology courses, it is necessary to introduce, in lecture or readings, some of the concepts, theories, and experimental findings from the various fields of Psychology. The sequence in which the content is presented is of great importance. There should be a systematic progression along several dimensions,—from the specific to the general, from the concrete to the abstract, from the scientific to the philosophical, and from the cognitive to the affective. The topics might be set in the following series:
Such a sequence enables the student to assimilate new material in view of past information and to prepare a groundwork for future areas. For example, the experimental evidence and theories of child development can be seen to draw from the previously covered topics of sensory stimulation, critical periods, and learning theory, while the same child material can lay a basis for future discussion of educational psychology and personality development.

Lectures

As in other methods of education, the function of lectures is to provide the students with an understanding of the content matter. With a common language and set of viewpoints, communication within the class improves. Teachers can transmit information and stimulate thought, and students can ask questions and explore new areas. Beside surveying content, lectures can also build the foundation for later classroom interaction and out-of-class work.

A guiding principle in drawing up lecture content is
to capitalize on curiosity. Education starting with the curiosity of the learner employs a spontaneous and natural form of motivation. The use of the inexplicable can give an impetus to the learning process. For instance, demonstrations of such visual phenomena as the blind spot, illusions, simultaneous brightness contrast effects, and color after-images can greatly heighten interest in sensory psychology since the students will be seeking explanations for the events they had just witnessed. Charlesworth's (1969) model of surprise is consistent with this approach: At a given level of understanding, one has certain expectations regarding cognitive events; should an expectation be violated, one will be surprised and come to give the careful attention likely to lead to cognitive development.

Curiosity may also be roused by presenting conflicting or dissonant points (Berlyne, 1960; Festinger, 1957). The theme of humanism versus determinism is quite appropriate, as would be issues surrounding the nature-nurture controversy with regard to intelligence. For example, after giving the relevant background information, one could ask students whether the Department of Health, Education and Welfare should put money into Head Start programs, into better inner-city residences, or into jobs for the parents. Or to demonstrate the equilibration notion of Kohlberg's
theory of moral development (Kohlberg, 1964; Turiel, 1966), one might present a moral dilemma to be discussed. Curiosity could be central to education in these and other ways; all it takes is a little imaginative innovation.

Beside curiosity, relevance is another principle in arranging lecture content. By addressing areas applicable to the lives of undergraduates, the teacher can tap into more personal interests and motivations. Much of physiology can be taught through a consideration of the altered states of consciousness resulting from alcohol, drugs, and meditation; child development can be heightened with a weighing of the methods by which one might raise children; educational psychology can provide diverse perspectives from which students might view their own education; and personality theories can give insight into the personal and interpersonal crises facing the late adolescent/young adult. Relevance allows the student to personalize education by learning more about the self through the application of course content and by learning more about the content through the study of the self.

The proper scheduling of the lectures is essential. More formal lecturing should occur in the first half of the semester and in the earlier portions of those class meetings. Transmitting the knowledge first permits each of the following: a survey of the field, discussion with informed
participation, the ability to view subsequent topics with a critical eye, and a springboard from which to dive into a project concerning a specific topic. As the semester progresses, the style can move away from lecturing toward student involvement, from teacher-centered to student-centered. A major method to effect this transition is the increasing use of small group discussions.

Small group discussions

Weber and Somers (1973) have lauded the advantages of periodically breaking up a class into discussion groups of from three to six students. As they are by their very nature quite a different experience, they offer the opportunity for different benefits: 1) The small group discussions allow more direct involvement in the learning process. 2) In these discussions students can develop new ideas regarding course content or explore their reactions to it. 3) Such discussions give a classroom the more human atmosphere resulting from communication and personal interaction. 4) They help to raise the energy level of an otherwise passive, absorbent crowd. 5) They can stimulate people to think. 6) Working in small groups encourages students to assume more responsibility for their education. 7) These discussions provide students with valuable experience in group work, which may be extended later in the
While small group discussions hold much promise, they must be employed cautiously and wisely. They should be scheduled appropriately in order to insure informed discussion and to reflect the course material. Therefore, the end of the class period would be most suitable, following the presentation of some subject matter. Likewise, these discussions should be used sparingly early in the term, and more extensively later on. This serves two purposes—postponing the bulk of the discussion until a larger body of knowledge has been amassed, and allowing students to comfortably adjust to the different style.

Another key to the smooth transition toward student responsibility in the classroom is the gradual de-structuring of the discussions. As students are at first likely to flounder in small groups without direction, it would be advisable for the instructor to suggest topics or questions to be addressed. As the semester proceeds and students become more practiced in group work, the conversations will probably become more general, more abstract, and more student-directed. This would facilitate the shift in responsibility, away from the semi-authoritarian nature of the early lectures to involved, self-responsible learning.
Exercises

Beyond the lectures and discussions, exercises provide an extra vehicle for encountering course content. This approach can very powerfully draw students into the subject matter as it has them live out a situation simulating some aspect of the material. By complementing the cognitive lectures, discussions and readings, the affective exercises encourage the students to feel the phenomenon they have just thought about. While Values Clarification (Simon et al., 1972) is the classic collection of one type of affective exercise useful in teaching in general, other specific exercises are appropriate for the teaching of psychology.

One area of the child development literature concerns child-rearing. Becker (1964) and Schaefer (1965) have studied the effects different parental attitudes have on childhood behavior. It is an intriguing and involving exercise when the lecturer treats the students themselves acceptingly or rejectingly, permissively or restrictively, while addressing those styles as variables in the family context. Two perpendicular aisles might be established, dividing the room into quarters; the lecturer might be accepting of the front half, rejecting of the back; permissive with the left half, restrictive with the right. These
treatments could be brought about by such comments as, "Why is it that the front half of this class is always alert and attentive, while the back is either asleep or dead?" or "For the next five minutes let's take a break; to avoid confusion we'll have the right half remain seated while the left is free to get up and move around." At the end of the period there might be a discussion of how it felt to be in the various conditions, and a comparison to the reported findings.

Another useful exercise stems from the view of personality ascribed to by the transactional analysis theorists. Harris (1967) describes three states, the Parent, the Adult, and the Child, corresponding to Freud's superego, ego, and id (Freud, 1961). This exercise has students draw portraits exhibiting the relative strengths of the Parent tapes, Adult voices, and Child demands in different, hypothetical situations. This exercise can give a feeling for the subjective reality of Freudian psychodynamics.

A third exercise, strong points glasses, has been devised by Weinstein (1970). In a minimally structured fashion, people simply get together in groups of three and exchange positive feedback. The reaction to giving and receiving such acceptance is often very strong, and must be felt to be appreciated. This exercise helps people ex-
perience unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1967), and it allows them to experiment with a seldom-practiced way of relating to others.

**Workshops and large discussions**

Group interaction can be promoted by workshops, small groups on a specific topic led by one or more persons. The instructor, a teaching assistant, outside resource persons, and even students from the class might discuss themes of their interest. The advantages here are many: a diversity of offerings, student choice, more personal interaction, more direct participation, and more student responsibility. In order to extend the aura of authority to members of the class, it is particularly valuable for students to present workshops. Indeed it has been asserted that teaching is a powerful way of learning (Gartner, Kohler, and Riessman, 1971; Rosenberg, 1973).

Another form of workshop entails a group of students researching an area and presenting their findings to their peers. This type of workshop adds the experience of working together with others on a task, developing reciprocal teaching-learning relationships. An especially effective format for this kind of workshop could be a debate on such issues as freedom versus determinism, the nature-nurture controversy, or the validity of intelligence tests.
Extending the communal nature of education even further are discussions by the entire class. Following a brief introductory lecture or an assigned reading covering requisite background information, the class can address itself to topical issues. The contemporary topics of sexism, media influences, and alternative life styles tend to generate much interest. These large discussions are best scheduled for late in the term, since by then students will have had sufficient background in the relevant psychological perspectives, will have had enough practice taking on responsibility for their education, and will have had some experience speaking in class. Even more than the small group discussions and workshops, large discussions can facilitate interaction and communication within the class as a whole.

Communication

In a humanistic class good teacher-student and student-student communication becomes extremely important. Such interaction can aid both individual learning and class functioning. Of course there are the usual avenues of questions and comments from students during lectures and feedback from class members. An interesting addition is to have the students stop to reflect on the class process, reviewing what has been going well or poorly and considering any changes
that might be made. Done perhaps once in the middle of the semester and again at the end, such reflection could raise the awareness of all concerned as to their satisfaction with, responsibility toward, and impact upon the class. Supplementing all these formal opportunities might be casual get-togethers outside of class, (e. g. meeting at a bar or having a pot-luck dinner).

Individual contact between teacher and student is also needed. In the first few weeks, conferences between the teacher and three or four students may serve to break the ice in a fairly non-threatening fashion. At this point the teacher can learn students' names, get to know them, gain a sense of their hopes for the course, and set a precedent for later personal contact. This might also be an appropriate time for each student to determine an individualized work program.

**Work contracts**

A student can individualize the course work through the use of a work contract. An agreement between teacher and student, it allows the two to come to terms both on what type of work would be personally relevant and on what the expectations are with respect to the amount and caliber of it.
The common core of reading would be included in the contract. A set of inexpensive paperbacks might be assigned, with perhaps some selection left up to the student. Readings should tie into the material and should also allow the student to relate to the themes as much as possible. It is of added benefit that the books be interesting, enjoyable, and timely. A list of suitable titles is included in the Appendix. Additional books elected as part of the course work should also be specified in the contract.

Also included would be the nature of the written work surveying the course content. One option might be the writing of a take-home examination distributed early in the term; a second might be the keeping of a journal relating personal reactions to the material; a third might be the filling out of values sheets (Kirschenbaum and Simon, 1969) eliciting responses to content-related issues. While the take-home would be a primarily cognitive task, the journal and values sheets would lend themselves to the affective domain as well.

Cognition, affect, and volition would be possible realms for independent projects. For this, students might do volunteer work in an institution, tutor in a nearby school, perform a laboratory experiment, carry out natu-
realistic observations, conduct a survey, write a library paper, do extra readings, etc. Variety is crucial here, since it is the means to encourage the personalization of out-of-class work.

Evaluation of student work and assigning grades are generally difficult areas for teachers, but in the humanistic class they are exceptionally so. Evaluation should be made by both teacher and student. As an expert, the teacher is empowered to give feedback, both supportive and critical, assessing student performance and suggesting improvement. And yet it is also instructive for the students to evaluate their own work to see if they are meeting their objectives, matching their expectations. Such self-examination is instrumental to the development of self-awareness.

While evaluation may be difficult, pressures on all involved render grading a very problematical issue. Kirschenbaum, Simon, and Napier (1971) have discussed a range of possible grading options. Under the humanistic approach, if a Satisfactory/No Credit or Pass/Fail is not available, a contract system might be the next best thing. Under it, student and teacher jointly set the work load and agree upon a corresponding grade. For the introductory psychology class contracts might be
D.....attendance at lectures and one of the following: take-home, journal, or values sheets  
C.....the above plus readings  
B.....the above plus an independent project  
AB.....the above plus presenting a workshop  
A.....the above plus a scholarly paper.

The contract would be subject to revision by the student and contingent upon the instructor's final approval as to the quantity and quality of work, thus assuring that the work meets standards of performance. (In some cases it may be feasible to arrange for students to elaborate, revise, or correct any work not done to the teacher's satisfaction; a student might extend the learning gained from an assignment through these re-submissions).

All of these measures concerning student work are designed to foster self-determination, self-responsibility, self-examination, and self-evaluation; they are intended to involve the student in an active and personally significant learning experience.
STUDENT REACTIONS TO A COURSE

The following are student comments on a humanistically taught Elementary Psychology course offered during the fall semester, 1974, at the University of Massachusetts.

When I sit down and consider my intellectual growth of the semester, I am amazed at how much I've not only cognitively learned, but also how I've further developed my own values system.

About the psychology material...presented in lecture...Well, that's all incorporated in my learning, and that's the best part...it all is wrapped up in my learning about myself, and what I like, and what makes me and others happy.

The discussion sections were the most valuable to me, interactions with people more than just subject matter.

I realize human relationship is as important as learning all the facts...I have been expected to since day one of school.

For once, I actually learned through experience with others.

The workshops were very valuable to me because they allowed me to become involved with a smaller group, doing something that I was especially interested in.

It (the workshop) allows students to learn from other students which makes college a little more realistic towards every day living.

I feel that this class has really helped me become more of a person--it's helped me open up to the people around me and to appreciate others' opinions and values, but not always accept them.
It's important and wonderful to feel and know that what I believe about certain things really means something. I felt that I was an important and contributing part of this class.

I've said things that are meaningful to me and that's what it's all about—right?

The discussion periods always seemed to be dominated by just a few people. This made the discussions pretty worthless to me. Why didn't I say anything?...Good question.

I did learn things about Freud, Skinner, etc., but I didn't retain it very well because I didn't participate in discussions, which was my own fault and choice.

The class was valuable, informative, and innovative. Its structure attempted to free us from our bonds of formal education. It failed in its aim, however, because we couldn't really handle our freedom.

Class discussions are fine but at times it is necessary to initiate direction; we are still too programmed to be totally on our own. You might say we finally have our cake but don't know exactly what to do with it.

Maybe it's wrong to be so dependent on the assistance of instructors, but one reason I came to school is because I value the availability of being taught. I can teach myself without going to college.

I really found this hard, which shows how used to structured exams I am. I do think it's good to get people to express themselves even if it comes hard at first.

The free choice or almost free choice of what could be done for projects was a really good thing. The student was free to spend time on things that they were interested in and get more into it, or to discover new experiences and interests.

I liked being free in choosing which areas I wished to pursue for projects. It gave me a
chance to extend my interests outside of the classroom, and integrate what was learned to the day care center. It was as if I was observing what was said in class about education happening right before my eyes.

Grading and contracting were two of the best aspects of the course. They actually allowed some personal educational responsibility. I can't say I fully took advantage of the opportunity to do what I want. After working for grades and deadlines all your life, the tendency is to goof off, but at least it was a step along the way to being responsible and knowing my own strengths and weaknesses.

Though this class was not free of structure it had less than most and it's become apparent how much I have been dependent and still am on... the teacher to give me opinions, to tell me what type of things I must produce, the type of work, etc. they want. Most of all I realize that I have the ability to form my own opinions, to reject or accept, to pick and choose—to more of an extent than I realized before.

I do feel that what I did came from me and not because it was required.

I found that the work I did was not to "impress the teacher" but rather to enhance my learning experience.

I think that the idea that little emphasis was placed on grades helped me to do things on my own, and put more into things that I felt were important.

Each individual produced and received the amount of learning they wanted for themselves. I found it very helpful for me to work for my own benefit, and not a grade. I not only read the required readings but other ones, simply because I was interested.

The opportunities in this class to do what you want and how you want are well presented and available, and it really shows that what you get out of a class, depends upon what
you put into it and what you wish to acquire from the class.

There was no pressure, only responsibility to do your work.

The lesson the structure taught then was this: You are responsible for your own education... I think this is a lesson the class has learned. Those in the minority, who contributed often, took the projects seriously and thoughtfully, did the readings, learned a lot. The minority who did nothing or next-to, learned nothing or next-to. The vast middle-of-the-road learned somewhere in between.

I learned that learning in general is not something that someone does to you but rather something you do for yourself. And that is the most important thing anyone can learn in any course.

I've been given the chance to actually think about my life while in school, given so much time to motivate myself and teach myself, yet it seems at least for this semester I really haven't motivated myself as much as I'd like to. This class has given me many ideas as to the way I believe education should be, and opened many theories and insights of other people to me. But I'm sitting here and writing how I'd love to be, when I could be doing it. So for next semester I've planned to broaden my mind.

Now that it is the end of the semester, I think that what I learned about myself was more important than a few psych theories. After knowing myself a little better, I think now I can handle those psych theories better and be able to apply them.

This class put me on the trail to self-examination. All through school I was doing what others wanted but now I am really understanding what I want from life.

I found here a reassurance that I could be what I wanted to be, and do what I wanted to do, and had to be.
The most important thing about this course is the process of working with students being aware of themselves.

This class has made me extremely aware of myself. Through it I feel more open, more honest...with myself and others. I have really begun to question my beliefs—something I had never questioned, just accepted before.

I read through my two journals, and I marked comments which I had made. I found that there was a strong theme coming through all semester. That theme is that I can develop myself, use my abilities of reason and choice, and do what I believe is right.
SOME DRAWBACKS

It would be neither honest nor just to report only positive statements concerning humanistic education. Indeed there are many challenges and difficulties awaiting the innovative instructor. For each of these issues there is no easy resolution; each teacher must face them alone, on the strength of the inner self.

With regard to the class format, there is a new set of responsibilities. Although there need not be quite as much preparation of lectures, other demands are placed upon the teacher's time. Meeting with students, scheduling workshop speakers, and reading student work require much of the instructor. Assigning grades is a task in itself, since much of the work is student-centered and subjective in nature. Teachers must surrender much of their close control and tight supervision of the class meetings; precise planning must give way to flexible functioning. More than teaching, facilitation is needed to open up the classroom, to bring the students into the educational process.

But are the students really ready? Three have cautioned that they might not be.
Students, consciously or unconsciously, after sixteen years of academic spoon-feeding, tend to demand more of the same. (Rogers, 1969).

It may be possible that students are so accustomed to looking upon the teacher as an authority and as a ready source of information that they feel uneasy when they are placed in a situation where they must rely upon their own judgment and assume responsibility for their own decisions. (Faw, 1949).

If they have been taught to play a passive role in a learning situation throughout their educational careers they may have to develop skills for learning in a more active manner. (Rosenberg, 1973).

These views seem to suggest that students lack the self-strength requisite for self-sufficient learning.

The process of student growth is a long and arduous one. "Breaking the habit of dependency" (Kohl, 1969) is a necessary condition for the redefinition of the student and teacher roles, but that alone is not enough. In order to mature, students must not only break dependence patterns, but also experiment with and develop patterns of independence and interdependence. Mogar (1969) has observed that this is an especially difficult goal given their educational histories. Kohl (1969) remarks,

A free way of existing is not necessarily an easy way of existing. Autonomy, the ability to make one's own decisions, and self-direction, the ability to act on one's decisions, can be quite painful to people who have grown up in an authoritarian system.

The shift from an authoritarian mold to a humanistic
one can be quite disorienting. As a result people often misinterpret the changeover from teacher-centeredness to student-centeredness as a move toward permissiveness. It is common for a humanistically taught course to have the reputation of being a "gut",--a course involving little work yet promising a good grade. Similarly, the "fun and games" impression some develop leads them to mistakenly conclude that little learning is taking place. A last problem is that some students take advantage of the system by trying to get away with as little work as possible rather than take advantage of the opportunity to further their growth.

While students pose some of the problems, others originate from the teachers themselves. Kohl (1969) forewarns of the anxieties they will face,

There will always be the fear that one is wrong in letting people choose their own lives instead of legislating their roles in society. There will be depression, for one can never know in the short range if one is succeeding in opening possibilities to people or merely deceiving and seducing them. And there will be panic because we all fear chaos--fear that things have gotten so far out of hand in our lives that if we face the truth we will no longer be able to tolerate life.

These storms forebode that the trip into uncharted waters will not be smooth sailing. Teachers must have at their command faith, confidence, and courage to reach the destination. And yet more important than arriving is learning to run one's own course.
SUMMARY

There are many ways to make a psychology class a humanistic one. For example, there are specific means the teacher can use to enhance the students' potentialities: Cognitive capacities can be addressed in lectures, take-home examinations, and class discussions; affective capacities can be addressed in journals, values sheets, and values exercises; and volitional capacities can be addressed in contracting and independent projects.

There are four other areas which should be addressed in the humanistic classroom: 1) The physical environment and personal interactions should help to establish a comfortable climate, suitable for student participation. 2) The subject matter and work options should be relevant to promote student involvement. 3) Contracting and independent projects should invite the self-responsibility of the learner. 4) Class discussions and student-led workshops should enable the shared leadership necessary for a good learning community to emerge.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

I have tried to describe my philosophy of education, and its implications for the teaching of an introductory psychology class. I am where I am because of my experiences
as a learner and as a teacher. I have tested different teaching methods; some experiments met with gratifying success, some with dismal failure. I learned from each one. Teaching has been my research, and the results have determined the evolution of the teaching itself.

According to this humanistic model, I try to facilitate student growth. I "teach" in order

that students might learn the content of psychology;
that they might personally interact with it;
that they might examine themselves in light of it;
that they might see more of their potentialities;
that they might develop those potentialities;
that they might enjoy that process; and
that they might continue on their own.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * *

I do not claim to be able to get people to the top of the mountain; all I can do is to try to help them develop some skills in climbing. If they enjoy it, they will find their own paths.
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APPENDIX

SUGGESTED TITLES FOR CLASS READING LIST

The following titles are listed in an order paralleling the sequence of lecture topics suggested.

BIOPSYCHOLOGY:
  R. L. Gregory, Eye and Brain
  K. Lorenz, On Aggression
  L. Eisley, The Immense Journey

LEARNING:
  B. F. Skinner, Beyond Freedom and Dignity
  A. Burgess, A Clockwork Orange
  G. Orwell, 1984
  A. Huxley, Brave New World

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY:
  B. F. Skinner, The Technology of Teaching
  C. Rogers, Freedom to Learn
  H. Kohl, The Open Classroom
  A. S. Neill, Summerhill

CHILD DEVELOPMENT:
  U. Bronfenbrenner, Two Worlds of Childhood
  V. Axline, Dibs—In Search of Self
  J. Itard, The Wild Boy of Aveyron

PERSONALITY:
  C. Rogers, Person to Person
  A. H. Maslow, The Farther Reaches of Human Nature
  R. May, Man's Search for Himself
  E. Fromm, Escape from Freedom

CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY:
  S. Freud, An Outline of Psychoanalysis
  K. Kesey, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest
  E. Fromm, The Sane Society
  V. Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY:
  A. Rand, Anthem
  W. Golding, Lord of the Flies
  B. F. Skinner, Walden Two
  A. Huxley, Island
  E. Bellamy, Looking Backward