

The Blumenfeld Education Letter

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." HOSEA 4:6

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EDITOR: Samuel L. Blumenfeld

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The purpose of this newsletter is to provide knowledge for parents and educators who want to save the children of America from the destructive forces that endanger them. Our children in the public schools are at grave risk in 4 ways: academically, spiritually, morally, and physically — and only a well-informed public will be able to reduce these risks.
"Without vision, the people perish."

Values and Public Education: The Cultural Civil War

The following is the text of a lecture given by Sam Blumenfeld at Hillsdale College, March 11, 1991, in a seminar sponsored by The Center for Constructive Alternatives.

There is a myth extant among a significant body of educators in America that a teacher can be value-neutral in the classroom. A corollary to that myth is the notion that a teacher must not impose his or her own set of values on the students, and that the students must be free to develop their own values. The process whereby this takes place is known as values clarification — the means whereby the student works out or discovers his or her own set of values based on his or her desires, experiences, beliefs, and inner personal instincts.

The first question that arises from this view is: how is it possible for any living human being to be value-neutral? Indeed, what does value-neutral mean? In classroom practice it has meant bringing up moral issues for discussion among the students, with the teacher remaining mute, refusing to in-

terject his or her views. Somehow, it was expected that through the enlightening process of clarification, the students would arrive at a suitable personal moral code, all by themselves, without adult guidance.

Now there is something obviously suspect in such an idea. Why bring up the subject of morals in a class if the teacher is not going to teach morality? Would that same teacher decide to bring up the subject of World War II and remain mute, while the students in their ignorance discussed it? The implication is that you can teach history but you cannot teach morals. Children must discover them for themselves.

Can children come up with a well-thought-out personal set of values merely through a rap session on moral issues? I hardly think so, for the simple reason that children have simply not lived long enough or experienced enough to understand the serious ramifications of their naive, juvenile decision making. If this is what ordinary common sense tells us, then why do educators expect children to accomplish in a few

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classroom rap sessions what the world's greatest philosophers have been unable to do in a couple of thousand years?

Obviously, a child comes to school with some idea of values. After all, a child learns very early in life what's important to him or her and what is not. But the child doesn't use the term values, which is really a philosophical abstraction.

What is a value? According to my New World Dictionary of the American Language, it is that quality of a thing according to which it is thought of as being more or less desirable, useful, estimable, important, worthy of esteem for its own sake.

We generally think of values in economic terms. Something that's expensive is considered of high value and is termed dear. The British sum up capitalism in four words: buy cheap, sell dear. Note how loaded these words are. Cheap not only connotes low price but also shoddy merchandise. It also connotes low morals: a cheap trick, a cheap thrill. Dear connotes high price as well as emotional value. A dear friend, a dear mother.

Values and Emotions

Children learn about values in emotional terms. Parents are dear because they are a source of love, without which the child cannot survive. When children were asked in a survey what they wanted most, the answer was more time with their parents. And so, children learn at home what is dear and what is not. They also learn that in matters of clothes, food, entertainment, etc., they have their likes and dislikes. Values, or tastes, are personal. *De gustibus non est disputandum*. There is no arguing over tastes.

The idea that an educator can be value-neutral is, of course, a sham. You have to be dead to be value-neutral. The very condition of being alive requires value judgment if one is to survive. The body itself, from the

moment of conception, values survival. In a film made of an actual abortion, the fetus could be seen on the sonar screen actually trying to get away from the abortionist's instrument. To a fetus life is a value. In other words, the value of survival is imprinted in the genetic code of each human being.

When an educator claims to be value-neutral, you can be sure that he or she is not talking about economics. He or she is referring to moral values. The term "moral values" is a marvelous invention by humanists calculated to undermine the idea of absolute morality. By simply using the term, one accepts the notion of competing, but equally valid, moral codes. That's how you get a society to accept the unacceptable — by inventing a phrase that, when used in discourse, tacitly implies acceptance. The idea that several moral codes can coexist in one society is then touted as the essence of democracy — freedom of choice, freedom to kill the unborn, freedom not to kill the unborn.

It is obvious that competing moral codes cannot coexist in a society without causing moral chaos. For example, the Biblical moral code, which was the morality of our founding fathers, the moral code on which our institutions were built, regards premarital sex as immoral. Now, that didn't stop clandestine premarital affairs from occurring. But unwed motherhood was considered a cause for shame and was generally kept secret. The purpose of that moral code was to protect the integrity of marriage and the family, to protect women from the consequences of such behavior, to instill in young men a sense of responsibility in their romantic relationships, and to maintain a stable and healthy social order through marital fidelity and monogamy.

In this regard, the Biblical moral code calls for a healthy and logical course of behavior based on the natural order of things.

Thus, boy first meets girl. Boy and girl then get to know one another. Boy and girl then fall in love. Their families then meet each other. Boy and girl get engaged. Boy and girl get married. Boy and girl, now man and wife, go on honeymoon, move in together, and have a family. The result is marital happiness, which is not as uncommon as we've been led to believe, social stability, economic productivity, and children raised in an atmosphere of emotional security and loving relationships.

The alternative humanist moral code produces an entirely different scenario. That moral code is clearly spelled out in Humanist Manifesto II as follows:

In the area of sexuality, we believe that intolerant attitudes, often cultivated by orthodox religions and puritanical cultures, unduly repress sexual conduct. The right to birth control, abortion, and divorce should be recognized. While we do not approve of exploitive, denigrating forms of sexual expression, neither do we wish to prohibit, by law or social sanction, sexual behavior between consenting adults. The many varieties of sexual exploration should not in themselves be considered "evil." Without countenancing mindless permissiveness or unbridled promiscuity, a civilized society should be a *tolerant* one. Short of harming others or compelling them to do likewise, individuals should be permitted to express their sexual proclivities and pursue their life-styles as they desire. We wish to cultivate the development of a responsible attitude toward sexuality, in which humans are not exploited as sexual objects, and in which intimacy, sensitivity, respect, and honesty in interpersonal relations are encouraged. Moral education for children and adults is an important way of developing awareness and sexual maturity.

What kind of behavior flows from the sexual recipe in this Manifesto? Here's a scenario we've seen enacted time and time again. Boy meets girl. Boy and girl have sex. Girl gets pregnant. Her pregnancy causes a family crisis. She's not sure what to do. Boy leaves girl. Girl decides on an abortion. The trauma of the abortion remains with her forever. She picks up the emotional pieces of

her life and looks for another boyfriend.

Here's another scenario. Boy meets girl. Boy gets condom from guidance counselor in school clinic. Condom fails. Girl gets pregnant. Girl decides to have the child, live on welfare, and raise the child without a father. She and her child will live in a state of near poverty until she finds someone who might marry her.

Here's a more middle-class scenario. Boy meets girl. Girl enters into a "meaningful relationship" with her boyfriend. They live together. She gets pregnant and proposes they get married. But boy convinces her they are not ready for marriage and that an abortion is the best solution. Girl has the abortion, becomes depressed, withholds sex from her boyfriend. Boy leaves girl for another "meaningful relationship" with the girl's best friend. Girl tries to commit suicide but botches the job. Modern middle-class mother hands her daughter a diaphragm for her birthday.

No End to Scenarios

We could spend the rest of the day concocting an endless variety of scenarios — all ending up in one sort of tragedy or another. The humanists would contend that some of these premarital affairs actually end up in happy marriages.

But what has acceptance of and tolerance for premarital sex given us? Widespread unwed motherhood, an epidemic of venereal diseases seriously affecting the health of millions of young people, the massive killing of the unborn, increased unhappiness and depression caused by failed romances, abandonment by lovers, infidelity, and empty, degrading sexual affairs. That's the legacy of the new sexual morality. Not exactly a recipe for human happiness.

Clearly, what we have in America is a cultural civil war being fought not by armed

regiments but by adherents of competing moral codes. This civil war has created not only moral chaos but judicial chaos. A moral code is enforced either by custom or by law, and a system of law that tries to reconcile such contradictory and irreconcilable moral customs and standards is doomed to fail.

The confusion that besets society is particularly acute when dealing with such volatile subjects as homosexuality and deviant life-styles. The Biblical moral code, to which most Americans adhere, explicitly regards homosexuality not only as immoral but as an abomination — a rather strong, visceral condemnation if there ever was one. But society's disapproval never stopped homosexuality from existing. It was practiced secretly, out of public sight. But with the growing acceptance of the "new morality" among swinging heterosexuals in the 1960s, homosexuals began to assert *their* right to live *their* life-style openly and flagrantly. And the public generally acquiesced in the name of tolerance — that indispensable ingredient of a democratic society. The idea of religious tolerance was simply extended to cover sexual tolerance.

The result was a tremendous increase in promiscuous behavior among homosexuals which increased enormously the spread of venereal diseases among them, culminating in the germination and spread of the deadly AIDS virus, which as of Feb. 1991, has resulted in the deaths of over 100,000 individuals, 80% of them homosexuals. The Humanist Manifesto preaches sexual tolerance and the freedom of consenting adults to engage in any sexual activities they wish. The assumption is that if the activities are conducted among consenting adults, no harm can possibly come to anyone else. If only this were true!

The AIDS epidemic has demonstrated how easily a blood bank can transport the infected blood of a promiscuous homosex-

ual in Los Angeles to the veins of a hospital patient undergoing surgery in Denver. It has demonstrated how easy it is for a pregnant intravenous drug user, infected by a contaminated needle, to pass the AIDS virus to her unborn child.

Price of Unlimited Tolerance

In other words, when a nation, in its magnanimity, tolerates perverse behavior, it pays a price it may not have anticipated. The humanists give the impression that the Biblical moral code is unduly repressive and intolerant for totally arbitrary, unjustifiable reasons. It is assumed that the Puritans disliked sex and all other forms of carnality because they were cold-blooded, cold-hearted sticks in the mud, paralyzed by superstition and the fear of a monstrous, angry mythical figure called Jehovah.

But when one examines the Biblical moral code objectively, one finds in it the most reasonable, logical guide to a healthy, happy life one is likely to find anywhere. Clearly it is a moral code based on a profound understanding of human nature and human experience. It is unlikely, for example, that the AIDS plague is something new. Such plagues probably existed in ancient times among pagans whose sexual practices were similar to those practiced today by the adherents of the "new morality." Two thousand years of sexual self-control based on the tenets of the Ten Commandments simply eradicated most of these plagues. But now they are back — because the old practices are back.

Where did this destructive new morality come from? It came from a profoundly atheistic intellectual elite who adopted Freud's dictum that sexual repression is bad for your health. Of course, if that were true, Catholic priests would be the sickest people in America. In 1933 the Humanist Manifesto

championed for all Americans the sort of moral freedom which artists and writers in Greenwich Village had long enjoyed as one of the benefits of bohemian life. It took Hugh Hefner, with his newly launched Playboy magazine, to bring that hedonist philosophy to the business executive and university student. Artists and writers were no longer the privileged class. Middle-class America was now told that the forbidden fruit was now available to just about everyone at popular prices.

But something else had been going on at a deeper level to prepare America for its transformation into Sodom and Gomorrah. The battering ram against Biblical morality was not only the Humanist Manifesto, but the new humanistic psychology — otherwise known as the Third Force.

A New Utopianism

This new psychology was principally the work of a brilliant young psychologist named Abraham Maslow, who, working with the best of intentions and highest of moral aims, brought into being the human-potential movement, which has led millions of Americans into moral and spiritual chaos.

Maslow, born in New York of a Jewish immigrant family in 1908, rejected religion early in life because he associated it with a mother he detested. He wrote in later years:

"I always wondered where my utopianism, ethical stress, humanism, stress on kindness, love, friendship, and all the rest came from. I knew certainly of the direct consequences of having no mother-love. But the whole thrust of my life-philosophy and all my research and theorizing also has its roots in a hatred for and revulsion against everything she stood for."

By the time Maslow was a teenager he regarded all religion as nonsensical. To him, religious observance attracted only the naive

and hypocritical. Later, in high school, a teacher introduced him to the novels of Upton Sinclair, which turned him into a socialist. Eugene Debs, Norman Thomas, and other prominent American socialists became his heroes.

In 1928 Maslow chose psychology as his career after reading several essays by John B. Watson, the father of American behaviorism. "I suddenly saw unrolling before me into the future," he wrote, "the possibility of a science of psychology, a program of work which promised real progress, real advance, real solutions of real problems. All that was necessary was devotion and hard work."

Watson's anti-religious outlook strongly appealed to Maslow, who shared Watson's faith in rationality as the means to a better society. He was particularly taken in by Watson's optimistic belief in the malleability of human nature. Change the environment and you can change human nature, argued Watson.

However, it was through his fieldwork with the Blackfoot Indians in Montana in the 1930s that Maslow began to revise his behaviorist views. He wrote: "It would seem that every human being comes at birth into society not as a lump of clay to be molded by society, but rather as a structure which society may warp or suppress or build upon. I am now struggling with a notion of a 'fundamental' or 'natural' personality structure."

But it was the birth of his daughter in 1938 that made Maslow reject behaviorism altogether. As he watched his little daughter assert her wants and dislikes, the idea that a child could be molded into anything the psychologist wanted through behavioral conditioning became untenable. He wrote: "Becoming a father changed my whole life. . . It made the behaviorism I had been so enthusiastic about look so foolish that I couldn't stomach it anymore."

Self-Actualization

In 1943, Maslow formulated his own theory of human motivation. He centered his theory on what he called the hierarchy of human needs. He contended that every person is born with a set of basic needs, such as food, safety, love, self-esteem. But when these basic needs are satisfied, there is a higher need that cries for satisfaction: self-actualization.

He wrote: "A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be ultimately at peace with himself. What a man can be, he must be. This need we may call self-actualization."

Maslow had rejected Freud's pessimistic view of human nature and the behaviorists' animalistic view of man. He had come up with a third view of his own. He was much more interested in human success than in human failure. Maslow's biographer, Edward Hoffman, writes:

"The issue was no longer 'What makes for a genius like Beethoven?' but 'Why aren't we all Beethovens?' Slowly and unexpectedly, Maslow's self-actualization research had become the basis for an entirely new vision of psychology with the premise that each of us harbors an innate human nature of vast potential that usually becomes blocked or thwarted through the deprivation of lower needs. This inner potential, Maslow believed, had not been taken into account by any existing school of psychology. . . . (p. 173)

"He emphasized that true fulfillment in life comes from satisfying our higher needs, especially the need for self-actualization. The more we pursue and realize our loftier needs, Maslow contended, the happier and even physically healthier we will be." (p.181)

Maslow himself wrote: "I think of the self-actualizing man not as an ordinary man with something added, but rather as an ordinary man with nothing taken away. The

average man is a human being with dampened and inhibited powers." (p.174)

In short, Maslow had come up with another secular recipe for human perfectibility, in complete contradiction to the Biblical view of man's fallen nature. It is said that Maslow had a Messiah complex with a great personal mission to change the human condition. He said in 1955:

"I am also very definitely interested and concerned with man's fate, with his ends and goals and with his future. I would like to help improve him and to better his prospects. I hope to help teach him how to be brotherly, cooperative, peaceful, courageous, and just. I think science is the best hope for achieving this, and of all the sciences, I consider psychology most important to this end. Indeed, I sometimes think that the world will either be saved by psychologists — in the very broadest sense — or else it will not be saved at all."

A New Road to Salvation

In other words, humanistic psychology offered mankind a new, atheistic road to salvation, and one of the mechanisms or techniques which the psychologists — or humanistic clergy — would use to bring salvation to the individual is the encounter group — the intensive group experience.

The encounter experience was first developed at the National Training Laboratory (NTL) in Bethel, Maine, sponsored by the National Education Association. It was founded in 1947 by Kurt Lewin, a German social psychologist who invented "sensitivity training" and "group dynamics," or the psychology of the collective. Lewin's work was very much in harmony with John Dewey's educational philosophy which stressed socialization.

The man most responsible for joining the encounter movement with humanistic

psychology was Carl Rogers, the founder of nondirective psychological counseling. In nondirective counseling, or teaching, the therapist, or teacher, is merely a facilitator who helps the client or pupil get in touch with his own feelings so that he can direct his own decision-making in accordance with his own values. In teaching, this encourages moral subjectivism and pupil rejection of all outside authority.

Rogers became the guru of the encounter movement because of his extensive experimentation with the technique at the Western Behavioral Sciences Institute (WBSI) at La Jolla, California. In a lecture to an audience of educators in 1968, Rogers described the function of the encounter group:

"One of the most effective means yet discovered for facilitating constructive learning, and growth, and change in individuals and in the organization they represent is the intensive group experience. It goes by many names: encounter group, T-group, sensitivity training. . . .

"The intensive group or encounter group usually consists of 10 to 15 persons and a facilitator or leader. Personally, I like the term facilitator better because I think he really helps to facilitate the group in its own direction. It's a relatively unstructured group providing a climate of maximum freedom for personal expression, exploration of feelings and interpersonal communication."

Training Change Agents

The first sensitivity training program for educational leaders was conducted by the National Training Laboratory in 1959. It was cosponsored by the National Association of Elementary School Principals. The program was designed for the principal as an agent and manager of change. Rogers wrote:

"Changingness, a reliance on process

rather than upon static knowledge, is the only thing that makes any sense as a goal for education in the modern world."

Why all the emphasis on change? Because the humanists realized that there was something terribly wrong with public education and that it had to be changed. Rogers wrote in 1971:

"I have days when I think educational institutions at all levels are doomed. I also have moments when it seems that if we could only do away with state-required curricula, compulsory attendance, tenured professors, hours of lectures, grades, degrees, and all that, perhaps everybody could move outside the stifling hallowed walls and learning could flourish on its own."

But Rogers' dream was only a dream. Schools were here to stay and the humanists were determined to remake them in their own image. Arthur Combs wrote:

"There are hundreds of ways we dehumanize people in our schools, and we need to make a systematic attempt to get rid of them. . . . If we want to humanize the processes of learning, we must make a systematic search for the things that destroy effective learning and remove them from the scene. If we're going to humanize the processes of learning, we must take the student in as a partner. Education wouldn't be irrelevant if students had a voice in decision making."

The Humanist Solution

One must admit that the humanist critique had merit. Public education was every bit as bad as they said it was. But would sensitivity training, values clarification, and encounter groups make it better or worse? In 1971, John R. Silber, who later became president of Boston University, wrote:

"Encounter groups invade human privacy with reckless abandon. You cannot make public what is private without chang-

ing it. We have derived our sense of human dignity largely from the Judeo-Christian tradition and, to some extent, from the Hellenic tradition. In rejecting those traditions, we forfeit the basis for the respect of the individual person and his dignity.

"I question the claim that encounter sessions have therapeutic value. . . . Some group sessions have caused great harm, bringing people over the brink, exacerbating mental difficulties and problems that were relatively under control before the students participated in encounter sessions."

What Silber suggested is that the encounter group was the humanists' equivalent of the prayer meeting. And there is no doubt that what Maslow and Rogers were offering America was a new religion in which self-actualization replaced salvation as the ultimate meaning and goal of life.

To be concluded next month.

Harvard's Kennedy School to Recruit Homosexual Students

Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government has agreed to recruit homosexual students and faculty members in an effort to create a better climate for homosexuals on campus.

"The school is very concerned about the issue of diversity as American culture and the world change so much," school spokesman Steve Singer said on behalf of dean Robert Putnam.

The school was acting on the recommendations of a 12-member Committee on Sexual Orientation, which released a report on Feb. 26 that called on the school to recruit openly gay students and faculty members, welcome gay applicants, include gay perspectives from invited speakers and furnish

the library with books on gay policy issues.

David Schnur, a student and a committee spokesman, said that issues of importance to gays and lesbians have been ignored in classroom discussions on minority rights and that there are no openly lesbian and gay faculty members, though there is a lesbian and gay caucus that includes students and staff.

"There's a real failing of the school to send graduates into the world to tackle policy issues and never expose students to issues affecting gay people," said Schnur.

The Kennedy school has 700 full-time candidates for master's and doctoral degrees in government. (*Boston Globe*, 2/27/91)

Comment: It is obvious that the Kennedy School of Government is a humanist seminary, espousing humanist sexual morality, training government bureaucrats, legislative aides and policy makers whose decisions will affect millions of Christians.

While the students at the Kennedy school will be made aware of issues affecting homosexuals, we wonder if they will be made aware of issues affecting Christians. In its concern for diversity, will the Kennedy school make an effort to recruit fundamentalist Christian students and faculty? Hardly, for the simple reason that humanists cannot tolerate articulate orthodox Christians in their midst and consider them beyond the pale. And that is why America is not so much a diverse country as it is a divided country — divided by a spiritual civil war in which opposing moral codes are struggling for control of the nation's cultural and political institutions.

In this moral confusion, tolerance of perversion becomes the highest societal good. When all is said and done, the humanist society will tolerate anything but absolute Biblical standards of morality. It has its own absolute: relativism.