



HUMANIST COUNSELING

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I MODERN HUMANISM

I.1 *The concept moral conviction*

Man's place in the world is quite distinctive, because he is not determined by instincts. He has to reconsider his position and make decisions all the time. His decisions are based on a complex of conceptions and expectations. When these have a bearing on man in all his relationships and show themselves to be interconnected, we use the term moral conviction. A moral conviction provides a basic pattern of human behaviour, functions as a frame of reference, is a source of energy and inspiration, in particular when difficulties arise, as well as a starting-point for the communication with others. Such a moral conviction is modern humanism, as characterized by the attempt to understand man and the world by the appeal to human faculties and the trend towards realizing a common humanity.

I.2 *Origin of the humanist moral conviction*

In the course of history several varieties of humanism presented themselves. Modern humanism, as it is understood in Europe and in the United States, derives from the Renaissance. In the middle of the fifteenth century people tried, more or less independently of Roman Catholic thinking, to reformulate an answer to the question: "Who is man?". It was assumed that god and the world were separated by a wide chasm which man could not bridge with his intellect. On the one hand this point of view leads to their abandoning faith in heavenly authority, on the other hand to respecting every honest approach to man and the world. The customary conception of sin was no longer upheld. Man may degrade into an animal, but he may also rise to great heights. A new concept of man is introduced, the central idea of which is the self-fulfilment of man in relationship with his fellow-man and the ambition to humanize the world. A humanist concept of man thus presented itself to the christian world.

I.3 *Connection with common humanity*

For centuries there was no direct connection between this kind of thinking and the "common man". At the time there was no need for this, because the great majority managed to lead a meaningful life thanks to their christian faith. In the nineteenth century a change occurred. At an accelerated pace Western European common man loosened his spiritual and social bonds, without new ones immediately taking their place. Spiritual poverty and social disorder constitute an increasing danger for human dignity. This process continues today.

I.4 *Content of modern humanism*

In today's world modern humanism appears with an appeal to all non-believing people for renewed reflection on human existence. As to practical life there are four aspects. The humanist recognizes that his existence is full of mysteries, but he cannot fathom them. His starting-point does not lead to self-complacency. He too experiences the feeling of wonder at life being such as it is. He does not recognize a special revelation of god as a possible directional force. Only his natural faculties are at his disposal. A humanist does not place blind faith in the infallible functioning of these faculties. He realizes that he must be continuously prepared to account reasonably for his thoughts and actions, and to reckon with new views and experiences of his own and of others. However, a humanist does not have an unmotivated distrust of his own faculties either. By making use of them he may achieve a true human existence or, when he gets more or less stuck, start all over again. Man is capable, within the limits of his abilities and circumstances, to achieve an existence worthy of man.

Man himself must contribute to this. Animals are mainly led by their instincts which usually function perfectly. Thus animals can live with them. Because the human instincts have been robbed more and more of their efficacy, the man, who nevertheless wants to rely on them, might become a slave to his passions and lapse into bestiality. Man cannot confine himself to self-gratification, but he should aim at self-fulfilment within the frame of values formulated by himself.

Man is not an isolated being. According to his nature he is a fellow-man; dependent on other people, who on their part cannot off-handedly disassociate themselves from him. The acknowledgement of a common fate contains the possibility of a meaningful life.

Man cannot bear his development being arrested. He seeks after more understanding of the concrete situation he finds himself in as well as of his own possibilities to cope with it. Man cannot go back or stand still. He is conscious of the fact that he should move forward. His life is fulfilled when — abilities and circumstances being taken into account — he has achieved the greatest possible self-realization.

II THE CONCEPT OF MAN

II.1 *The concept consciousness*

All men possess the same structure of consciousness and sensory organization. The terms consciousness and conscious indicate the situation of being human, characterized by:

a *orientation*

Man appears in an existence he experiences as *his* existence. He is, however, not absorbed by it. As an excentric being he objectifies his existence, tries to become conscious of his existence. In this manner he orientates himself towards his existence and that so evident that he cannot be imagined as non-orientation.

b *interpretation*

Man appears in an existence that on the one hand manifests itself as cosmos or harmony, on the other hand as chaos. Because human life proceeds in polarities, and man as a self-conscious being cannot suffer this fact passively, he continuously applies his powers of discernment. However, his reflections do not form an abstract concept of reality. They are human interpretations of reality. In this connection it may be observed that man can achieve little or nothing with purely subjective interpretations. Through critical perception as well as joint research and reflection (deprojecting) he may attain a common human world and a creative and purposeful society.

c *intentionality*

The interpretations are not of an indifferent nature. They are rooted in the point of view (attitude of mind) man assumes even before he starts thinking about reality. This attitude of mind makes him take a certain course and thus his decisions can be divested of their arbitrary nature.

d *identification*

In this manner a concept of reality is created in man, with which man identifies himself. The positive aspect of this identification process is that man avoids a precarious existence. On the other hand it is very difficult to make alterations in his concept of reality or to reconstruct it, when needed.

II.2 *The natural faculties*

II.2.1 *The concept experience*

Man forms a concept of reality through his impressions. However, he does not react to stimuli as such, but to his experience thereof. After checking against his system of values he transforms his perceptions into conceptions, the combination of which constitutes his concept of reality. This reality is the basis of a concept of life or moral conviction that embraces man as a whole in all his existential relationships and acts as the directional force in the practice of life. As argued before, a moral conviction provides a basic pattern of behaviour, functions as frame of reference and is a starting-point for the communication with others. Summarizing: a moral conviction is the vital source of energy and inspiration on the road to self-fulfilment.

II.2.2 *The passions*

Typical of organic life is its vitality or life impulse. Every living being wants to stay alive and develop. Moreover it resists interferences. The urges towards satisfying fundamental needs will here be termed passions. Passions are conditions for the existence of life, man's as well.

They are the basis of his frame of spiritual-moral notions and they function from the unconscious. Although a certain training and regulation of the passions is possible, not everybody succeeds in changing them fundamentally or adding something new to them. Attempts to ignore or deny passions lead to frustrations and deformations.

II.2.3 *The instincts*

The instincts indicate the means by which passions can be satisfied. Men and animals know instinctively how to behave when mating and animals know how to make use of their natural means of defence. The instinct is a form of unconscious awareness, not acquired through experience. As regards man, the instincts have been relegated more and more into the background. He learns from his experiences, discovers connections and draws his conclusions; he made himself and his existence subject of examination and evaluation. Proceeding from living by his instincts he created a new orientation pattern that was checked against his system of values. The mental qualities of man thus acquired quite a distinctive character. They cannot be abstracted as independent faculties, but should be considered as activities determined by his sense of value, and they function within the frame of purposeful decisions. Through his emotions man experiences his being directed towards reality as valuable; by means of his will he exerts himself to shape this directional force; through his reasoning he searches for means he can utilize for this purpose. The foregoing implies that help, mental and social help included, is inadequate, i.e. incomplete and functionless when the sense of value and the system of values are not made subject of discussion and analysis as well. The system of values that becomes meaningful through the functioning of the sense of value, is the essential link between passions and their satisfaction. Therefore a multi-disciplinary approach to the person who is bothered by problems and difficulties, of whatever nature, is of vital importance.

II.2.4 *The sense of value*

The sense of value is a power of discernment with which man meets the challenge of the continually changing situations in which he finds himself. On the one hand it functions as a criterion that enables man to make evaluations, on the other hand as the power to formulate values. These values combined constitute the system of values and thus do not come within the content of the sense of value. On the other hand it is not completely void of content itself. Actually when man is faced with a choice between available possibilities he applies a criterion. This criterion is an expression of

his sense of value but is subject to common evaluation and thus assumes for this moment the character of intersubjective validity. Clarification of the criterion is therefore not only possible, but also of great importance. We may assume that thus the motivating force increases in personal as in social life. The criterion is, however, no recipe, but a starting-point, no manual but a principle. Life of man with his passions, faculty of thought, with power and emotions, proceeds within the frame of this sense of value and the system of values based on it.

III REALITY-AS-PERCEIVED

As mentioned above man forms a concept of reality through his impressions of everything taking place at any moment in the organism; this includes sensory stimuli, physiological processes and mental reactions. Impressions may lead to perceptions and these to experiences. Perceptions are consciously received impressions. Through integration into the system of values perceptions are transformed into concepts and absorbed as such into the entire body of experience. This perception process explains the individual nature of reality-as-perceived. Man identifies himself with this concept. Thus he does not react to stimuli as such but to his experience of them. It is, however, possible to account for thoughts and actions afterwards. By accounting for the concept of reality formed by himself, man overcomes subjectivity and selfishness and is thus capable of creating an adequately functioning image of reality.

Man can receive impressions consciously or unconsciously. Unconsciously received impressions may influence his thoughts and actions negatively as well as positively. It may therefore be necessary — in particular when existential questions and problems of a spiritual nature cannot be explained from the conceptions in question — to bring the unconscious impressions into awareness. Consciously perceived impressions, perceptions, can be transformed into concepts or be experienced, i.e. added to the already existing concept of reality; sometimes they are not transformed when the impressions are experienced as a threat to reality. During this discrimination process man can just ignore impressions and disavow their possible significance without previous examination; this is usually accompanied by deformation of the impressions.

Man reacts to reality as to a homogeneous body. This concept denies the stimulus response. The fact is that man does not always react in a certain way to a certain stimulus. His reaction to a reality, his behaviour, is always more or less a conscious attempt to satisfy his fundamental needs within the frame of his system of values.

The fact that the development and the application of the basic pattern in concrete situations are no simple matters, may be explained by various circumstances. Man is acquainted with the concepts guilt and deficiency. Sometimes man is not willing to do what he has recognized as good and beautiful. His actions do not correspond with his inclination. He gets landed in a guilt situation. Man may, however, fail as well through lack of insight. Then there is no question of guilt, but of a deficiency. In this connection we will make some elaborations.

Man lives in a continuously changing world of experiences. Thus it may happen that new experiences do not fit into his reality and are experienced as threatening. The cause of this can be either of two things. The reality-as-perceived may have become rigid and therefore repel new conceptions; it is also possible that new conceptions have been insufficiently checked and thus do not fit into the reality-as-perceived. Insecurity ensues when the primary subjective conception does not develop into an intersubjective interpretation. Communication problems may then arise.

Finally it is possible that the components of reality-as-perceived present insufficient coherence, so that it becomes a patchy whole and will produce various conflicting patterns of behaviour. In such situations man is faced with existential questions and

problems. He does not understand himself and/or the world, cannot see any purpose in life anymore and in extreme cases he is afraid that he cannot go on living.

As long as the urge for self-preservation and the need for self-fulfilment have not been fully eliminated, it is possible, though not always easy, to solve the problems in question, i.e. to make the reality-as-perceived function adequately once more by means of additions, alterations or reconstruction. The fact is that man is capable of stepping outside himself and thus of appraising his own experiences by means of self-examination as well as by projection. In the last case the counselor acts as a projection screen and as a stimulating force and a means of confrontation. In this connection it is of utmost importance for the counselor to appreciate his client's attempts to form a more adequate and functional image of reality, and to avoid anything that may act as threatening. The counselor must be willing and also be capable of entering into a relationship of mutual confidence with his client. The client on his part should realize that the counselor, in the interest of his client, asks for understanding and appreciation for his attitude towards and his opinions about the client. To a certain extent this polarity is an essential condition for the creation of a true relationship.

Man develops along the course set out by his concept of human existence. Where this actualization leads to a more differentiated and enlarged, a more autonomous and socialized human existence, there is a continuous process of maturing. The counselor appeals to this aspect of human existence. He has faith in the creative power of man.

IV HUMANIST COUNSELING

IV.1 *No indoctrination*

Humanist counseling is no indoctrination. That would not be fair to the client in view of his increased suggestibility. Nor would it be desirable because the client is supposed to solve his existential problems in his own manner. Moreover it is not necessary, for the creative power of man is greater than many people think. Finally it would be unfeasible because solutions cannot be forced on anybody.

IV.2 *The relationship of mutual confidence*

Humanist counseling first of all aims at establishing a relationship of mutual confidence with the client by showing a selfless interest in him and consideration for his susceptibility to anxiety and insecurity.

IV.3 *The client as source of information*

Man's private experiences are actually only known to himself. That is why he is the best source of information about himself. Thus the counselor should first of all listen to what his client has to say. This kind of listening does not mean that the counselor should just be present in a passive quality. By occasionally reflecting an element of the client's story, i.e. repeating in the same or in his own words, the counselor makes it clear to the client that he is thinking right along with him. It is this thinking together that stimulates the client to go on talking about and examining his inadequately functioning image of reality.-

IV.4 *The right to confrontation*

A client who has got more or less back on his feet in this relationship of mutual confidence, will still have to answer a lot of questions for himself before he can start changing, complementing c.q. reconstructing his image of reality. He expects his counselor to think along with him about this as well. The counselor recognizes the right of his client to confrontation of his whether or not provisional answer with that of the counselor.

IV.5 Moral education

The client having straightened out matters for himself, will still wish to consider new aspects and further elaborations of his reality with the counselor for a considerable length of time. Counseling then develops into moral education, whereby the counselor naturally avoids indoctrination.

V. THE PROCESS

The question arises if the process of counseling develops according to fixed rules and in apparent stages. This will probably not be the case, because no two clients are alike. The same goes for their problems and for the counselors. However, a few remarks may be justified that pretend to be no more than an appeal to the counselor to check how far his client has progressed. The following is not based on any scientific research but has been tested by experience. Four stages may be distinguished.

V.1 *Establishment of a relationship*

The client is faced with existential questions and problems and therefore feels insecure, maybe threatened. Very often he looks for the cause outside himself. It is the circumstances that make it difficult, if not impossible, for him to fulfil his humanity.

The counselor will accept his client with these conceptions and, in order to be able to establish a relationship, enter into his situation as well as he can. The counselor never expresses his favourable or unfavourable opinions, but he does show his sympathy. In fact the opinions of a counselor are at this stage out of place in the relationship with the client. He must disassociate himself from them. The counselor will listen, occasionally repeat his client's words to stimulate him to continue examining his own experiences. The main characteristic of this stage, however, is the establishment of the necessary relationship.

V.2 *Self-examination*

Once this relationship is established the counselor may proceed to reflect the statements of his client more systematically, to give an occasional summary of what has been said, or carefully draw attention to omissions or inconsistencies in the statements. All this to stimulate self-examination of the client.

By this means the client discovers that conceptions are more than perceptions and that integration of conceptions into an image of reality is not a matter he may ignore. In this situation clients are sometimes heard saying: "How did I ever get into this?" Things are really progressing by now. The client is learning detachment and discovers that he must try to get a grip on reality once more. Sometimes this proves to be a fearful discovery that may seriously threaten the relationship.

V.3 *Reconstruction of a reality*

In the third stage the readiness of the client to become reconciled with the whole human situation increases, without his becoming passive. The client re-discovers himself, but still does not see how he might give his life a new purpose. "How do I find the way?". "Does life still have something in store for me?". In this stage the client may ask his counselor: "What do you think about this?". A question which may be an indication, and usually is, of a growing desire for addition to, alteration or reconstruction of his image of reality. An inner process has been set going and the desire for a new concept of existence has been roused.

The counselor will have to answer the questions put to him but always be on his guard against indoctrination. "I do not mind telling you what I think about it, but I do not know if it means something to you". Counselor and client are becoming equivalent partners in an open dialogue.

The client is not out of the wood yet, his nerves may frequently fail him. Backsliding into a previous stage is certainly not inconceivable. Establishing and maintaining a relationship becomes uphill work.

V.4 *Moral education*

The client who in principle has straightened things out, and in whom the desire has been roused for an adequate concept of reality, will often wish to think through with his counselor, the many aspects of a moral conviction even if they had no direct connection with his questions and problems of an earlier stage. Counseling then develops into moral education. The peculiar aspect of this moral education is that it proceeds from counseling and thus may acquire a character of its own.

The process of counseling shows that counseling and moral education are strongly connected. Sometimes counseling appears as a part of moral education, sometimes moral education as a part of counseling.

VI REFERRAL

Counseling is feasible where two worlds, that of the counselor and that of the client, are congenial. Even if counselor and client agree to a considerable degree as to their concepts of life, a true meeting does not always appear possible. In such cases the counselor will do well to refer the client, when possible, to a colleague.

In the course of a contact divergent visions of life may prove to ruin the relationship between counselor and client. In that case the counselor will refer his client to a counselor whose starting-points are more in keeping with those of the client.

As stated above man reacts as a coherent whole. Thus physical and/or mental disturbances may influence the process of experience adversely. Referral to a doctor, psychologist or psychiatrist may then be indicated, as in other cases for practical help referral to a social worker may be called for. However, referral does not at all imply that the counselor drops his client. Side by side with physical, mental or social treatment counseling may be required as well. In many cases counseling will stimulate and complete these other forms of treatment. The possible co-operation of the various specialists, among which the counselor should be counted, will be of great benefit to the client.

Referral of a client is a touchy business for there is always a risk involved of increasing his feelings of insecurity. As a consequence of an ill-prepared referral the client may relapse into loneliness. On the other hand a belated referral or none at all may cause problems as well. Theoretically speaking it does not appear very difficult to distinguish between the sphere of action of the counselor and those of the doctor, the psychologist, the psychiatrist and the social worker. Unfortunately in actual practice "collisions" have frequently occurred. Among others this is caused by the fact that the specialisms just mentioned have developed too independently of each other. A few know what the others are doing, even less what they aim at.

The differences between the specialisms in question might be conveyed by means of the following sketchy outline. The human organism is not a subject of examination and treatment for the counselor, but for the doctor, the psychologist and the psychiatrist. The counselor's interest is directed towards what this organism has created

as a conception of reality, as well as towards the basic pattern of behaviour directly connected with it, and the directional trend of his client's existence.

The social worker is not interested in this as such. He accepts it as one of the data. He is only concerned with what has become of it in the concrete situation he is dealing with. He functions as a guide, while the counselor acts as a man from the X-ray department whose task it is to examine the inadequate concept his client has formed.

Counseling, psychiatric/psychological treatment and social work are complementary to each other and certainly not rivals.

In some countries some specialisms overlap each other; for instance the work of counselor and psycho-therapist.

VII THE COUNSELOR

VII.1 *The empathic attitude*

The counselor should be able to enter into the subjective reality of the client. This ability to empathize is not the same as diagnostic skill. It might be said in general that he who diagnoses interposes obstacles to communication. The primary purpose of counseling is not so much to diagnose the client but to think along with the client about his vision of life. The counselor will leave his client free to evaluate his own conceptions. By imposing his views, he creates feelings of constraint in his client.

The establishment and the handling of a relationship is no easy matter. On both sides there may be difficulties in formulating thoughts in a clear manner. This is all the more cogent when the client sometimes unconsciously attempts to mask his own views with a line of reasoning that is hard to penetrate. Moreover many a client is only too ready to interpret the words of the counselor as an endorsement of his own unproductive standpoint.

Finally the counselor is always running the risk of being too much involved with his client. For the establishment of a true relationship it is of vital importance to have a great measure of interest that may lead to a certain identification with the client, without losing that distance always needed in situations where aid is given.

VII.2 *The moral conviction of the counselor*

Counseling is not a matter of "common humanity". The manner of meeting people referred to above is rather uncommon and has a direct connection with the humanist concept of man. If the counselor wants to maintain his working attitude, he should be acquainted with its mainspring and be able to appreciate its value. This requires constant reflection on that moral conviction.

Counseling does not only make heavy demands on the physical and mental energy of the counselor, but also on his moral strength. The continuous confrontation with existential problems of others may raise doubts of one's own concept of man. Regular reflection will help preserve one's own concept and prevent rigidity. It often happens that a client wants to know the counselor's views on vital problems. He may just ask for purely practical information, but this may well be a veiled request for material to help construct his own solution. The counselor who does not answer such questions, leaves his client out in the cold.

VII.3 *Professionalization*

To do counseling well a certain skill is required. The question is whether the requirements should be such that under all circumstances only professionally trained counselors are allowed to do the work.

The following reasons for professionalization should be considered.

- a professionalization would be necessary to fulfil the expectations of private and public institutions

All governments require professional qualifications of teachers and doctors. In some countries of priests and social workers as well. These requirements usually refer to the knowledge deemed indispensable for the work, not to personal skill and responsibility. A humanist organization that provides counselors to public bodies for so-called incorporated forms of counseling, will have to take account of requirements from that quarter, if only because the allocation of finances and subsidies may depend on the expert skill of the counselors. The same goes for private bodies such as hospitals and sanatoria that admit humanist counselors to work with patients.

- b professionalization would be necessary to fulfil the expectations of the client and the general public

With the previous point we might still think of an incompletely thought-out desire for formalization of the profession, but the client and the general public demand at least a minimum of expert skill from the counselor, for fear of quackery and dilettantism. On the other hand the public is also afraid that professional training may kill the element of vocation, which may lead to the work becoming sterile and businesslike, and even to depersonalization of the worker.

Apart from mentioning this rather ambivalent attitude, the above does not answer the question whether a non-trained volunteer can meet the minimum expert qualifications. This matter will be dealt with more elaborately in the forthcoming chapter on volunteers.

- c professionalization would be necessary to meet the expectations of the professional counselor

The professional counselor identifies more with his function than the volunteer. Therefore he seeks after more knowledge and insight, and especially after refinement of his working attitude. He does this in the interest of his client but also to give society a clearer picture of what his task implies and within what limits he works. This greater clarity acts as a protection of the profession as well. The client knows to whom he appeals for help and what he can expect. In this respect the professional counselor proves to have more need for establishing and maintaining a professional code of ethics than the average volunteer.

VII.4 *The volunteer*

In view of the previous considerations it seems justified to argue that a certain professionalization is definitely necessary. However, this does not imply that in humanist counseling there is no room for volunteers.

As stated before, a counselor has to meet the following requirements: the ability to empathize and an insight into the value and function of his own moral conviction.

The first requirement refers to a natural skill that may be refined under expert guidance. The assumption that a volunteer is usually unable to meet this requirement is contradicted by experience. The matter of the second requirement is more complicated, even though it is more a question of appreciating one's own moral conviction than of scientific analysis. Yet the volunteer will have to meet minimum requirements in this respect, which means that the number of potential volunteers is rather small. As a rule it is preferable to provide public and private bodies with professional counselors. In other fields of counseling the use of volunteers is certainly not acceptable and for practical reasons often necessary. Special attention should then be given to their selection, training and coaching supervision.

VII.5 Selection, training and supervision of the volunteer

The following desiderata are based on practical experience of several years with a group of about sixty voluntary counselors. The recruiting of volunteers is done in consultation with the local committees of the Dutch Humanist League. The actual selection is made by a chief counselor, who first has several talks with the volunteer to get an impression of his natural attitude and education. Moreover this volunteer is given some material for study to get acquainted with the function he was approached for.

When the volunteer has been accepted by the chief counselor and been appointed counselor by the board of the Humanist League, he does not immediately get an assignment. In this preparatory stage the new volunteer joins the working-discussions of the practising volunteers, courses in interviewing techniques, and the chief counselor has a few personal talks with him as well in these three or four months.

The supervision given by the chief counselor to the volunteers bears a pluriform character.

A counselor should have sufficient insight into the personality of his client and his circumstances but in particular into his existential situation. As to the first and the second requirement, some knowledge of psychology is indispensable. This is naturally not a question of specialized knowledge but of general understanding. Further the counselor is trained in the subject of the vital problems the client may present to him. Although this kind of counseling was never intended to advance the humanist moral conviction as categorical truth, the client still has the right to confrontation, if he so wishes, with the answer of the counselor. The latter must be able to answer questions on moral issues.

Humanist counseling is done by means of individual interviews and discussions in groups. A good interview is a process full of hidden possibilities, but also full of pitfalls and snags. From the courses in interviewing techniques the counselor gets an insight into what happens during an interview. These courses are held for twelve volunteers at the most. Interviews acted out in role-plays are recorded and analysed. As a matter of course the structural aspects of the work are dealt with as well, amongst others, at regional working-conferences. Moreover a close contact is maintained with the volunteers by correspondence and telephone.

During the last few years a programme of national and regional meetings for counselors has been set up, which proved to be very satisfactory. Two to three conferences a year are dedicated to reflection on the humanist moral conviction. Once or twice a year the counselors meet at courses in interviewing techniques; four to five times a year at regional working-discussions.

Counseling is not a haphazard business; it is more than a meeting by coincidence of two people. A relationship is established whereby, in a sense, two worlds, i.e. that of the counselor and that of the client, merge. Only then a true meeting has been achieved.

This method requires considerable mental energy from the counselor and is attended with risks for him. He should be protected from the danger of too great a subjective involvement. Once every two months, or more frequently when needed, the counselor had a personal talk with a supervisor. The main purpose of these talks is to clarify the counselor's attitude in his relationships with clients. The second purpose is to get a better insight into the problems and the possibilities of the client, and to find starting-points for moral help. These talks are held on the basis of the reports the counselor keeps of every interview with a client.

VII.6 *Professional ethics*

In the chapter on professionalism casual mention was made of the professional worker's desire for an approved code of professional ethics. This desire arises from the fear of getting into a rut and professionalism. Ethical reflection is a prerequisite for keeping intentions pure.

a *self-determination*

The main purpose of humanist counseling is the clarification of starting-points, in order to supplement or revise concepts of reality. This means that the practice of life is being taken into account continuously. As a rule it is the problems of the client in this domain that make him seek contact with a counselor.

According to humanist views the practice of life will always be a matter of personal decision, whereby circumstances may play an important part as well. The recognition of the right to self-determination is a direct consequence of the humanist concept of man.

This train of thought places the counselor under the obligation to accept his client unconditionally in his pursuit of an adequate and functional concept of reality. He does not show anything of his own judgement, favourable or unfavourable, in his relationship with the client. In fact, the judgement of the counselor is quite out of place in this situation.

b *professional secrecy*

The client establishes a relationship with the counselor of his own free will. Such a contact implies that everything the client is pre-occupied with, including really intimate matters, should be able to come up for discussion. The voluntary nature of the relationship has consequences for the working attitude of the counselor.

The counselor does not conduct an inquiry. The only things discussed are those brought up by the client. Further, the counselor will not repeat his client's communications nor his own interpretations of the client's attitude, behaviour, conceptions and expectations to others. Finally, the counselor will disregard information about his client from third parties, because this often proves to have a negative effect, and is experienced as threatening by the client.

c *authenticity*

Counseling aims at stimulating the authentic thinking of the client about himself. The conceptions and expectations of the counselor are irrelevant in the relationship. Nevertheless, the client may ask the counselor for his opinions. The counselor may and must answer such questions, though with the greatest caution as already mentioned above. It is self-evident that certainly in such circumstances, the answer of the counselor should be as authentic as possible, as well. In other words, the counselor is obliged to take his own authenticity seriously.

Although the main purpose of the relationship with the client is examination, and if needed, revision of his concept of reality, the counselor should in certain cases not disregard the inhibiting effect of environment factors. It is in the interest of the client that the counselor should have the right to urge others that they improve any frustrating circumstances. The responsibilities of the counselor go further than his immediate contact with the client.

VIII THE ORGANIZATION OF HUMANIST COUNSELING

This last chapter deals with the manner in which the Dutch Humanist League has organized its counseling.

Counseling has a great appeal for people within, as well as outside, the League. This is apparent from the increasing number of clients, from reactions to publications on the subject, radio and television broadcasts, and the number of gifts to the Assistance Fund, of which more hereafter. Humanist counseling is also important from the viewpoint of public relations. Thus modern humanism is becoming more widely known and more visible. Naturally the financing of this work is a matter of great concern. After the Assistance Fund was established the cares of the Humanist League diminished. This Assistance Fund receives voluntary contributions from members and supporters with which to finance the counseling programme. These revenues now almost cover the costs, outside the work in public institutions.

The Dutch Humanist League has from the start launched the counseling as an independent and valuable service to public health, whereas only the mental-hygienic aspect has received attention up till recently.

It is becoming recognized, also in the domain of social work and psychiatry, that nihilism and disintegration with respect to the phenomenon of moral conviction are great problems in our day. Nihilism in the sense of indifference to moral issues; disintegration interpreted, as on the one hand the disintegration of a view of life in incoherent part-convictions, and on the other hand as the dissociation from every form of moral community. Many a man's thoughts and actions are guided by outside factors, he never gains a personal and at the same time intersubjective insight and experience. People with concrete questions and problems often prove to have lost their sense of human dignity.

As to the organization of humanist counseling, the Dutch Humanist League distinguishes between incorporated and non-incorporated work. The incorporated work includes the counseling in public and private institutions like hospitals and sanatoria, homes for elderly people and psychiatric institutions.

The counseling done in public institutions consists, for example, of work in military camps and in prisons. The non-incorporated work includes counseling within and outside the local branches of the Humanist League, telephone assistance services and agencies for "life and marriage problems", the conduction of weddings, funerals and cremations, work for the humanist correspondence society for matrimonial contacts, and counseling of students.

The costs of the work done in public institutions are almost fully carried by the government. For the military, the Humanist League can supply a Chief Counselor and

eight full-time counselors; for the prisons etc. one Chief Counselor and eleven full-time counselors; for the non-incorporated work three full-time counselors, who supervise several hundreds of volunteers. The costs for the latter work are borne fully by the Humanist League.

It is self-evident that the number of full-timers has gradually increased. For years the Chief Counselor for prisons had to work with sixty volunteers. In view of the growing need for humanist counseling, the Minister of Justice decided a year ago to create the possibility of appointing eleven full-time counselors, who took the place of the volunteers.

The Humanist League has always proceeded from the assumption that making use of volunteers in a certain area of humanist counseling is only justified when it has command of a full-time chief counselor to supervise the volunteers. In 1950 the Humanist League appointed its first full-timer. In less than twenty years this number has increased to twenty-four.

The working party on counseling hopes that all organizations associated with the IHEU will conduct an investigation into the need for, and the possibilities, of, humanist counseling.

If needed, and feasible, the working party is prepared to give advice in these matters, as well as on the preparation and execution of the work.