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**Humanistic Forces versus The Dynamics
of Faith: A Critique of Carl Rogers'
Self Theory**

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INTRODUCTION

The humanistic concept of the self, embraced by Carl Rogers and others, declares that man has the capacity to solve his own problems, and if he is in possession of all the psychological facts, he is capable of solving all the problems that face him. (Evans 1975; 64, 65)

This is contrary to biblical teachings; for if man could solve all his problems by himself, there would be no need for God. Christ himself said in John 15:5 "Without me ye can do nothing," and in Mark 10:27, "With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible." St. Paul, a renowned scholar of his day may have thought he could solve his problems intellectually, but after failing to do so, he concluded that solutions to problems come only through cooperation with Christ, for he wrote in Phil. 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me."

While humanistic theories focus on human experiences, problems, potentials and ideals, and encourage insecure and disturbed people to find solutions within themselves, the Christian psychologists and educators should point these people to the great Problem Solver - Christ. In **The Journal of Adventist Education** it is stated that the Christian's ultimate hope (for solution) rests in Christ, because he gives conversion, cleansing and transformation. (41, 1:17)

It is therefore the purpose of this paper to briefly address Carl Rogers' concept of the Self Theory in light of the Christian world view which holds that, "We are persons (of great value) equipped by God with rational, moral, and artistic powers to invest for our Maker." (Holmes p.15). When such persons cooperate with God true self-actualization is achieved.

The writer will therefore examine the topic: Humanistic Forces Versus The Dynamics of Faith: A Critique of Carl Rogers' Self Theory.

ROGERS THEORY OF THE SELF

Carl Ramson Rogers, a Midwestern American was born in Oak Park, Illinois, in 1902 and died on February 4, 1987. He began his professional career working with troubled children, and later extended his client-centered therapy to adults. Emerging from a highly conservative Protestant, and closely-knit family, Rogers prepared for the ministry and graduated from Union Theological Seminary and later pursued a career in psychotherapy. (Ricks 1995; Vitz 1977)

While at the Seminary Rogers was exposed to humanistic orthodox fundamentalist's view of life. This resulted in a shift of focus from his original religious concept to a more interpersonal relationship which emphasized the individual's freedom to make choices. This view was strengthened by the ideas of Otto Rank who emphasized the power of the "will" and its autonomy in the development of Self determinism. (Evans. 1975, p.74)

Embracing this new school of thought, Rogers, like Rank, deviated from the Freudian genetic deterministic, and the neo-Freudian social-environmental deterministic concepts of personality development, and psychotherapy, because he believed that the genetic basis of behaviour vis-a-vis biological, social or self deterministic constructs are not as important as those focusing on the individual self. He therefore challenged educators to create a positive environment that will foster and nurture intellectual development and psychological health. (Ibid. XXVI)

For Rogers, individuals were on a growth path continuum which may be blocked at times by negative self-images; or inhibited by cultural conditions. It was therefore necessary for society to provide the facilities for the development of personal growth that would promote respect and dignity of the individual and thus lead to greater self confidence.

His work gave rise to the concept of the Human Potential Movement which focuses on two aspects (1) a new consciousness as to what the individual can become and (2) the rights and needs of the individual. (Ibid)

Rogers' greatest contribution to psychology is in the area of man's individuality and self responsibility since he sees the self as

"All of the individual's perception of his organism, of his experiences and of the way in which those perceptions are related to other perceptions and objects in his environment, and to the whole exterior world." (Evans p.16)

He agrees with Jung, that the self is on a continuous path to actualization, but if it becomes static in any aspects of its development, maladjustment occurs. Self actualization is thus viewed by Rogers as the individual's awareness and acceptance of his development and changes in complexity toward a balanced self. (P. 16,17)

Rogers uses the 'self' interchangeably with "self concept" and defines it as an organized consistent pattern of characteristics of the "I" and "me" of the inclusion of values attached to attributes. (Davidoff 1987, pp.423-428) According to him the conscious self may be incongruent with one's unconscious needs and feelings, therefore he sees Personality Theory as based upon the relationship between the self - your conscious view of yourself, the qualities that make up the "I" and "me" - and the organism - the sum of all the experiences including unconscious feelings, perceptions and wishes. He argues that one's behaviour is influenced by one's subjective reality, and not on the external reality. (Wade & Tavris, 1987, pp.410-411).

The fully functioning person is seen by Rogers to experience congruence or harmony between the self and the organism. Such a person is trusting, confident and open to new ideas. Consequently, childhood becomes a crucial period for personality development, because genetic, social and environmental forces set

constraints and limits on the individual, but these limits can be "stretched," to accommodate the individual's development.

With reference to ghetto lifestyle, Rogers claims that the influences of childhood and society, do shape individuals, but "It is the person himself who is able to understand these factors that have contributed to who he is, and choose his own future." (Evans p.76)

The concept of Rogers' self determinism which places self at the core of existence, became the basis for his "I" - "thou" client-centered relationship, which is non-directive in its approach. This type of therapy is in contrast to the Freudian concept of resorting to the patient's hisroty. It is also key to self discovery. (Evans p. 106)

Rogers' hypothesis that the individual has within him vast resources and his self understanding, and for altering his self concept, his attitude and his self-directed behaviour, championed his disagreement with the behaviourist concept, that the environment is the sole determinant of a person's behavior. (Ibid p.124)

He argued that if man acts as he is forced to act, then man's thoughts, decisions, choices and values are just illusions. He therefore concluded that man's behaviour is deterministic based not on cause - effect, but on experiences which are inherently in him. His humanistic theory of the Self, therefore emphasizes the centrality of the Self and places significance on experience in relationship to behaviour.

DYNAMICS OF FAITH: THE CHRISTIAN VIEWPOINT:

Carl Rogers is of the opinion that the schools of today are more damaging than helpful to personality development, because they are fostering a negative influence on creative thinking. Hje sees these schools as primarily institutions for incarcerating and taking care of young people to keep them out of

the adult world. To him these institutions are ossified, where innovations are stifled and innovators squeezed out. (Evans 1975, p.150) In his article "The Role of Religion in Education" supports Rogers' concept when he said,

Although educational achievements have contributed greatly to changes in our modern world, they have made little positive impact upon man's inner self. They have improved his living conditions, but not the quality of life. Consequently, modern educational institutions have failed to liberate man from vice, fear, inhuman disregard of others and spiritual degradation. Therefore, man remains a helpless slave of his own inhuman passions and destructive vices.
(P.20)

While we may be tempted to disagree with Rogers and Ott, we have to confess that both men have their fingers on the pulse of modern-day parochial education; for indeed, our parochial schools have fallen short in influencing the wholistic development of the person, that is the spiritual, mental, physical and socio-emotional aspects. Secular education devoid of the spiritual component cannot and will not adequately help the person to find answers to his problems, because the root cause of man's problems is sin, and the solution to the sin problem is beyond man's control.

Christian education, because of its Christ-centered approach, is capable of providing the learner with the information to find answers to his/her origin, potential, and purpose for existence. The person is constantly searching for solutions and direction in life, and if education is to meet these needs, it must incorporate a religious component that addresses the nature and predicament of man in his struggle for survival. Ott suggests that man's real problem is not ignorance, but sinfulness, therefore the struggle is not his mind, but his Will (p.21). Secular education therefore, is incapable of providing a balanced and corrective program to deal with the Self, because true education has to do with the complete development of the person.

The major objective, therefore, of Christian education, is "to restore man to the image of his Maker." This is possible when each aspect of the learning process is presented with that in mind. To do otherwise is to deprive a person of the ability to think, to be creative, to use his initiative and therefore to incarcerate him to a state of self pity and frustration. In fact the person would be prepared for life rather than for living.

Students should be taught that self actualization and fulfillment is not achieved through intellectual pursuits alone, but through a personal relationship with Christ, "For in Him we live and move and have our being." - (existence) Acts 17:28.

Dr. Fowler in his discourse on "The Making of a World View" suggests that:

God's image in man, places upon man, a unique dignity and worth. Man is matter, yet above matter, He is creature, yet above other creatures, He bears the image of God, yet he is not God...he can stand at the center of existence and survey the future (p. 20).

Christian education should promote Christian values and attitudes that will help students to develop and appreciate the dignity and worth of man, because all persons are created in the image of God. Holmes extrapolates that being in God's image we ought to reflect God's glory, especially that we are uniquely crowned with glory and honor. Therefore, our moral and artistic powers should be invested to the glory of our Maker (p.15). This puts the person in partnership with his Creator, and allows him to see that, true education involves much more than intellectual pursuits, and the preparation for the here and now. Its major focus is on the wholistic development of the person and his/her entire life span. "It is the harmonious development of the mental, physical, and spiritual powers," fitting one for service here, and in the hereafter. (White, p. 13).

Thus the source of all true education comes from God, and therefore Christian education should have two major components - the nature of man and the purpose of his existence. The basis

therefore of true education is redemptive. Such an education will allow a person to think and to act, to be masters and not slaves of circumstances, to develop breadth of mind that is fortified against evil, clearness of thought and the courage of convictions. (White p. 18).

Armstrong (1994) in supporting this line of thought said:

Students who are supposedly well educated can spout algorithms, rules, laws and principles in a variety of domains, yet still harbour, in their minds, misconceptions rigidly applied procedures, stereotypes and simplifications. (P. 152).

He believes that they are in need of an education that will challenge their beliefs, provoke questions, invite multiple perspectives and stretch their minds.

If students are to achieve such worthwhile goals of education, they should be painstakingly taught to be, "thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thoughts." (White p. 17). This is only possible when the Christian teacher connects with the Divine and integrates faith into the learning process, so that the students will look away from the humanistic concept of self sufficiency in solving problems to the God who exists in every fibre of their life, and without whom incongruencies would remain static. This integration of faith, should not be seen only as an intellectual achievement, but rather as a partnership existing among the teacher, student and God. Every effort should be made to promote the total development of the student, by providing a positive Christ-centred environment, where the study of books will combine with purposeful manual labour. (White p. 289).

Partnership with God not only allows students to revalue themselves, but opens for them oceans of possibilities, "for with God all things are possible." Christian education then, should help students to focus on God rather than on Self, for to focus on Self one runs the risk of developing self pity, self hurt and eventually self destruction. E.G. White in counseling against

emphasis on the Self, said, "A love of notoreity, and a spirit of self trust are encouraged that prove fatal to the Soul." Christ-centered education then should discourage self dependency, and encourage the development of human possibilities - reaching one's full potential.

H.D. McDonald in his book, The Christian View of Man points out that:

Every man is a unique selfhood over and against society. The reality of natural individual self love which thebiblical view of man recognizes means that each desires for himself the full relaization of his every possibility. Every man knows himself to be less fulfilled and less developed than he might be: and he knows too that there are within himself deep and dangerous urges which conspire to hidner his being what he ought to be. It is certain however that no man can reach his full stature (potential) of manhood except through a power not his own ..." (1981, p. 113).

That power which McDonald spoke of is God - the image He wishes to restore in man. E.G. White speaking about that power in the "Hidden Treasures," said:

"God will take men (women) who do not appear to be so richly endowed (with intellect) who have no large self confidence and he will make the weak strong because they trust in Him to do for them that which they cannot do for themselves. God will accept wholehearted service and will Himself make up the deficiencies. (P. 150).

Many psychologists and humanists may argue that people are the only ones who can solve their problems, and they may invent varied techniques to show or teach them how to do so, but the truth is, the greatest threat to man is himself. Therefore, until man surrenders Self to God, and the finite is united with the Infinite, will man find lasting solutions to his problems, for Paul reiterates that we can accomplish all things, only, through Christ.

The Christian viewpoint will therefore continue to emphasize the four dimensional or wholistic approach to the development of the true or ideal Self, because according to White, "Education comprises more than just a knowledge of books. Proper education

involves not only mental discipline, but that training that will involve sound morals and correct deportment." (P. 52).

The Christian teacher's task is therefore to assist in restoring and protecting the image of God in students, in whatever subject matter taught, while helping them to maintain their individuality of "Self" and their freedom to make independent choices.

A Critique of Carl Rogers' Self Theory

Carl Rogers, a notable humanistic psychologist and psychotherapist, is at the forefront in the broadening of the goals of psychology, giving greater concerns to human problems. He must be credited for his significant contribution to psychology as a discipline, and as one who has challenged and improved the psychological and intellectual health of disturbed people. Thus developing an optimistic self-determined and positive philosophy of human existence. (Evans 1975 XVI)

Evans saw him as a quiet revolutionary who demystified the practice of psychotherapy, and promoted change when the concept of personality development was influenced by genetic and socio-environmental deterministic views. According to Evans, Rogers' ideas were so elegant in concept and so dramatically rewarding in practice, that all professions, including psychology were greatly influenced by them.

As a humanist, Rogers emphasized the centrality of the Self and suggested that the answer to man's problems lies within him. Peale (1982) adopted that line of thinking when he said:

You are never defeated by anything, until you accept in your mind, the thought that you are defeated; you are never defeated until you accept the image of defeat... What your mind can conceive and believe, and your heart desire, you can achieve... (pp.17,29).

To the reader, it would appear that Peale is assuming a humanistic trend of thought, but in his book, **The Power of**

Positive Thinking he records for posterity:

"Within the mind are the resources needed for successful living... God our Creator has laid up within our minds and potentialities, all the potential powers and ability we need for constructive living. Man's duty is to tap and develop these powers." (p.62)

The power referred to by Peale is the power of God in man. This is the most powerful force in nature and is the spiritual power technique taught in the Bible. Duffie (1968 p.57)

Rogers therefore erred when he placed experience over God and the Bible, as the sole contributor to truth. In support of his ideas about experience he wrote:

It is to experience that I must return again and again; to discover a closer approximation to truth as it is in the process of becoming in me. Neither the Bible nor the prophets - neither Freud nor research - neither the revelation of God or man - can take precedence over my own direct experience (Cited in Lamberton, C.C. p.281).

Although direct experience, education, culture, the exercise of the will and human effort, may play a part in correcting human behavior and helping to shape the self, they cannot "Change the heart or purify the springs of life... they need the power of God working in human experiences." (Duffie, p.139). Psychological sciences therefore, while playing their part in the development of society, pose both dangers and opportunities to the Christian mind. They are devoid of a spiritual component; they are secular in nature and cannot therefore solve all of human problems, because human problems are spiritual in nature, with sin as the root cause, and therefore needs a spiritual experience to provide solutions.

Man is constantly seeking to provide answers and meaning to his life. Ott suggests that man's real problem is not ignorance, but sinfulness, therefore the real struggle is not his mind, but his will, and that will is the power to choose. (p.21) Rollo May (1953) in support of this concept of choice said, "The fulfillment of one's individuality is based on conscious

responsible choice, and therefore regardless of the effort of the therapist, it is left to the client to decide if he wants to be free, it all boils down to choice." (p.119) Therefore choice is a crucial factor in the development of the Self.

Carl Rogers, in developing his Self Theory and his client-centered approach to therapy, should be applauded on his originality and freshness of ideas. However, in his anxiety to present his Self Theory from a humanistic point of view, he inadvertently overlooked two crucial points. Firstly, life is made up of enormous complexities and therefore man is constantly fighting against the things that prevent him from feeling abandoned. Achieving consciousness of self then, involves a struggle against these conflicts. Rollo May classifies these conflicts as chains - parents, friends, and society - that hold man in check (p.119). Secondly, life is not one-sided, it consists of opposites - good versus evil, life versus death, love versus hate - that demand choices. The choices made will determine what happens to man in the development of his selfhood and in finding answers to his problems.

Although Rogers supports the idea of choice, he elevates experience above choice, and contends that in some degree man is the architect of himself (destiny) and that self understanding is crucial in predicting man's behaviour. He failed to recognize the spiritual aspect of man and the biblical teaching that "man is created in the image of God in whom 'we live, and move and have our being - existence.'" (Acts 17:28) Consequently, by placing the locus of evaluation on the individual and not on this external force, Rogers places man in a predicament that can lead to further frustration, unless man achieves oneness with God.

Kellog in his book **The Living Temple** supports this unity with God when he said:

"There is but one life, and that is the life of God... If we really believe in the power within us, we shall be led by that belief to put our wills in harmony with that Will. To cooperate with this divine will in doing those things that make for our happiness and peace... Life is simply a state of harmony with God (p.475).

For Rogers to suggest that man is the architect of his destiny, is to promote what Vitz (1977) calls **humanistic selfism**, a concept that promotes the goodness of man's nature, but which later blossoms into the cult of self-worship which is anti-christian in perspective (p.80).

To position self at the center stage in one's life, leaves no room for Christ and therefore the self dependency syndrome takes control and the "I" and "me" of self is glorified; individualism emerges - "I did it my way." (Middleton & Walsh p. 52)

Rogers believes that people have the capacity to solve their own problems if the right climate is created for them to do so. This climate he attributes to psychology. His myopic, humanistic concept of life inhibits his appreciation for the fact that man is a spiritual being, constantly interacting and role-playing in his environment. This role-playing has resulted in the development of three distinct "selves", the "ideal self", the "perceived self", and the "observed self", all of which influence man's behavior.

Rollo May in discussing the development of the self, felt that the self is the center from which one sees, and is aware of his different sides. It is the capacity by which he knows that he plays those roles in society. Man's constant interaction with his environment helps to shape his inner self and determines his destiny in life. Accordingly - Zimbardo and Ruch (1975) see these forces (internal/external) acting spontaneously and significantly to influence behaviour even though such behavior is not predictable. (p.365) Coon (1989) expanded on this concept when he suggested that photographs, mirrors, tape recorders, and the reactions of others form the basis of evaluation and the attachment of self worth. (p.456)

To focus on experience as the sole determinant of self development, at the expense of genetic, socio-environmental, and

the faith factors, is to assume what Evans refers to as the "linear" approach. He said that Rogers, in the development of his client-centered approach to psychotherapy paid little attention to the aspect of human experience such as law, history, politics and technology which influence and shape man's development.

While Rogers' approach to client-centered therapy is good and has created changes in various peoples' lives and society, he seemed to overlook two things. Firstly, he appeared to overburden his new approach to problem-solving with expectations that may be difficult to achieve. Secondly, his change of behaviour, according to Evans, is achieved, not in the way he envisioned it, but as to how people think about human relations, expectations about intimate personal and organizational behaviour. In this regard he has revolutionized the thinking of society about human development of the Self and the ability of people to find answers to their problems.

Summary And Conclusion

Many students who enroll in Christian institutions enter with a positive image of themselves. Others, on the other hand are led to believe they are inferior. This feeling need not exist among Christian teachers or students, because according to Horne cited in Shermis (1967):

The self is capable of unlimited capacity for growth in the attainment of knowledge and wisdom, in the production of an enjoyment of the beautiful, and in the acquisition of the ideal virtues of understanding, sympathy, cooperation, forgiveness and self sacrifice. (pp.251,252)

The supremacy of the Self can find its greatest fulfillment when it synchronizes harmoniously with the ideal Self - God. In this respect the image of God will begin to be restored in human, reflecting what Hughes (1980) describes as core characteristics

of physical attributes, perceiving, thinking, feeling, choosing, acting, creating and relating, as persons relate with each other and with God. (p.90)

Such revelations are the result of choice - that of sin or of righteousness. Humans are created with the power of choice, but due to the existence of good and evil, humans find it difficult to choose good. It was St. Paul who described his predicament in Romans 7:18 "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not." Each person needs to develop a personal relationship with God, and initiate a network with his fellowmen so that the interaction between home, school and community can be realized, as the Ideal Self - a real life in Christ become a reality. In this respect the "fully functional person will be able to declare like Paul "I can do all things through Christ."

A balanced Self is achieved only through purposeful integration of faith and learning which Rasi describes as:

a deliberate and systematic process of approaching the entire educational enterprise from a biblical perspective, and with Christian objectives, so as to ensure that students (and teachers) will leave school having freely internalized a Christ-centered, service-oriented and kingdom-directed view of knowledge, life and destiny. (C.C.4.)

Holmes also cautions that integration should be viewed as an intellectual activity that is continuous with life. (p.46)

Learners, especially in the field of psychology need to be aware that:

Our impulses and passions can be harnessed for the highest use, and that with full surrender of self, God will make up the deficiencies. (White)

Psychology as a science should seek to develop body, mind and spirit, thus beginning the restoration process - leading humans back to the pristine state of being - "in the image of his Maker." Relativism and absolutism, along with the concepts of freedom and the self, should be taught in a manner that affirms

God's laws as the transcript of His character. Biblical principles and psychology should be so well interfaced, that their interdependence resembles that of mind and body interrelationship.

The Christian teacher then, should launch out in faith believing that according to White, in **Hidden Treasures**

God desires that His workers in every line shall look to Him as the giver of all they possess... and that Divine and human agencies are to combine in temporal as well as spiritual achievement. (p.236)

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