

A REPLY TO ANDERSON'S "CLARIFYING WHAT VALUES?"

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When a colleague criticizes one's work in a public forum (Anderson, 1979), there are two avenues of response. One is to take the necessary ten steps down the corridor to knock on his door. The other is to choose the same public forum in which to reply. The latter approach gives readers who have been misled by the criticism another opportunity to examine what exactly was said in the original presentation (Hague, 1977).

First, it is gratifying to see that Anderson's criticism in no way touched upon the *substance* of what I had to say. This I take as a compliment if not tacit agreement, coming as it does from such a respected scholar. Anderson leaves the essence of the paper — the dynamic for development found in moral crises and the role that counsellors are called upon to play — essentially unmentioned and chooses instead to cast doubt on the ability of the teaching and counselling professions to induce productive moral conflict.

I am tempted to criticize the sweeping conclusions which Anderson draws from a relatively small sample but readers of the *Canadian Counsellor* will not be led astray by that. I am also tempted to question Anderson's use of the Rokeach Value Survey as a valid measure of values. My own research using that instrument with university students (future counsellors and teachers) has removed some of my illusions about the validity with which it measures real values as opposed to those that are merely verbalized. I am even tempted to return criticism for criticism, but that not only would be petty but also would mask the important purpose of this reply: to point out the misunderstandings contained in the criticism, thereby saving the contents of my original presentation and preventing unwarranted negative conclusions about the counselling and teaching profession.

Unfortunately, in his eagerness to get across his criticism of counsellors and teachers, Anderson uses my original article as a springboard. As a result he exerts extraordinary pressure on some of its statements in order to draw his unwarranted conclusions. For example Anderson (p. 37) points to two statements of mine that he calls "falsifiable assertions." The first is that "one cannot overemphasize the importance that teachers . . . be conscious of what values they hold." That is why the statement was made. Educators of any kind must be aware of their values. I fear this idea may

be lost in confusion. The other "falsifiable assertion" according to Anderson, is that "No one can give what he hasn't got." I'm sure Anderson does not quarrel with this statement — but, in order to use it as one of his jumping off points to criticize counsellors, setting up some criteria against which to measure them and find them wanting, he jumps to the conclusion: "Implicit in this is the idea that this adult model must be at Kohlberg's principled levels of moral development . . ." The conclusion is categorically not "implicit." It cannot be implicit or explicit for anyone who understands Kohlberg. Anderson surely knows that very few people operate at Kohlberg's principled level. It would be unrealistic to expect many teachers and counsellors to be there. The original article does not ask for principled moral thinkers; all it asks (*reflecting Kohlberg*) is that those who teach or counsel be aware that their own level of moral reasoning sets a limit on what they can convey to others. In so far as Anderson's distortion clouds this caution to counsellors, he not only distorts the message of the paper but does a disservice to the improvement of counsellors, which cause presumably he espouses. In so far as Anderson's criticism urges counsellors on to higher levels of moral development, I welcome it as support of my original thesis. But to set up principled thinking as the standard against which counsellors are to be measured, loads the argument from the beginning to its inevitable negative conclusion.

Anderson returns to this theme again on page 37, calling it "Hague's hypothesis" that effective counsellors operate at Kohlberg's most principled stages. It would be shoddy work on my part not to state my hypotheses clearly. But this one was never stated because it was not an hypothesis. I have not provided an unrealistic standard against which Anderson can measure counsellors and find them wanting. Would that all men were saints and principled moralists but, alas, they are not and even counsellors are aware of this deficiency in themselves.

My concluding remarks must revert back to that part of Anderson's paper where he strikes the lowest blows. This is the introductory section filled with comments on "faded metaphors" and "thought clichés" like "growth," "autonomy," "authenticity," "creative potential." (By the way, it is he who presumes that providence is to be spelled with a capital P!) There are some counsel-

lors (even those veterans who came through the group sensitivity movement) for whom these words have real meaning. They have not faded. They do not fall from the lips as mere clichés. It is a narrow concept of "knowing" that says we have grasped a concept when we have defined it. Is "I love you" a "thought cliché" if not accompanied by a definition? Can we dismiss other vital words with which great men have directed their lives and even gone to their deaths as merely "faded metaphors" and "thought clichés?" It would be a cynical world if we did that. I would not like to live in such a place.

If my paper has provoked Charles Anderson to share his ideas and his scholarship with us, then it

has served a good purpose over and above the support he gives to the substance of the original paper. But he stops short at only pointing out what is deficient in counsellors. Perhaps in some future presentation he can pick up the main theme and substance of the original and help build a positive program for counsellor moral development.

References

- Anderson, C.C. Clarifying what values? *Canadian Counsellor*, 1979, 14 (1), 36-40.
- Hague, W.J. Counselling as moral conflict: Making the disintegration positive. *Canadian Counsellor*, 1977, 12 (1), 41-46.