

Letters

AN ALTERNATIVE CREED FOR BIOLOGY TEACHERS

"A Behaviorist Teacher's Creed," by Thomas J. Cleaver (*ABT* 37[5]:298) surely represents a point of view supported by some biology teachers, but it is not one that should be put forth as representing the point of view of all biology teachers. An alternative point of view, as set forth below, should be given equal consideration by *ABT* readers.

A Humanist Teacher's Creed

I believe that my role as teacher is best fulfilled through promoting the positive development of students in as many dimensions as possible.

For some, this will be a matter of acquiring knowledge and skills;
for some, it may mean finding friendship and tolerance;
for most, it will be a mixture of these, and their relative importance will change for each student from day to day;
and, for all, it should be a means of achieving independence.

I approach each class with joyful anticipation, as well as trepidation—

knowing that the transmission of knowledge, for which purpose we have been brought together, is an incomplete basis for human interaction;
knowing that each class offers many opportunities for lasting friendships;
knowing that the way in which I am perceived will differ with each student, and that there is no one message appropriate for all;
knowing that significant learning comes from mutual trust and respect and that, often, these conditions cannot be met;
knowing that for most, I represent a role rather than being a real person, and that I will be anxious to be recognized as a person of worth; and,
knowing full well that I will fail to meet the expectations of many.

As a result of our interaction, I would like my students to —

value both verification and invention,
question the relevance of the past, not assume it,
assume increasing responsibility for their own learning,

know that values, as well as knowledge, are essential for societal decisions,
come to value intuition as well as logic,
be able to think metaphorically as well as sequentially,
know when to trust their senses and when to seek authority,
think constructively of the future and not replicate the past,
develop a sense of personal power over factors affecting their own future,
feel a sense of accomplishment from mastering some field of knowledge,
distinguish between situations requiring rational and intuitive thought,
know that dependence on reason to prevail in all situations is to deny full humanness, as well as a large segment of scientific knowledge, and
to know that the "big leaps" in scientific knowledge have been based on intuition.

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Thomas J. Cleaver comments:

Knowing this "humanist" as I do, I prefer to view his sensitive contribution as a *complement*, rather than alternative, to that I described as "behaviorist." Cognition and affect do not strike me as exclusives in rational human behavior though our experiences and perceptions may lead us to express them with different emphases. *Intuition*, however, should not be confused with thought, though intuition may frequently provide a supportive insight that frees the imagination and stimulates the intellect. Pity the man or woman who loses, or never gains, the ability to recognize reason *and* compassion as inherent and vital in all domains of human experience.

The Aim of Education

I see *the facilitation of learning* as the *aim* of education, the way in which we might develop the learning man, the way in which we can learn to live as individuals in process. I see the facilitation of learning as the function which may hold constructive, tentative, changing, *process* answers to some of the deepest perplexities which beset man today.

From *Freedom to Learn*, by Carl Rogers