

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Meaning of "Growth"

R.G. 8-26-68

I have a primary concern with how people experience themselves in the world. By this I mean how people experience themselves as themselves, their face to face contacts, the groups, organizations and institutions with which they have contact, of which they are a part, and the society as a whole. This also includes how people experience the relationship between parts (e.g. between a community organization and the city, or between themselves and an institution, etc) and the felt relationship between everything and everything else. This refers to a concern about how people experience things and how particular social structure and processes tend to foster specific kinds of experiences. The experiences can be idiosyncratic (i.e. unique to a specific individual) or shared in some way by larger and larger groups. This is the experiential dimension of living.

A second primary concern is how people think about their experiences as individuals, in groups etc. This has to do with the conceptual models people make of their experiences. These conceptual models may be very simple, such as most prejudices or complex as social theories. They also may be either about oneself, a group, organization, etc., etc. They also may be personal concepts or shared concepts.

The third dimension of primary concern is action. This can also be with oneself or with others, for oneself or for others, etc., etc.

The dimensions of experience, thoughts and action are not discrete. To the contrary, they interpenetrate and are in constant interplay, and it seems to me that this interplay is the primary mechanism for human growth.

My own sense of what almost any service profession does is stimulating growth by making experiencing, conceptualizing and acting⁷ the interplay between them more vigorous and more free.