
**FROM THE
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

**The Need for “Ethical” Human
Sciences and Services**

A Moral Lifetime Ago

When I first began my private practice more than three decades ago, it was possible for psychiatrists like myself—as well as for psychologists, counselors, social workers, family therapists, and teachers—to conduct themselves according to their own freely chosen ethics and principles. That same year, 1968, I was also in my second year at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), where my staff responsibilities included overseeing the grant approval process. It was still possible at NIMH to focus on the psychological, social, and economic causes of individual suffering. As remarkable as it seems in retrospect, researchers in the psychosocial and educational fields, and in related biomedical sciences, could conduct investigations that were potentially threatening to large pharmaceutical and biomedical interests. I was also teaching at a respected school of psychiatry where I could—without fear of reprisal—advocate viewpoints that challenged biological psychiatry. Some of my teaching involved consulting with public school counselors about how to help their young pupils without their resorting to drugs. No one thought this was heresy that required suppression.

Although it was never easy, 30 years ago practitioners, researchers, and teachers could still hope to devote their careers to the genuine needs of their patients or clients, their research subjects, and their students with respect for the integrity of individuals and their families, and with devotion to the scientific method and to truth.

In the Shadow of the Psychopharmaceutical Complex

Today in human sciences and services—from psychiatry, psychology, social work, and counseling to behavioral genetics and the neurosciences—it has become increasingly difficult to participate without compromising sound ethics, rationality, and scientific principles. We can no longer naively hope to function as professionals without encountering threats and coercion from large, powerful

interest groups. Today, frustrated students and professionals alike frequently ask, in effect, "Where can I go to learn, work, or teach without being forced to espouse biomedical theories and to promote drugs and electroshock?" Patients and clients search in vain for therapeutic and educational help that does not end in taking drugs.

Among the interest groups that have transformed human sciences and services in the last three decades, the pharmaceutical industry stands at the top. Drug company funding has dramatically penetrated many professional and public domains, influencing research, education, philanthropic and professional institutions, and the media. Biologically oriented psychiatry and related medical specialties are among the primary beneficiaries. As demonstrated by drug company financing of the American Psychiatric Association, the pharmaceutical industry and organized psychiatry have become self-acknowledged partners. The interests of the health insurance industry are also interwoven with those of drug companies and organized biopsychiatry. Government agencies, responding to economic and political pressure for quick-fix assembly-line treatments, have joined in promoting pseudoscience. These agencies are controlled by a U.S. Congress that is awash in drug company political influence and financial contributions. The media—increasingly dependent on drug company advertising—treat every new biopsychiatric claim as a scientific revolution, while ignoring research that demonstrates the greater value of human services delivered in a caring, empathic, and informed manner.

The psychopharmaceutical complex overshadows the entire professional arena; it has reduced human conflict and suffering to cookbook diagnoses and cookie-cutter treatments. Physical interventions that subdue and anesthetize the brain and human spirit have replaced psychosocial and educational approaches that identify and fulfill genuine human needs. Human sciences and services succumb to the lowest common denominators of simplistic biologizing, reductionism, and scientism.

In the United States, for example, it is nearly impossible to teach at a university without giving lip service to the ultimate need for psychiatric drugs and electroshock. It is increasingly difficult to publish anything that questions the fundamental propositions and approaches of biological psychiatry. Even teachers and therapists who work with children must go along with the widespread drugging of children or risk the loss of their jobs. Overall, professionals who reject unfounded biomedical approaches to psychological distress can find it difficult to get work or to be published. Similarly, clients or patients who seek psychological and social services may instead find themselves referred to physicians for potentially brain-disabling medications and electroshock.

While biopsychiatry and drug companies are most powerful in the United States, their influence—fueled by drug company profits—is burgeoning everywhere. In the trade it's called market expansion. Throughout the world, professionals of integrity in the human sciences and services increasingly feel isolated and alone. Everywhere the big loser is the client, patient, research subject, or student who deserves the attention of professionals devoted to identifying and meeting genuine human needs in the psychological, social, and spiritual spheres. Another big loser is scientific veracity.

Choosing to Take a Professional Stand

A few decades ago, it may have seemed sufficient to promote high standards of research and service. But in a professional world dominated and controlled by corporate interests and biopsychiatry, it becomes futile to advocate for the genuine needs of children or adults, or for honesty in science, without at the same time speaking truth to pseudoscience and scientism. Professionals must join together to take the more courageous but necessary step of confronting these economically driven interest groups that are reducing human sciences and services to simple-minded physical principles and interventions.

Ethical Human Sciences and Services is a peer-reviewed journal devoted to ethical psychosocial interventions *and* to principled critiques of pseudoscientific theory and practice. It is sponsored by the International Center for the Study of Psychiatry and Psychology (ICSPP), an organization of professionals devoted to the same principles. Founded more than 25 years ago as the Center for the Study of Psychiatry, ICSPP has repeatedly stood for ethical reform and principled practices, often in direct confrontation with powerful interest groups.

In the 1970s, for example, ICSPP conducted a successful worldwide campaign to slow and in some places to stop the resurgence of lobotomy and psychosurgery. In the 1990s, ICSPP led another successful reform effort to stop the United States government's "violence initiative." The violence initiative was slated to become a multimillion dollar multi-agency program for conducting intrusive biological and genetic research on inner-city children. In a dangerous combination of racist politics, social control, and biopsychiatry, its goal was the discovery of biomedical causes and interventions for the prevention and control of inner-city crime and violence.

In a professional world increasingly dominated by pharmaceutical money and biomedical interests, ICSPP has sometimes been a beacon of light, at other times a "conscience," and still at other times, an oasis for professionals seeking a community of ethical, psychosocially oriented colleagues. Now ICSPP has become a substantial voice—an international network of hundreds of concerned professionals.

On a daily basis, ICSPP provides otherwise unobtainable information to the professions, the public, and the media concerning the dangers of biological reductionism and the importance of ethical, empowering psychosocial interventions. It often evaluates current research projects and clinical practices, as well as specific drugs and other treatments. In addition to sponsoring *Ethical Human Sciences and Services*, ICSPP publishes a newsletter, holds an annual international conference, and offers an informative Website (www.ICSPP.org). It has divisions in North America, Europe, and Australia. More than 200 professionals are involved in the Board of Directors and Advisory Council, and many hundreds more constitute the general membership. They are drawn from across the spectrum of human sciences and services.

Consistent with the ideals and aims of ICSPP, *Ethical Human Sciences and Services* will publish scientific research, clinical reports, commentary, and book reviews that reflect ethical psychosocial and educational interventions. At the same time, it will subject reductionist theories and practices—from whatever

school of thought or ideology—to the light of scientific and ethical criticism. It will offer scientists and practitioners the opportunity to publish, to read, and to benefit from principled critiques in the field of human sciences and services. *Ethical Human Sciences and Services* seeks to empower professionals who are devoted to human science and service unsullied by professional and economic interests.

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