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THE SOCIAL WORKER'S STYLE

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ABSTRACT: The style of the social work practitioner is a very influential factor for therapeutic effectiveness and is a way of expressing the practitioner's creative artistry. The meanings and functions of style are clarified. The practitioner's general style is analyzed as a combination of personal and professional style elements, responsive to artistic role-task performances in helping clients. A case presentation illustrates a social worker's particular style. Wider cultural influences of a practitioner's style also merit recognition.

THE SOCIAL WORKER'S STYLE

The social worker's personality, craftsmanship, and artistry in the application of knowledge and skill are articulated through professional and personal styles. Style, said George Bernard Shaw, "is the effectiveness of assertion." It is a central influential factor for the effectiveness of therapeutic activities.

Surprisingly, there has been a general lack of attention to the importance of style in therapeutic processes, and for the realization of helping purposes. It seems to be a subject that is taken for granted. There is relatively little analysis or research on this subject given in the clinical literature.

We will examine the general meanings of style, and discuss personal and professional practitioner styles. We consider the functions and uses of style in practice situations, as well as for broader societal purposes. An illustration of a practitioner's style in operation is presented and discussed.

This paper is adapted from a chapter of a book in progress on The Art of Social Work Practice.

Meanings of Style

Style refers to a process and product of human actions that results in a valued product, with the value and meaning of the product depending on the cultural context (Walton, 1987). It is "a form or mode of functioning—the way or manner of enacting a given area of behavior—that is identifiable, in an individual, through a range of specific acts" (Shapiro, 1965, p. 1). It consists of a set of skills, including a characteristic use of self, time and space; of cultural themes, codes, scripts, myths, rituals, symbols and metaphors; as well as assumptive beliefs, principles, rules and their rationale for expression and performance (Nisbet, 1976, pp. 30-35). When the word style is said with admiring emphasis, it also has a meaning of unusual clarity, elegance, and grace.

Style is a distinctive how of action, with its particular features of expressing, making, performing, and relating to others, within the structures of our social roles. In helping people with their problems in social functioning, a practitioner uses personal and professional styles.

A personal style may be expressed in the repeated use of distinctive qualities that also represent the "signature" of a person: in dress, appearance, gestures, rhetoric, and language in speech and writing; in diction, tone, pitch and rhythms of speech; in the use of time and space. A personal style is the individualized way of thinking, talking, and feeling, of expression, performance, action and interaction with others, that is characteristically and habitually exhibited by a person. The man who habitually wears a tie and jacket, whatever the temperature, or a woman who always wears a hat when outdoors, presents a characteristic attribute.

Yet a personal style also may follow common collective rules or conventions, in accord with cultural, regional, and ethnic customs, such as for a man to wear a jacket and tie on formal occasions. It may include some common attribute that marks a person as a member of some group, and is also a sign of solidarity with other members of that group, as in wearing a particular fraternity or sorority pin. A collective behavior pattern may characterize a conventional social role, as in how a good mother lovingly cares for an infant; or how a good student studies hard to master an area of knowledge or skill; or how a professional therapist seeks to understand and to be helpful at the same time. It may represent an educational approach, as in Catholic parish elementary schools; or a school of thought, as in analytical philosophy or deconstructionist literary criticism.

A professional style is a collective type of behavior pattern characteristic of members of a profession. A professional therapist's style consists of such collective conventions as being reserved about aspects of one's personal life, or repressing angry criticism of a client. Social workers characteristically tend to express themselves verbally in making frequent use of such terms as support, situation, and resource.

The needs for group membership and acceptance lead some people to follow fashionable trends and adopt particular fads of self-expression that may become excessive and suppress the individuality of personal styles. There was a time, in certain therapeutic settings, when hugging a client, and even wearing short sleeved shirts or short dresses when seeing a client, were considered taboo, unprofessional behaviors.

Harold Lewis speaks of professional, personal, agency, and client styles, as in the use of time (1982, pp. 147-160). He suggests that style is an essential dimension of skill, though tasks that require either limited or considerable skill can be performed attractively, even beautifully. The degree of style, he believes, does not vary with the degree of skill, so that a highly skilled helping action may "lack refinement," and a low skilled helping action may be done with "unusual grace and sophistication."

A practitioner's general style is a combination of personal and professional styles. The many roles and tasks that are enacted utilize different, specific styles, though with a basic core of qualities expressive of the special personality of the practitioner and of professional (including agency) conventions. One may be empathic in a very warm or almost impersonal way, convey acceptance in an emotionally expressive or reserved manner, make use of or avoid professional terminology in interpreting behavior to clients. Everyone's operational style is highly individualized and expresses the characteristic qualities of the practitioner as an individual human being. He or she may be comfortable with certain professional conventions, may conform rigidly or flexibly, or may reject some particular formality. When working as a hospital social worker, I fought and lost a battle to avoid wearing a white jacket that was required to be worn by all medical/hospital personnel.

Helping Functions of Style

The artistry of clinical social work practice, including the elements of creativity and craftsmanship, of relationship and communication, is expressed and realized in terms of a practitioner's style. The art of practice is what makes helping actions effective. It is the application of knowledge, values, skill, and self of the practitioner in the creation of beneficent results that have beauty and truth (Siporin, 1988). Optimally, the art of practice is the provision of an aesthetic experience and the creation of aesthetic form, in terms of patterns of human actions and relationships that are harmonious, integrated, functionally satisfying, and mutually life-enhancing.

The social worker's style is an instrumental means in the use of artistry to influence clients and situations in desired, helpful directions. As employed by the practitioner, style has rhetorical and pe suasive

powers, to effectively engage clients and stimulate them to change beliefs and behavior (Richan, 1972). It is the manner and mode for the artistry of skilled communicating, relating, creating, structuring, and intervening, that go into the art work of practice. A well-developed style enables the worker to be genuine, flexible, and spontaneous while acting in a professional self-disciplined, consciously purposeful, and self-aware manner. It is a way of being present, as a delineated, real human being, with a client. The worker's expressive style as a person engages and leads the client in the transformative journey of therapy into personhood.

Glaser (1980) defines psychotherapy as a rhetorical and artistic process, with style used to influence clients to change their beliefs, feelings, and behavior. She declares that these are persuasive procedures which experientially affect the client, and influence the client to accept the therapist's talk as true, important, logical, and believable.

The function of style in convincing clients of the importance and truth of interpretations and directives also points to its importance as a central factor in leading the client through the change processes of therapy. These further functions of style are discussed in the following analysis of personal and professional practitioner styles.

Personal Style

A person uses a personal style to forge an individual identity, and to project a personal "presence," an alive, singular, impressive quality of appearance and personality. Style reveals something of a person's spirit, habits, capacities and bias, "it is the Self escaping into the open" (Strunk & White, 1979, p. 67). We function in terms of social roles, and it is the styles with which social roles are enacted that express this individuality and personal identity.

There is a fundamental human need to be an individual, unique and special in some way, in order to gain love and attention from others, status, power, or as a sign of self-realization. People choose some distinctive quality or way of meeting such needs, in dress, appearance, speech, possessions or achievement. Through such skilled behavior, and within the requirements of role structures, we express ourselves in unique ways, verbally, nonverbally, and affectively, even in the ways our skills are applied. We thus can produce actions and objects that have distinctive qualities. These actions and their products may have particular features of grace, elegance, taste, or beauty. An aesthete aims for such distinguishing attributes to some perfect degree. Lalique glass figures have a particular light and elegant style of beauty.

A style is enacted through role performances which assert and communicate a person's intentions and influence. As Goffman (1959) ex-

plained, a skilled, competent performance projects and controls an impression of self and a definition of a situation for other participants and for the audience. The actor also dramatizes and highlights the nature of the actions being performed; claims the qualities of certain capacities, attributes, or skills; idealizes the action and situation as in accord with accepted standards and moral values; and gives the relationship with others a unique, important quality. Thus a practitioner may perform as a group leader, using a guiding style to aid a new client in a ceremony of induction into accepting a role as therapy group member. Or the practitioner may use a confessor style to lead a client through a ritual of confession, contrition, and self-forgiveness.

When well-learned and well-developed, a person's style includes a discriminating taste and sensitivity and a situationally apt yet genuine manner of self-expression. A personal style may be studied, highly structured, unvarying, or it may be characteristically improvisational, free-wheeling, and highly adaptive to varied situations and roles. One may speak in loud and dramatic or in soft and understated ways. A person's style has varied degrees of personal authority, of a commanding presence, or even of charisma. When performed aptly and in appropriate settings, it may be very influential in its effects on others, like the style of a judge in a courtroom, pronouncing sentence.

As a form of communication, an expressive and influential style needs to be based on awareness of explicit communicative meanings, as well as of the meanings of the covert metacommunications that are conveyed. Satir (1987) taught that a mature person and well-functioning communicator is direct, delineated, and clear; such a person is responsible for what he or she says and does, and uses "the first person 'I' followed by an active verb and ending with a direct object" (p. 228).

Williams (1990) presents a set of helpful principles, which are more than rules, for a person's style to gain the exemplary qualities of clarity, consistency, coherence, emphasis, concision, and elegance. For example, for clarity, one should name the characters as subjects of sentences and the verbs that go with those subjects should name the crucial actions those characters are part of (p. 21). This principle is very similar to Satir's emphasis on a person's use of I followed by verbs and objects.

Related to this point, Williams believes that the distinctive voice of a person needs to be expressed to the listeners as well as readers who are targets of communications:

> We should hear something beyond sheer clarity and coherence. We should hear a voice. The voice . . . contributes substantially to the character we project—or more accurately to the character our readers construct (p. 79).

Style, it has been said, "is the man himself." It is "distinguished and distinguishing" and revealing of the unique identity of a person (Strunk & White, 1979, p. 66). Whitehead (1951, pp. 24-25) declared that style has the "aesthetic qualities of attainment and restraint," that it is the "ultimate morality of mind," and that it is the outcome of expertise and specialism. Oakschott (1967) pointed out that style consists of choices we make, not according to rules, but within the freedom of their operation.

A definite, distinctive style is the product of successful training and experience; it also develops out of an identification with and internalization of one's mentors or from the models in one's reference group. A person thereby gains, and is able to present oneself as having, a clear identity, vocation, membership, status, purpose, and ideology. These aspects of self presentation become elements of one's style.

One does not need to be a charismatic public speaker or a virtuoso pianist to develop and present an individual, effective style. But cultural socialization processes influence people to adopt distinctive styles of dysfunctioning as well as well-functioning. Shapiro (1965, p. 1) refers to "neurotic styles," as "modes of functioning that seem characteristic, respectively, of the varied neurotic conditions," such as obsessive-compulsive, paranoid, hysterical, and impulsive styles.

Style is the way we use our selves to relate to the world and to other people as an individual person. We may express ourselves logically, emotionally, physically, in order to assert and attain our wants, and to influence and persuade other people to meet our desires, to accept our beliefs, to enact our wishes. It also is a mode of conflict-resolution in overcoming the dualisms and contradictions of our existence, and a way in which we project ourselves so that we become and remain part of the product of our actions.

Still, the individualized and highly developed style of a person may or may not be used artistically to achieve aesthetic effects. An individual may use a warm, charming manner to seduce, manipulate and cheat people. A professional helping style needs to be used to develop an aesthetic experience that has its completion and consummation in some unified, enjoyable, and beneficial product.

Practitioner Styles

The general style of a social worker in professional practice is essentially that of an artist. The practitioner makes a differential use of verbal and non-verbal communications, sensory images and metaphors, musical tones and rhythms of speech, as well as scripts and routines, physical settings and furnishings, psychophysically stimulating exercises, and psychosocial rituals and ceremonies—all of which affect,

arouse, involve and influence the client intellectually, emotionally, and physically. Diagnostic insights are developed and conveyed and interventive procedures are enacted through styled forms, content, and manners of the practitioner's behavior.

Effective workers may accomplish their task-performances and objectives using very varied styles, acting for example in accord with the requirements of such roles as pragmatist or analyst, parent or blank screen, trouble-shooter or confidant, director or model. Within this variety, the particular styles are expressed with common personal qualities characteristic of the individual practitioner. A great many styles are available in performing the different helping roles enacted by practitioners, such as trouble-shooter, guru, mediator, discussion leader, expediter, consoler, coach (Siporin, 1975, pp. 34-39; Lister, 1987; Simmons & Aigner, 1987). The artistic helping roles that Goldstein (1992) identified—as editor, director, accompanist, philosopher, and translator—may be performed as individual practitioner styles. Most styles actually can be enacted in artistic ways.

These many styles may be understood in terms of their cognitive, communicative, and interventive patterns. Harrison and Bramson (1982, pp. 39-40) identify thinking styles as synthesist, idealist, pragmatist, analyst, and realist; they apply this typology to analysis of dissonance between an idealistic supervisor and a realistic or pragmatic social work practitioner. Cognitive styles also are categorized by Roger Peters (1987, pp. 226-271) as analytical, methodical, reflective, holistic, intuitive, and active; he equates the analytical type with the behavior of a fox, and the holistic type with hedgehog behavior. Peters also conceives of cognitive styles as cognitive skills.

Lewis (1982) points out that the styles of social worker and client need to be "congenial":

> An "analytic" can sometimes drive a "gestalt" up the wall, and an "up tight" can give ulcers to someone who "hangs loose" (and vice versa) (p. 172).

Practitioners, as Weiner and Crowder (1986) found, favor abstract and metaphoric types of thinking and communication, as well as insight-giving interpretations. This is in contrast to the concrete thinking and communication styles characteristic of many clients. Many clients do not respond to metaphoric interpretations such as, "Your boss is your feared father." Weiner and Crowder (1986) suggest that such incongruence in styles may lead the helper to misunderstand client assets and deficits, and that clients actually can respond positively to other kinds of interventions that are more concrete and direct.

Whatever one's cultural background and style of speech, the practi-

tioner's communications with clients—the questions, directives, and interpretations—need not only to be timely, but also to be at an appropriate level, using language clients can readily understand and respond to. They also need to be clear, direct, plain-spoken, and forceful. These principles apply to the skill and use of rhetoric, particularly of the metaphoric communications that are part of the practitioner's interpretations. Esoteric professional language may seem to impress clients, but is useless unless presented so that the client understands their meaning. A worker's speech may be attractively eloquent but rhetorical grandiloquence and speech-making are self-defeating.

The setting in which the social worker meets with the client may be part of his or her style, especially when it is personally crafted and furnished to express that style. Workers thus display personal knick-knacks, pictures, diplomas, books, art work, rugs, etc. The presence of toys and playthings is particularly inviting in work with children. Practitioners in private practice furnish their offices in highly individual, self-expressive ways, to invite a warm, intimate ambiance, or an impressive, directive air.

One very successful practitioner used a plush waiting room and a large, high ceiling office, with heavy dark drapes, richly covered furniture, and a wall of bookcases holding framed diplomas and certificates, and thick, professional books. He sat behind a huge desk, with the client at some distance, and he spoke little, mostly asking questions, or giving brief directives. He thus asserted an imposing authority and sense of power that were highly influential for the kinds of clients he often worked with.

Interventive styles may be supportive and non-directive, or controlling and confrontive. Action styles in family therapy are declared to be active or passive, transactional, blank screen, authoritarian, paternal, maternal, and idiosyncratic (Rice, Fay & Pepecs, 1972). Also in regard to family therapy, social work therapist styles have been characterized as attender, director, agitator, prober, modeler, and detoxifier (Greene & Kolevzon, 1982).

Munson (1983, pp. 65-98) found that the practitioner styles of social workers vary greatly from their styles as supervisees. He categorized the supervisee styles as a reasoned neutrality, perceived organizational obstacles, clinical helplessness, persistent diagnosis, over-simplified response, pseudocritical desire, theoretical speculation, and self-analysis.

Reciprocally, supervisors interact in active and reactive ways as philosophers, theoreticians, and technicians. Although supervisees adapted themselves to the styles of particular supervisors, Munson did not find any correlation between the practitioner styles with clients and their styles as supervisees. Practitioner styles thus seem to be role specific.

Leadership and its associated styles are a central component of task and therapeutic group work, of community work, as well as of case, team, and agency management. Leadership styles are related to leadership roles and orientations, to the authority attached to these roles, and to the context of task-work situations (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Quinn, 1988). The roles vary in terms of task-maintenance/productivity and of people/relationship orientations. The power and authority of the leader may be formal or informal, strong or weak, and may be asserted in up-front or behind-the-scenes roles. The task situation may involve highly structured or unstructured tasks and a high or low level of maturity and personality fit, morale and cohesion, of group members. These factors need to be in a complementary balance for effective leadership and group performance and outcomes. Thus a strong, directive leader may effectively achieve high productivity in a situation involving highly structured tasks and unskilled, unorganized workers. High quality work involving unstructured tasks to be preformed by skilled professionals, as in therapeutic work, require an informal, people/relationship oriented leadership style.

Douglas (1979) identifies leadership styles in group work as those of director, enabler, and resource person. Patti (1983, pp. 168-172) discusses leadership styles in social welfare agency administration as directive, participative, and delegative. He cites research supporting the superiority of participatory leadership in relation to job satisfaction of subordinates and higher work quality, and he calls for a balance of style factors to achieve efficiency and productivity as well. Bennis and Nanus (1985, p. 21) identify three organizational leadership styles: collegial, personalistic, and formalistic; they distinguish between "managers who do things right and leaders who do the right thing."

Quinn (1985, pp. 82-89) finds that in the area of organizational leadership, practitioners express competing values, along two dimensions of power and control. He identifies leadership styles and associated roles, that are: conservative and cautious (in monitor and coordinator roles) vs inventive and risk-taking (in innovator and broker roles); concerned and supportive (in group facilitator and mentor roles) versus directive and goal-oriented (in director and producer roles); structured and formal (in director and coordinator roles) versus responsive and open (in mentor and innovative roles).

"The art of practice," Lewis (1982, pp. 159-160) says, is to be found in the product of the relationship between social worker and client, where their "distinctive styles coalesce to give each helping transaction its unique, idiosyncratic attributes." It is evident though, that in addition to the complementarity of client and worker roles and styles, the social worker's styles, particularly as a leader, also need to be complementary with the helping task situation.

A SOCIAL WORKER'S STYLE IN OPERATION

Mrs. Sawyer is a professional social worker who serves as a probation officer, and functions as a supervisor as well as therapist/practitioner. She is middle-aged, a widow with four grown children and several grandchildren, and is the epitome of a warm, maternal kind of person. When necessary, she can be an authoritative disciplinarian, but with a very friendly, open, sympathetic manner. She is a very attentive listener, inspires relationships of trust and confidence with clients and staff, to whom she characteristically presents an accepting and supportive style. She is widely respected as a very competent practitioner, and has been very successful in working with difficult people, particularly with sociopathic ex-convicts who have frustrated and defeated other probation officers.

An example of her style and work with a difficult client is the case of Joe Bandieri. Joe was a 30 year old auto mechanic, a high school graduate, good-looking, articulate, with a fund of jokes and humor that made for an easy engaging approach to people. He was an only child, with both parents killed in an accident when he was 16. He had had difficult relationships with his strict, distant father, and his hard working mother, who had little time for him. Following their deaths, he quit school and went to work. Joe was very much attached to and affectionate toward his wife, Sophie, age 26, who worked as a telephone operator, and his two children, aged eight and six. He was an excellent auto mechanic, but habitually left jobs because of dissatisfactions or being fired as a result of absenteeism or arguments with superiors. Still, because of his expertise, and the shortage of trained mechanics, he was able to obtain other jobs easily.

Joe had been released from prison after serving three years for burglary and assault, with a record of several convictions for thievery, for which he was sentenced to probation on three occasions. Prior to his prison term, Joe had been involved with several probation officers, with whom he had difficult, stormy relationships. He was described as disobedient and argumentive, and as having a problem with authority. He often refused to keep appointments, consorted with known criminals, (people he had grown up with and continued to regard as friends). Because of his erratic work pattern, there were periods of financial hardship, and his recourse to thievery occurred at such times. His wife was still very attached to him, had exhausted her efforts to change him, and coped with his behavior mostly with much help from her parents and siblings.

Mrs. Sawyer decided to take on Joe as a client when he reported to the probation office. The two quickly established a positive relationship, and Joe appeared accepting of the ground rules Mrs. Sawyer set forth for him. He declared that he did not want to return to prison and promised to behave. During the first two months, he worked regularly, and he appeared to enjoy his weekly talks with Mrs. Sawyer. At her encouragement, he spoke openly about his early life and his difficult relationships with his parents, particular his mother, as well as about his marriage, in-laws, friends, and work.

After this honeymoon period, Joe embarked on a series of incidents involving minor infractions of the probation rules, such as coming in late for appointments; quitting his job, though quickly obtaining another; getting involved in helping friends try to sell stolen auto parts, for which they were arrested and he escaped with a warning by the police not to repeat such behavior. He got involved in an auto accident, damaged his car, and somehow had a verbal run-in with the police officers on the scene, though he was not blamed for the accident.

He then went home and provoked a fierce argument with his wife, which led her and the children to threaten to go to her parents. Mrs. Bandieri did not leave, but did see Mrs. Sawyer, to whom she complained about Joe's disturbed behavior. Mrs. Sawyer had talked with Joe and his wife together on two previous occasions, extending her support to the wife, and on this occasion, urging Mrs. Bandieri to continue to be understanding of Joe, and to stand by him.

In response to Mrs. Sawyer's efforts, Joe had been unwilling to examine his own behavior, and projected blame on others for these difficulties. From the way he reported these incidents to her, however, she sensed that he was behaving provocatively in relation to her, testing and perhaps inviting her rejection. She remained accepting of him personally, though pointing out that he was violating probation rules, whatever the reason, and that he could not continue to do so.

Following the accident and her talk with Mrs. Bandieri, Mrs. Sawyer directly confronted Joe with his pattern of rebellious and provocative behavior. She recalled with him a pattern of adolescent behavior that he had related to her, in that he had been mischievous in setting false fire and burglary alarms, had stolen from his neighbors, and also had periodically stolen money from his father and mother. In a firm but kindly manner, she said that she was not a police officer, nor his mother, but Mrs. Sawyer, and that he needed to behave toward her as Mrs. Sawyer. She also asked him to examine what he gained by his provocative behavior, and at this time, he accepted doing so. He agreed with Mrs. Sawyer that he was provocative, did not gain any direct benefit from this behavior, did have responsibility for the difficult incidents, and that he did not need to be rejected by authority figures.

In response to this discussion, Joe was able to engage himself, with Mrs. Sawyer's help, in learning to understand his interactions with other people, the consequences of his own behavior, and the misperceptions of the behavior and reactions of others. He completed his year's probation period without any further disruptive incidents. He thereafter kept in touch periodically with Mrs. Sawyer, stayed on his job, made a new circle of friends, particularly among his in-laws, and avoided any legal difficulties.

DISCUSSION

This interventive activity is notable in that Mrs Sawyer's maternal, (accepting and supportive) style, in her roles as authority person and therapist, helped create a very positive relationship with the this type of client. The relationship in turn made it possible for an irrational transference relationship to develop and then for a corrective emotional experience to take place. In contrast to the traditional psychoanalytic approach, Mrs. Sawyer did not attempt to intensify the transference in order to resolve it, but provided a reality experience that clarified the irrational and self-defeating nature of Joe's behavior. Her interpretations were timely, confronting, with an assertion of her legal authority, yet personally accepting. It was this style that also enabled Joe to learn new behavior and relationship patterns that made for his better functioning.

Mrs. Sawyer's style also was in keeping with the requirements of

the helping situation, in that there were sufficient social resources available to Joe to support the helping process, including a favorable employment situation, a fairly strong marital relationship, and a supportive circle of in-laws. It also is notable that Mrs. Sawyer asserted her official authority in a flexible manner, tolerating minor infractions of probation rules in a way that was acceptable within the policies of the probation department. Her style was both professional and personal in merging both into effective helping behavior.

WIDER INFLUENCES OF STYLE

There is a quality of style that Aristotle and other Greeks spoke of as Arête, the virtue of excellence in fulfilling one's function (Kerford, 1972). This was considered a way of good and beautiful living, expressing of such qualities as psychic strength, courage, self-restraint, rationality, cooperation with and justice to others. It also includes a pattern of moral behavior, enacted well, so that it does not call attention to the person's own virtue. This quality of style is one that a social worker can represent and model for the client, to demonstrate its possibilities and rewards in the client's own life situation, and for the client or client group to develop as part of their own art of living. It also may express a wider approach of the social work profession and of a social agency to the tasks of helping or of management. The articulation of such a wider stylistic approach can be shaped to the characteristics of the practitioner's individual personality and personal style, and have the quality of arête.

Our present-day culture seems to value the surface qualities of style, preferring highly stylized products or performances, delivered with panache and vivacity, with heightened imagery, color and sound, intended to have an overwhelming sensual and emotional impact. The effect of such an engulfing sensual experience is to blot out consciousness, rather than move a person to personal growth through a transcendental experience. Much of current popular music has this character. The lack of artistic vision and substance in the use of such styles is held to be symptomatic of "the death of art" in our times (Lang, 1984). So engrossing and "all-consuming" are the images presented by contemporary art, that the wide gap between these artificial images and the realities of life are declared to compound the alienation of people from their communities and society (Ewen, 1988).

This cultural situation makes it important for social workers to be conscious of their work styles, and to avoid stylized and dehumanized qualities. We can reject Oscar Wilde's aphorism that "In matters of

grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing." Even more emphasis should be given to the social worker's societal functions of furthering social integration, humanizing social relationships and life situations of people, restoring and enhancing their social functioning. This means being as authentic, honest, and fully present as one's own person in the helping situations with clients and others. The social worker's personal and professional styles ideally express humanistic and humanizing qualities.

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