Preserving human ecology

By Bruce Peetz

A few people were peering through the window of 7-345, Tuesday night, trying to get into the forum on Human Ecology, "The Heightening of Human Awareness." One of them cautioned the others against entering, "It wouldn't bother them, they're having a heavy experience."

Inside the 20 by 20 room, 100 people appeared to be in a trance, directed by a placidly smiling Minor White. In spite of the crowd, a cool breeze circulated from the open windows. Candles flickered on the window sills, and the quiet was broken only by traffic noises from the street outside.

"Now direct your energies toward your eyes in preparation for opening them. Open them when you feel ready," White guided.

The room came alive. White was speaking, but it was Smith, professor of philosophy, who had only begun a few sentences of explanation when he lapsed into a state of trance, directed by a placidly smiling Minor White. "The Heightening of Human Awareness" was then turned over to Huston Smith, professor of philosophy. White, speaking, Smith attacked the individual ego as a source of alienation; and presented mantra as a method of attaining "oneness" with the world, and subsequently, self. A film produced by Smith was then shown.

The film began as a documentary in the anti-communist high school tradition ("But the land of Tibet is no more...") but soon zeroed in on the Tibetan religion and the Lamas. The Lamas, as part of their religion, practice singing in a low gravelly voices until they are able to sing overtones at the same time, thus singing an eerie chord. Just as the film ended, a tape recorder was turned on with Lamas singing the lost chord. It sent chills through the room, and people settled into concentrating on the sound. Shortly, though, the lights were turned on for the third featured guest, Mike Miller.

Miller began by explaining his specialty, gestalt therapy. He described gestalt in three ways: it is to be a mental rather than physical or medical growth; it focuses only on the present existing moment, future moments being only of concern when they occur; and it works to bring about an acute awareness, both internal and external. When he attempted to aid the group in experiencing gestalt, he received a negative response.

One person, however, summed up the evening: "Some of us need you badly. We just tried to share a comfortable environment with each other."

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