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RELIGION WITHOUT PRIESTS

THE man who, today, attempts to find out for himself something of the meaning and truth of religion has unique opportunities, but is also confronted by unique difficulties. His opportunities arise from the "crisis" character of the times. He shares in the deepest kind of questioning, finding himself unable to rely with any certainty on the claims of religious institutions which are wracked by the same disturbances that have caused him to look around. His difficulties are, so to speak, the reverse of his opportunities: How shall he begin, where shall he turn, when the portals marked "religion" or "religious truth" have all become questionable, or at any rate involve approaches which he is unable to enter with a glad and unsuspecting heart. He is used to being led, yet his opportunities dictate a very different course.

To be so confronted invites a kind of heroism which few if any of us are ready to embrace. Who, despite his disillusionment, feels able to stand alone? Yet the voice of uncompromising human integrity says that we must. The situation is filled with paradox. Any position that can be assumed involves paradox. A man, we say, needs to be strong enough to rely upon himself. Yet the religious quest, by acceptable common definition, also means seeking for unity. With whom can we unite? We must think for ourselves, we say, yet also learn humility. To do both, while no doubt possible, means walking a very fine line. Certainty in the matter of religious truth may easily be a form of arrogance; on the other hand, some species of "certainty" is needed for any kind of *action;* what good is a stance which does not lead a man to act?

The counsel of humanitarian compassion can hardly be neglected, but with so many things wrong with the world a man's life may soon be absorbed in more urgent causes than he can possibly serve well, so that only by shutting his eyes in some directions, and refusing to hear in others, can he silence his insistent doubts. But if he has some knowledge of history, he *dare not* silence his doubts. Too much blood has been spilled by angry men who would not question the way they set out to right the wrongs they saw in the world. The manufacturers of social strait jackets and political procrustean beds have much to answer for. No responsible man would willingly join their number. Yet he knows he must act, and right action remains obscure, apparently impossible without uniting with some party of action. What is a man to do?

Well, an immediate answer may be given—an answer which is either shallow or profound, depending upon the undistributed meaning behind it. It is that we must think first, then act with whatever light we get. Of course. There is nothing else to do.

But with what hope of solution do we think? Is the "right answer" going to be obtained? What can we legitimately expect as the fruit of our thought? Is there a golden thread of right thought and action, difficult to discern and more difficult to follow in a world as confusing as ours, yet nonetheless *there?* And supposing it is there, why should we be favored with such celestial vision? How can we *know?*

There is also the possibility, raised by tough-minded naturalists, that such longings pursue metaphysical chimeras, religious "essences," which only distract a practical man from doing a duty that is by no means so hard to find out. We have all these sciences, we have studies of the behavior and needs of human beings: What are we waiting for? Enough of agonized subjective inquiry and epistemological hair-splitting!

And without lengthy argument we know that whatever we happen to decide, other men will have made quite different decisions. Right or wrong, they will have gone in other directions. Yet is "right or wrong" the way to put it? Does this give the problem a gray, indifferent character? Or does it imply that there is a "right" answer which a great many people are bound to miss?

Obviously, we have the bias of the egocentric predicament here. There is at least the flavor of feeling that we *must* find out how to be "right," despite the fact that we know practically nothing about whether the countless human beings who lived before us succeeded in being "right." Are our fortunes in making decisions about right and truth more important than theirs? Logically enough, we suppose that they couldn't have made very many right decisions, since the world is in such a mess; but this conclusion is based on the assumption that "right" has a decisive *historical* measure or vindication. Does it? We don't really know. We only know that our decisions are important to us because we have to make them.

There is a natural longing for nice, clean distinctions. We should like to know, for example, whether our personal contract (if we have one) is with the moral law (if there is one), or with the verdict of history (if, the way history is stretched out in time, there can ever be one). Without being able to make this distinction, or have a working view of it, how can a man measure his social obligation? Unless he has decided what he has or ought to do in the world, how can he follow Thoreau (or legitimately contradict him) when Thoreau rejects the means afforded by the State for remedying evils, saying, "They take too much time, and a man's life will be gone." How, indeed, do you fill in the blanks in Thoreau's declaration that "any man more right than his neighbors constitutes a majority of one already"?

One cannot avoid the suspicion that an important part of this dilemma is locked up in the need to be Thoreau before you can really adopt or defend his opinions. Yet there are times when his opinions become quite compelling, so we have at least something in common with him. How do these matters work? "Morality"—if this word can serve to mean doing what is right—seems, paradoxically, to have both a private and a public light. It is public in that we are able to argue, if not to agree, about moral questions; and it is private in that we have a very strong feeling that Thoreau was right for *him*, even though the vast majority of people would have great difficulty in following him all the way.

But *I*, a man will say, am not Thoreau. And we must then ask him, Whence all this abundance of self-knowledge? How does he know so much about himself, as to declare that there is nothing in him of Thoreau? Who or what is Thoreau? And what of all the other undying ones of history, whose lives inhabit our memory with a restless, insistent, yet ill-housed intensity? How are they part of, how alien to, ourselves? Indeed, we do not know.

The foregoing is a secular statement of what is also, at root, a religious question. There is, some people say, a Christ within. Or they say not "Christ," but "Inner Light," meaning very much the same. And it is certainly true that many humble persons have been upheld throughout heroic and self-sacrificing lives by such affirmations of belief.

It seems that saying "we do not know" about such things cannot be allowed to dismiss the problem. To say "we do not know" means simply that there is no public agreement on matters of human identity, such that it may be expected to govern all in ultimate choice. Yet it is quite reasonable to point out that great things have happened in the world by the inspiration of ideas which lack public agreement. It might even be said that the ideas which *do* have unquestioned public agreement are precisely those which are impotent to bring about either the insight we long for or the change we seek. So we must be careful how we argue against hope of saving truth, in debating these matters.

Some sliding scale of potentiality plays havoc with our quest for certainty. Self-confidence is plainly one of the factors in human achievement. A man can take on more when he is sure of himself. The bitter part of this is that it seems to work quite well even when his surety is founded on blind conceit or terrible error.

How do we know in fact that he is in error? Well, we know error well enough at its extremes. It is wrong, we agree, to burn people alive for their stubbornly held religious beliefs. So the Inquisitor's calm moral certainty of acting according to spiritual ordinances is recognized as a terrible delusion. Yet at the time his authority impressed and persuaded a

majority of the people. Few, at any rate, spoke out against his crimes.

Well, if only now we know they were crimes, how shall we tell if we are guilty of others? If the fifteenth century could burn people alive in the name of Truth, can the twentieth do the same, more remotely or technologically, in the name of Freedom? And if we can be so betrayed by history, or by our times, how shall we protect ourselves against such disastrous oscillations of opinion? Is it possible to find out about the "laws of history" and to rise above them?

Yet these laws are far from absolute. While, by the eighteenth century, the *autos-da fé* and other gruesome activities of men determined to "save" the world through the one true religion had brought upon themselves a passionate reaction, in the form of a wave of anti-religious and anti-God propaganda, distinguished human beings often remained immune to these over-simplified persuasions. At the very pinnacle of emotional atheism, during the French Revolution, the heroic Madame Roland was unaffected; or rather, she deepened in her religious conviction. As Carl Becker says: "We know that Madame Roland read the works of Holbach and Helvetius; but these works, instead of making her an atheist, only fortified her belief in God, so that she turned, more readily than she might otherwise have done, to Rousseau for consolation."

For the majority, the swings of history make and unmake faiths, yet there are always those who have some gyroscope of inner equilibrium, making them question even the very credos they have had a decisive hand in fashioning. This was the case with Diderot, who, horrified by his foresight of the probable social consequences of the "scientific" image of man he was constructing, drew back in tortured uncertainty. At what cost to the morality of the people had he done away with God and Soul? It did not seem to him sufficient, at the last, to argue the hedonistic doctrine that consistent goodness would lead men to "happiness," in order to secure morality. "I have not even dared," he explained in bleak depression, "to take up the pen to write the first line." For what if his persuasions should fail? "If I do not come out of the attempt victorious, I become the apologist of wickedness; I will have betrayed the cause of virtue, I will have encouraged men in the way of vice." This was the dilemma of Diderot, and in an essay on the subject Carl Becker makes this comment, which has a further pertinence:

> Few men, it is true, were philosophers enough to be troubled by the difficulty which Diderot never solved, and which Kant himself solved only with the help of Rousseau. To the unphilosophical person the difficulty presented itself in a less technical form. Many a "fervent soul," like Madame Roland whose emotional nature had found abundant nourishment in the literature of Catholicism, renounced the harsh creed of the Church only to be chilled by the cold and barren rationalism of the very philosophers whose works had pointed the way to intellectual emancipation. "The atheist," said Madame Roland, "is seeking for a syllogism, while I am offering up my thanksgiving." "Helvetius hurt me," she says in another place. "He destroyed the most ravishing illusions, and showed me everywhere a mean and revolting self-interest. I persuaded myself that he delineated mankind in the state to which it had been reduced by the corruption of society."

As a moderate Girondist, however, and a critic of Robespierre, Madame Roland suffered the fate of dissenters to the popular revolutionary doctrine. She was guillotined on Nov. 8 in the terrible year of '93.

Thus the definitions of crime as well as the claims of truth change with the winds of history. What hope is there for one who wants to *know?* Is a man always a fool for trusting in the authorities? Or are some times better than others, having more reliable authorities? Can a man escape from the trap of history? Equally important, should he? How will he fare if he does? Why is it, regardless of what may be "right," that there are so few in any age to question the orthodoxies of their time? Where did a Genevan youth get the courage, not to speak of intelligence, to ask an eighteenth-century archbishop: "Is it simple, is it natural that God should go in search of Moses to speak to Jean Jacques Rousseau?" What paths to religious truth may a man safely or sensibly take?

We might now say we have been delivered into the hands of the epistemologists—those who attempt to pass judgment on what is truly knowledge and

what is not; but since we may be sure that, on so important a question, news of a certainty obtained by scholars and other experts would have reached us long ago, we can afford to neglect looking them up. Further, there is deep sense in Madame Roland's exclamation: technical analysts seek a syllogism, while our hungering hearts want to be able to make thanksgiving! Even if we can find no shortcuts to truth, there are useless excursions that ought to be avoided. Learned men do not agree on a path that everyone ought to follow, so why concern ourselves with barren critiques and other speculations?

This view, for which there is much justification, often takes the form of a fine impatience toward study: "What do I need with all that 'intellectual stuff'—I have a heart which tells me what to do! " Indeed, yes; but an enthusiasm of this sort, while timeless in origin, sometimes seals off awareness of the partisan follies of an uninstructed heart. Madame Roland, it is well to remember, carried Plutarch to church with her, instead of a prayer book, at the age of nine. "She," Becker says, "communed familiarly with the saints and sages of the world." And while she sat in prison, awaiting the call of the tumbril, she addressed her thoughts to what in her eyes had become the cruel follies of the Revolution, already turned into a "bestial saturnalia." She wrote in her *Memoirs:*

> O Brutus! whose courageous hand vainly freed the corrupt Romans, we have erred as you did. These pure men whose ardent souls aspired to liberty, whom philosophy had prepared for it in the calm of the study and the austerity of seclusion—these men flattered themselves as you did that the overthrow of tyranny would forthwith bring in the reign of justice and peace; it was only the signal for releasing the most hateful passions and the most hideous vices. You said, after the proscription of the Triumvirs, that you were more ashamed of that which caused the death of Cicero than grieved by the death itself; you blamed your Roman friends for this, that they were made slaves more by their own fault than by that of the tyrants, and that they had the baseness to see and to suffer things the mere recital of which should have horrified them past endurance. It is thus that I grow indignant in the depths of my prison; but the hour for anger is past, for it is evident that it is useless longer to expect anything good or be astonished at anything evil.

What, it may be asked, has this to do with religion? Everything, surely, connected with human good has to do with religion, and everything done in the name of human good, most of all in the name of freedom, is connected with the quest for religious truth. In modern times, for example, what we speak of as the separation of Church and State is not a way of denying religion but of affirming it. It is intended to prevent the turning of religion into a perverting source of political partisanship and the creation of false certainties. Yet we know the practical difficulties in exiling the play of religious opinion from the political sphere; and we know, also, the importance of deep conviction—whether called "religious" or something else—in maintaining the intangible but necessary temper of a free society.

By processes of maturation we hardly understand, we are now learning that religion in its widest meaning is "ultimate concern," and that religion in this sense cannot be discharged or placed out of bounds by an atheist revolution. The emotions of one form of commitment are now embodied in another, and we can learn from the universal history of ideas (if we will) that every kind of skepticism, every species of materialism, every expression of what we suppose to be anti-religion has nonetheless had somewhere, in some past, a clearly religious form.

In addition, what in the nineteenth century would have been regarded as practically impossible, may now be seen to be taking place—the union (or reunion) of science and religion at a primary cognitive level. At the end of a discussion of the processes and character of scientific discovery, Michael Polanyi remarks in *Saturday Night* (for June), a Canadian magazine:

> I have been stressing the role of faith in science. Whether one should call this faith "religious" or not, I do not know. Science (as its name tells us) is an avenue by which one can pursue knowledge. In its area of application it has been enormously successful in this century. There can be little doubt that it is, today, the growing point of our culture. . . . if people are ashamed to seek illumination through religion because the language, the customs and some of the precepts of the church are at war with the profound intimations of reality they receive from other

> branches of knowledge—then surely all this "experimental" evidence (assembled by science) has some relevance to the conduct and the content of religion. In fact, the Christian Church, and perhaps other churches, are starting to be shaken by convulsions which are certain to have far-reaching effects. A religious magazine in its editorial columns spoke feelingly of this not long ago: "We have reached a moment in history when . . . things are at last being said openly and when they are said there is an almost audible gasp of relief from those whose consciences have been wrongly burdened with religious tradition."
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> At a time when many people feel that out of a deep (and I believe a proper) respect for science and the new knowledge it has brought us, they must abjure faith, it is particularly important that we understand what science is. Modern science is an awesome testimonial to the power of the human mind—supported by faith.

Well, how does this help? There is broad intellectual encouragement, but Mr. Polanyi's statement becomes a comfortless abstraction when the only way we know of to *get at* religion—by its tradition, through the familiar avenues of historic practice and belief—is what we must give up, or seriously distrust.

Is there really anything left of religion after tradition is stripped away? In many cases, fortunately, the answer is yes. There is the Scripture freed from its priests. There are statements about meaning of which we may be able to make something good. If, for example, we say that we must now go back to the very beginning, to take nothing for granted, to acknowledge only our longing and our need, and to admit our deep uncertainty and feeling of being lost—to what in scripture might we conceivably turn?

In the Christian Scripture, there is Jesus tried by his terrible hours in Gethsemane. And in the sacred literature of the Hindus, there is Arjuna's time of anguished indecision and the collapse of all—or *almost* all—that he had learned to rely on. It comes when his chariot is drawn between the two armies and the Great War is about to begin.

Now the imagery of these situations, while moving and dramatic, is of no help to us unless we make a fundamental choice in the reading. We have to say that these scriptures are not only about Christs or mythic heroes, but about *ourselves.* We have to make our peace with all this terrible uncertainty and unmanning doubt—to see it as the common human condition. We have to stop insisting that we be delivered, or found "right." This is also to say—going to ancient Greek religion—that like Prometheus, before we can be unbound, we must recognize that we wear our shackles from a cause that has high purpose and to see the raw materials of future greatness in the rock.

It seems perfectly obvious that if religious truth were ever known to anyone, and if it could be communicated in some familiar way, to be a man would have another meaning entirely. Our troubles would have been over ages ago. But they are not over; they are not solved through history; and the familiar things we have been told concerning religion have not been of service to us in the way that we were led to expect.

REVIEW
A MAGNIFICENT ANACHRONISM

ONE of the pleasant things about Zen Buddhism is its complete lack of piety, so that, in reviewing a book about it, the possibility of saying something that might wound a true believer is very remote. What should bother the reviewer is his need to do such a book justice, and this may be too pretentious an undertaking. After all, a book about Zen, if it is serious, invites the reader to the discovery of Final Truth, and how can you review the prospects or promise of *that?* Or, as Theodore Roszak remarked here a few weeks ago, when discussing Thomas Merton's *Way of Chuang Tza*: "Is there anything one can *say* about Zen and Taoist teachings without seeming. from the very moment one begins to speak, to have missed the entire point." Possibly this fate can be avoided only by not trying to make the point.

Well, to get on with it, right or wrong, the book we have for review is *The Three Pillars of Zen*, compiled and edited by Philip Kapleau, with a foreword by Huston Smith (Harper & Row, 1966, $6.95), which came as a gift from a reader. It is one of the most informing books about Zen we have ever read. The author is a serious man for whom Zen is an all-engrossing pursuit, and he has done what you are supposed to do if you mean to find out about Zen—which is considerably more than researching a "subject." His book is likely to make a lot of converts, and to be candid, we have no idea whether or not this is a good thing.

The "pillars" of Zen are Teaching, Practice, and Enlightenment. The practice is a way of intense concentration called *Zazen*, and the teaching is about the various forms and motives for the practice of *Zazen*. The section on Enlightenment is constituted of reports by persons who felt they had achieved some measure of illumination, and since their teachers agreed, and all involved seem worthy, intelligent, and truthful, to accept what they say at face value brings the reader little risk.

Another pleasure of the book—and this applies, more or less, to all good books about Zen—is the absence of straining references to "God." The Buddhists do very well without a smokescreen of useless contentions concerning Deity. And since Zen Buddhism in particular warns against the built-in errors of conceptualization, the worst conceptualizing error of all is naturally avoided. Another thing which the reader enjoys is Zen's freedom from religiosity. Zen training is apparently a specific for any kind of spiritual egotism. A friendly toughness seems to prevail in the monasteries—the kind of toughness you would expect to encounter if you set out to learn from a master craftsman a very difficult trade; and here is the much harder task of learning to know oneself.

But what we miss, here, as in other such books, is a philosophic purview which takes some account of the meaning of history. There can be no doubt but that a prime mistake of Western thought has been to seek meaning in *nothing but* history, and this leads, among other misfortunes, to all the collectivist delusions which blur and derange our thinking about human identity. It is a matter of great interest that Zen thought speaks directly to the present-day Western hunger for an acceptable answer to the question of who and what the human individual is, and that so many Westerners consider this answer without much skeptical pain and often adopt it with a great sense of release from anxiety. But there is still the problem of what history is about. We stand by the view that, miscellaneous egotisms and nationalist delusions all granted, there is more to history than one big aberration. "Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay" is indeed nonsense, but to confess this is not to declare that the last five hundred years of Europe has had no meaning at all.

This is the reason why we presume to call Zen Buddhism a magnificent anachronism. And it is also achronic. It has no truck with time. Time is something you get out of. However, there may be a sense in which to say only this would be mistaken or unjust. Even though the people who testify to the experience of Enlightenment tell mostly how great they feel, how much they understand, and how peaceful and calm they are able to be, there is still the *Bodhisattvic* ideal at the end of the line. You live, finally, to help and teach others. That's what the

Buddha did, and that's what all true Mahayana Buddhists set out to do.

Here, at least in principle, is recognition of the importance of history. People suffer through history. Delusions as to who or what we are bind us to time and to the cycles of rebirth in history. These cycles *make* history. And delusions are erased in time; the release of the enlightened ones is to timelessness, and then they go back into time to help their fellows to become enlightened, too. They spread the teachings of the *compassionate* Buddha.

It is reasonable to ask: Are the problems of mankind *exactly* the same in all ages, or do they change from cycle to cycle? Are such changes, if they take place, of any importance to a potential Buddha? Is there a kind of understanding possible for a man in the twentieth century that could not have existed, in respect to certain subtleties of human experience, in the sixth century? Has the evolution of thought no value at all? Are some concepts better, less delusive, than others?

A concept, we submit, may be a good thing if you understand the limits of its use. And if this be acceptable, then there is a brief for the *comparative* importance of all relative (conceptual) truth, as one of the means by which men approach the central problem of transcendence. And this is a way of saying that there is not one path only to transcendence, but that the path varies with the pilgrim. This cannot help but mean something to the teacher. "Whatever the path taken by mankind, that path is mine, O son of Pritha," was the declaration of the Avatar of the philosophical religion of which Gautama Buddha was the greatest reformer.

We take, then, a dim view of isolation from history and in monasteries. Salvation or deliverance should be possible without all that. Maybe it's easier that way, but what is easier can't possibly be as good; and it probably won't serve so many people—the people who desperately need understanding while they are doing their work in the world. The Buddha, one recalls, trudged all over India.

This is not to deny that embedded in Zen traditions may be the seeds of very nearly every philosophical truth. The Zen Buddhist triumph over the limitations of sectarianism is represented in a quotation Mr. Kapleau gives from Dogen, founder of the Soto sect, upon his return from China:

> I have returned home with empty hands. I retain no trace of Buddhism. I can only say *this:* my eyes are horizontal, my nose is vertical.

Here one of the greatest of the Zen patriarchs discloses that liberation from illusion means universalizing the path to freedom, until even its temporally identifying marks are lost. To achieve Buddhahood is to dissolve even the illusory forms by which "Buddhism" is known to imperfect mortals. Or, to put it otherwise, true Buddhism is what is not sectarian in any of the sects called Buddhist.

All great religions make known this view in one way or another. In the *Gita,* Krishna declares to Arjuna:

> When thy heart shall have worked through all the snares of delusion, then wilt thou attain to high indifference as to those doctrines which are already taught or which are yet to be taught. When thy mind once liberated from the Vedas shall be fixed immovably in contemplation, then shalt thou attain to devotion.

There is, finally, one quality of Zen Buddhism which seems of the utmost importance to the modern world, and has perhaps more stress than any other idea in Mr. Kapleau's *Three Pillars of Zen:* This is the idea of complete self-reliance for each one—the idea that the perfection of the Buddha is a potentiality of every human being. This is surely the source of the undying strength of the Buddhist movement, in all its many forms, and the truth which makes it stand out from other religions as a manly and dignifying faith. There can be little reason to doubt that if a man truly follows the path of the Buddha, he will eventually find himself free.

COMMENTARY
TWO WAYS TO HELP

IN an article in the May *Fellowship,* Virginia Naeve says that the impulse for her Mississippi Box Project came from understanding the need for person-to-person ways of helping others, and from first-hand knowledge of the South:

> Having spent my childhood in the South, I knew that the link between the Negro and the white in the South was severed when the first Negroes went out into the streets for their rights. It became nearly impossible for Southern Negroes fighting for their rights and white Southerners wishing to help them to get together. In many instances where a white person tries, he is ostracized by the white community and subjected to such severe economic and physical reprisals that he desists or is driven out.

After taking counsel with two Southern Negro women whom she met in Geneva in 1962, Mrs. Naeve began sending packages of food and clothing to a needy family in Georgia. Neighbors in the little Vermont town where she lived (now she lives in Canada) asked for the names of people they could send packages to, and the project grew, with a rather wonderful correspondence developing between New Englanders and Southerners. Usually, the Southerners are sharecroppers who were pushed off the plantations where they made their living because of activity in the civil rights movement. Without help, these people just starve.

How big the project grew is made clear by the following:

> More families are expected to be kicked off their plantations this year.
>
> Thus, food is badly needed. With the increase in appeals for help (today's mail brought eight), I am forced to go out beyond the 178 Northern families in eighteen states that are helping about 1,500 Southern Negro people, to find new sources of help. It takes from two to four families up here to help one family in the South; we have one with fourteen children.
>
> What is needed is enough helpers so I can give each Southern family name to four different families, each Northern family being responsible, then, for *one* box of food a month and whatever clothing and other help they can manage. . . . To join the project, write to Virginia Naeve, R.D. 2, Ayers Cliff, P.Q., Canada.

Another way of helping would be to buy from the co-op Liberty House, Box 3193, Jackson, Miss., what you can use of products made by civil rights workers who lost their jobs. Write for a mail-order catalog. The products include leather goods (tote bags, belts, hats, etc.) and children's and women's dresses—all made by Negro workers in Mississippi cooperatives. The goods are lovely and well made, the prices low.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
EDUCATION: LIBERATION AND ARTICULATTON

[This discussion of education by Christian Bay, who is connected with the Institute of Human Problems at Stanford University, is adapted from a KPFA broadcast given earlier this year. It appears in two parts.]

I

OUR schools now turn out far too many pleasant and pliable young men and women without real intellectual and moral integrity. We need more young men and women who will feel responsibility for what they do or fail to do with their lives, people who are capable of saying no as well as yes, people capable of deciding for themselves when to obey and when not to obey their elders, or the law—which often amounts to the same thing. But how can we hope to change the product of our school systems?

By "education" I mean two things: liberation and articulation. Liberation, above all, from irrational fears and prejudices; from ignorance; and from mental oppression by traditions, by conformity pressures, or by dictators or demagogues. By articulation I mean acquiring mastery of the arts of reading and writing.

A free spirit in a man who is good at reading and writing will lead also to the acquisition of knowledge and wisdom and of the skills appropriate to a chosen style of living. I take knowledge and wisdom to be almost inevitable consequences of education and thereby they become empirical characteristics of the educated person; but the two *defining* characteristics of the process of education itself, in my view, are the stimulation of independent thinking and of mastery of the mother tongue.

First of all I should simply state that I believe that all or most men are educable, in my sense of the term; if not, the argument here would make little sense. I ask you, then, to simply assume with me that most people, at least most young people, are potentially capable of becoming articulate as well as independent-minded human beings. If this is true, then surely we must call "miseducation" any process by which our schools and colleges rob young people of their chance to become educated. In my view it is a tragedy and indeed a crime each time a college graduates a young person who could have become educated but instead merely became polished, and equipped with a few useful skills,—useful for the purposes of other people, of corporations, or of his government but not to himself as a conscious and growing person. All our colleges would quickly go bankrupt if they were to be held financially liable for the loss of ability to learn that they have inflicted on the majority of their students; in their own defense they could blame the high schools, the grammar schools and the parents, but that would hardly exonerate them for their own practices of miseducation.

Not every process of liberating the individual mind should be called education; fully as important are the therapeutic processes, whether by way of formal or informal therapy or self-therapy. My point is simply this, that the liberation from repressed anxieties and irrational guilt and fears is a job that psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers often are better equipped than teachers to handle; depending on the severity of the psychological problem, successful therapy may be a prerequisite for the possibility of becoming educated. In that hypothetical lawsuit against colleges that have cheated their charges of an education, a part of the blame might well be shifted to the inadequacy of our community mental health facilities or to the entire absence of such; in the most racially bigoted sections of this country perhaps more could be done if there were mental health centers capable of treating neurotic fears about interracial human relationships. In most American communities, however, at least wherever Dr. Spock's influence has reached, most students are probably not too

neurotic to be educable, and to this extent the liberation of their minds should be mainly the responsibility of the schools and colleges. Many parents can help, but we must remember that no individual mind is free unless the young person is free to choose to reject his parents' belief and prejudices, too.

The autonomous person can choose to conform or not to conventions, beliefs and attitudes. Perhaps no one is capable of achieving complete autonomy, which would require, theoretically, the capacity to stand entirely alone with one's convictions all one's life. The autonomy we should seek to cultivate, in my view, is in part the scientific attitude with its critical judgment and in part the humanistic attitude with its concern for justice and its abhorrence of violence and the stunting of life and growth. Psychological study has convinced me that acts of violence are pathological responses, unless they occur as a last resort in self-defense; men who have been educated to understand and cope with their own anxieties are to that extent freed from the hatreds or fears that lead to acts of violence. Freedom from neurosis and freedom to reject conventional beliefs are prerequisites for the freedom to affirm whatever values and commitments are in harmony with the young person's own nature as an individual. Liberation means freedom to become a whole person according to the unique potentialities of each individual. Schooling that fails to encourage individual liberation in this sense may transmit skills but fails to educate. It may provide efficient computer minds for the Pentagon or for private industry but fails to produce individuals, let alone intellectuals.

Articulation, learning to become articulate, my second criterion of genuine education, is perhaps inseparable from the first. Language is for most people a necessary tool both for understanding and for accepting or rejecting conventions or commands. No doubt the pictorial arts can by themselves sensitize and liberate some individuals, but the vast majority can defend their own individuality effectively only if they become able to express themselves clearly. Moreover, we are all robbed of the opportunity of choosing other styles of life as portrayed in the world's literature unless we know how to read, and I mean how to read well. Robert Hutchins in his *Autobiography of an Uneducated Man* expresses his appreciation to the Yale Law School because it taught him how to read, something he had not learnt in school or college. Mastery of the mother tongue means to me, as I believe to Hutchins, commanding a vocabulary, a clarity of phrase and an ease of style than can express as well as comprehend all (or most of) the communicable thoughts and feelings emerging in a liberated and therefore freely reflecting and growing individual. This mastery requires a liberated mind's reflectiveness (although some can acquire verbal skills and even a graceful style while remaining basically non-reflecting prisoners of fears and irrational hatreds; William F. Buckley seems a good example) but in turn the same mastery of language expands individual consciousness. It works both ways. The truly educated person learns to express more and more of himself by way of his good command of language, and he keeps improving his command of language because he develops more and more facets of his consciousness to explore and communicate.

But I hasten to add that language is not the only medium for expressing thought or, of course, feelings. There can be nobility of feeling and thought in inarticulate people, communicated by subtle signals of feeling or by action or by art instead of words. Yet for most of us it is surely true that our minds will fall far short of their potentials for growth unless we learn to read and write and speak as clearly and lucidly and gracefully as possible. This, and the liberation of the individual mind and heart that goes with it, is the process of education, as I define it.

Education can take place inside or outside the schools. Eric Hoffer, today one of America's best

educated men, is almost wholly a self-educated man. Finn Carling, one of Scandinavia's most brilliant novelists and essayists, had very little schooling due to his condition of cerebral palsy, and reports that the only times he did not learn were when he went to school; what most schools dispense, in his view, is a training in indifference. On his own most of the time, he was free to follow the bent of his own mind and to go about learning, without constant interruptions, what at each time interested him the most.

I have said that the educated person spontaneously will seek and acquire knowledge and wisdom and appropriate skills. Jerome Bruner makes essentially the same point in his *Toward a Theory of Instruction* (p. 127):

> The will to learn is an intrinsic motive, one that finds both its source and its reward in its own exercise. The will to learn becomes a "problem" only under specialized circumstances like those of a school, where a curriculum is set, students confined, and a path fixed. The problem exists not so much in learning itself, but in the fact that what the school imposes often fails to enlist the natural energies that sustain spontaneous learning—curiosity, a desire for competence, aspiration to emulate a model, and a deep-sensed commitment to the web of social reciprocity.

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FRONTIERS

The Evolution of Synanon

IT is time for a progress report on Synanon. Synanon—more formally, the Synanon Foundation, Inc., with headquarters at 1351 Ocean Front, Santa Monica, Calif.—operates seven houses in which a total of some 600 residents work on their personal reconstruction, nearly all of them having begun from the all-time human low of heroin addiction. Founded in 1958 by Charles E. (Chuck) Dederich, this private venture in self-help has grown to a point where national publicity is the rule instead of the exception, and where recognition of its extraordinary achievement by lay people all over the country is equalled only by its neglect by professional people who are supposed to know how to help delinquents to stop using drugs and recover from their characterological ills.

No literary effort can expose the heart of the matter so far as Synanon is concerned, but a few things about what happens there may be said. You could say, for example, that Synanon is an institution devoted to the abolition of a wide variety of institutionalized attitudes of self-defeat. You could say it is a haven where people who have let themselves fall apart have a unique opportunity to put themselves back together again. You could say that it is a place where the conditions which oppose this kind of self-integration either do not exist at all, or are quickly marked for identification and driven out of town.

The repeatable principles of Synanon are few and familiar. The most important one is that there are no substitutes for self-reliance in human rehabilitation. Rehabilitation is seen as no more than a deliberate intensification of *normality*—but to find out what "normality" is, in the context of our society, takes some doing.

Synanon is a place where the ex-drug addict learns to be tough on himself and considerate of others, but not of what is wrong with the others. Mistakes are made by Synanon residents in dealing with one another, but a time comes when those who grow up in Synanon recognize that making and suffering mistakes is an essential part of the human condition. Fewer mistakes and less important ones are made by the people who learn this lesson, who see that expecting more of themselves than they do of others is the only lubricant of social life that really works.

Being human is the project. Anything which takes the place of this is regarded as a hang-up. A distinguished artist who has had a drug problem can't hide behind his skill or his "creativity." Dederich has said:

> Making music isn't that different from mixing cement. Let's do it. Don't take yourself so seriously—nobody else does.

No excuses for self-deception is the rule. Putting themselves and one another to the test of this rule takes all the ingenuity of the Synanon residents, since schemes for testing get hackneyed and have to be replaced with new "techniques." In recent months, the small-s synanon has become the Game, and since our last report there are new developments known as Dissipations, Cerebrations, and the Wizard Room. These devices—and they are more than devices—have much in common with earlier activities such as the synanon and the seminar, but they also embody new discoveries growing out of experiment and practice. In what is probably the best all-around account of Synanon that has appeared to date—in the British magazine *Anarchy*, for February of this year—the writer, Arnold Pressman, observes:

> As Dederich says, Synanon's approach is pragmatic. It is in a constant process of becoming something else, with definition and redefinition making it difficult to label its methods. It may be, however, that Synanon is now reaching a position where definition is possible. Semantic considerations are very important in Synanon because they convey a powerful, subliminal message to the groping student. Words like "wizard," "cerebration," "dissipation," are also humorous. (One word, however, central to Synanon semantics that is not funny is "reaction.") This is a crucial part of their dynamics, and the changing symbolism of words and ideas . . . is a key

reason that attempts to jam Synanon into other moulds clouds the issue and produces false appraisals.

The caption writer who put together some words to go under a photograph of Chuck Dederich in *Look* for June 28 (part of a round-up story on California) got very close to the core of Synanon's success. He called Synanon "a tightly structured, 24-hour-a-day living situation in which the addict [has] to face the consequences of his every act." The feedback from a Synanon resident's life-pattern is not delayed. And it cannot be disguised. He gets to find out almost immediately what he's doing wrong, what is hurting both himself and others. So Synanon is a hothouse for self-correction. It works mainly because there's nothing else to do. It's not "therapy," as the *Look* writer says, "but close attention to living."

In short, Synanon is a living example of how to put the human community back together again. Only in such a human community can the sick become well, and the fall-aparts see before their own eyes what it means to be whole.

We have a theory—for this week, anyhow—about Synanon. It is that Synanon is a profoundly successful Taoist enterprise. How is this? Well, Synanon has taken down the institutional barriers which give substance to official definitions of "addicts" and provide spurious justification of the rules for "controlling" them. The pertinent passages in Lao-tse are:

> Banish human kindness, discard morality, and the people will become dutiful and compassionate. . . . It was when the great Tao declined that human kindness and morality arose. . . . Not until the country fell into chaos and misrule did we hear of "loyal ministers." . . . .

The Synanon recension would be:

> Eliminate the "pseudo-kindness" of essentially punitive state programs of "rehabilitation," recognize the prerequisites for growth-processes instead of repeating slogans about "morality," which only make people hate both society and themselves, and sick and weak beings may find a way to become well and strong. . . . A well-paid bureaucracy thrives on problems which multiply into numerous subdivisions, each requiring a separate institutional solution; there is never an attempt to remove the primary causes of the disorder, to which there is no access in terms of the professional canons which govern everything the bureaucracy does.

The scope of this indictment is wider than superficially appears. Lewis Yablonsky, head of the sociology department at San Fernando State College, observed in his book on Synanon (*The Tunnel Back*):

> . . . in the drug addiction field, my cursory review of recently published conference reports and papers reveals a tremendous preoccupation with the symptoms and various patterns of destructive drug use and with the hallucinatory effects of drugs. In comparison with the symptomatic destructive aspects of addiction, there appear to be fewer publications concerned with the causes and cure of the problem. . .

Synanon ignores all this, which it regards as elaborate and mischievous nonsense. It goes on with its daily task of producing clean man-hours. Synanon achieves the absence of addiction, not learned papers on its multiplying forms.