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A SOCIETY MADE TO STAND

AS twentieth-century inheritors of vast stores of doctrine concerning the Good Society and how to get it, we find ourselves surrounded, penetrated, and saturated by ideas filled with constructive and reconstructive content concerning all human institutions. What was and is missing in all this, as we are now beginning to realize, is an understanding of how and why the *not*-good persists throughout all the institutional changes men have been able to put into effect. "Not-good" is an awkward word; its use here is to justify revival of an older term, *evil,* which has been outlawed from serious discourse for a century or more.

The bitter truth is that the development of modern technological society has been accompanied by the creation of countless typical situations which can only be described as productive of continuous pain for human beings. Human societies have always included areas in which suffering is the common lot; the point is that while the well-intentioned planning and arduous action of the past two hundred years were supposed to eliminate even the possibility of widespread suffering, the revolutionary expectation has not been fulfilled. Before too long, people in the mass may be driven by the depressing barrenness and ache of their lives to admit this fact, and what they will then be moved to do about it remains to be seen. It is in such periods that uncontrollable demonic forces take over the arena of historical change, playing havoc with conventional political theory and prediction. It is in these terrible intervals that the overwhelming strength of inverted metaphysical formulas is demonstrated and the leadership of nihilists and madmen is preferred to "sanity" and "common sense."

Hannah Arendt's chapter, "A Classless Society," in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Meridian paperback edition, $2.65), helps its reader to reach tentative conclusions about these "terrible intervals" of history. One such conclusion is that before the longing for nihilistic cleansing can become a popular emotion, there must be a protracted decline in the social structures by means of which people participate in the decisions which control or affect their own lives. The hopelessness of choiceless impotence and the emptiness of attainable ends are the vacuum-creating feelings which open the way to the sweep of desperate passion, turning the frustrations of the normally apolitical mass into a dam-breaking flow of action.

In the light of the historical experiences of the twentieth century, it might be argued that there are two kinds of evil to be understood and contended against. There is the ordinary, day-to-day evil of self-interest, in both its individual and corporate forms, with all the agencies of persuasion, deception, and coercion that it sustains, but there is also the wild Luciferian evil which breaks out periodically, when its hour arrives, to exploit and rule over what has become universal moral confusion, in the name of a last, desperate measure to obtain the Good. Clues to the origin of this second kind of evil are probably locked up in the human psyche and may, in the course of time, be brought into the open; but meanwhile the gross socio-historical evidence is becoming plainer with every passing decade. A case study drawn from the post World War I period in Europe by Hannah Arendt will illustrate:

> The attraction which the totalitarian movements exert on the elite, so long as and wherever they have not seized power, has been perplexing because the patently vulgar and arbitrary, positive doctrines of totalitarianism are more conspicuous to the outsider and mere observer than the general mood which pervades the pre-totalitarian atmosphere. These doctrines were so much at variance with the generally

accepted intellectual, cultural, and moral standards that one could conclude that only an inherent fundamental shortcoming of character in the intellectual, *"la trabison des clercs"* (J. Benda), or a perverse self-hatred of the spirit, accounted for the delight with which the elite accepted the "ideas" of the mob. What the spokesmen of humanism and liberalism usually overlook, in their bitter disappointment and their unfamiliarity with the more general experiences of the time, is that an atmosphere in which all traditional values and propositions had evaporated (after the nineteenth-century ideologies had refuted each other and exhausted their vital appeal) in a sense made it easier to accept patently absurd propositions than the old truths which had become pious banalities, precisely because nobody could be expected to take the absurdities seriously. Vulgarity with its cynical dismissal of respected standards and accepted theories carried with it a frank admission of the worst and a disregard of all pretenses which were easily mistaken for courage and a new style of life. In the growing prevalence of mob attitudes and convictions—which were actually the attitudes and convictions of the bourgeoisie cleaned of hypocrisy—those who traditionally hated the bourgeoisie and had voluntarily left respectable society saw only the lack of hypocrisy and respectability, not the content itself.

Since the bourgeoisie claimed to be the guardian of Western traditions and confounded all moral issues by parading publicly virtues which it not only did not possess in private and business life, but actually held in contempt, it seemed revolutionary enough to admit cruelty, disregard of human values, and general amorality, because this at least destroyed the duplicity upon which the existing society seemed to rest. What a temptation to flaunt extreme attitudes in the hypocritical twilight of double moral standards, to wear publicly the mask of cruelty if everybody was patently inconsiderate and pretended to be gentle, to parade wickedness in a world, not of wickedness, but of meanness! . . .

At that time, nobody anticipated that the true victims of this irony would be the elite rather than the bourgeoisie. The avant garde did not know they were running their heads not against walls but against open doors, that a unanimous success would belie their claim to being a revolutionary, and would prove that they were about to express a new mass spirit or the spirit of the time. Particularly significant in this respect was the reception given Brecht's *Dreigoschenoper* in pre-Hitler Germany. The play presented gangsters as respectable businessmen and respectable businessmen as gangsters. The irony was somewhat lost when respectable businessmen in the audience considered this a deep insight into the ways of the world and when the mob welcomed it as an artistic sanction of gangsterism. The theme song in the play, *"Erst kommt das Fressen, dann kommt die Moral"* [First comes Food, then comes Morality], was greeted with frantic applause by exactly everybody, though for different reasons. The mob applauded because it took the statement literally, the bourgeoisie applauded because it had been fooled by its own hypocrisy for so long that it had grown tired of the tension and found deep wisdom in the expression of the banality by which it lived; the elite applauded because the unveiling of hypocrisy was such superior and wonderful fun. The effect of the work was exactly the opposite of what Brecht had sought by it. The bourgeoisie could no longer be shocked; it welcomed the exposure of its hidden philosophy, whose popularity proved that they had been right all along, so that the only political result of Brecht's "revolution" was to encourage everyone to discard the uncomfortable mask of hypocrisy and to accept openly the standards of the mob.

Two pertinent comments occur. One is that no current political doctrine is psychologically equipped to make adequate analysis of these processes of cultural collapse. The other is that programs for revolutionary change which draw their energy from angry contempt and their justification from the claim that only ruthless destruction can accomplish what is needed, are programs without a positive social ideal. These men are destroyers. They must also be seen as essentially victims. They have children and doubtless love them; but think of the twisted emotional lives of fathers who wait impatiently for their children to grow up from the unreal world of innocent joys to an age when they can be instructed in the angry truth about the world and how it must be bled white of the evil which pervades all social life.

What we are questioning, here, is the systematic politicalization of basic human problems, with the result that, in terms of the gross averages to which politics reduces human attitudes, you have, on the one hand, the massive hypocrisy and moral indifference which support

the existing system, and on the other the brutal "honesty" of men obsessed by a frenzied determination to *act.* How could such men be persuaded to look behind the lying institutional façades they hate to recognize in their "enemy" only half-responsible people whose mixed and weak natures have made them captives of the system they serve?

The trouble with this sort of questioning is summed up by the French maxim: To understand all is to forgive all. To feel, compassion for destroyers and hypocrites may be all very well, but the *evil,* men say, must be erased. For this reason what seems the sentimental optimism of the pacifists is often found to be vastly irritating by those who believe themselves to be equally committed to working for a peaceful world. Apparently, the pacifists jump to a condition of having understood *all* through some big intuition not accessible to the rest of mankind. It is for this reason, perhaps, that many pacifists, being themselves aware of this problem, are eagerly enlisting the psychotherapists for the analysis of social questions, and of the problems of war and peace, since human understanding is now increasingly recognized to be dependent upon psychological knowledge. The studies of Erich Fromm, Jerome D. Frank, and Lester Grinspoon bear directly on these matters. One would like to see some cognizance taken by serious political analysts of what such psychological research is revealing. The problem is not alone in the design of a socio-political order which provides for psychological realities in human rather than statistical terms, but also, and more urgently, in comprehending how and through what basic institutional defects the *terrible intervals* of history impose their uncontrollable forces upon all men.

Already there are uncomfortable parallels between present-day culture in the United States and the quality of life in, say, pre-Hitler Germany. There are now many latter-day Brechts whose capacity to shock is identified as the skill to delight. Madison Avenue is now a place where men of considerable talent work for a while before writing novels exposing the cynicism and amorality of the advertising business. There are differences, of course, a major one being that the second half of the twentieth century can hardly forget the nihilistic revolutions of the first half; we know that those *Götterdämmerungs* were not followed by a fresh Garden of Eden where the purified survivors could make a new beginning. We know that the brief orgasm of destructive fervor leaves behind only a shrivelling horror at a world completely undone. Yet such memories may be easily thrust aside by a renewal of destructive emotion.

So there is the question, hardly asked until now, of what men not infected by either the cynicism of the status quo or the bitterness of the destroyers might possibly do to change the course of history. How, for example, do you displace hypocrites from seats of authority without calling out the nuclear vigilantes? How do you restore a sense of participation for all common folk in the process and decisions of social life? How do you regain the confidence and cooperation of revolutionaries hardened by years of alienation?

Is it not plain that these are not political questions but educational questions? That they have to do with the therapy of binding up one another's wounds and ministering to one another's hopes? They relate directly to how we bring up our children and what we lay upon them as the burdens of maturity as they grow into men and women. They relate to the essential elements of an organic society—non-coercive, voluntaristic, aspiring, non-contractual, loving, mutually supporting—which must come to subsist within, to pervade, uphold, support, and inspire, any and all political societies.

The entire *living* content of modern scholarship in psychology, sociology, and religio-cultural research points in this direction. Put the vital communications of these fields together with the lessons of recent history and you get a

message which throbs with all the urgency of longings which have been denied throughout the modern age: Men must teach themselves and one another to live good lives as individuals, or they will never have anything remotely resembling a good society.

And what is a good life for the individual? It is what it has always been: Essentially, a human drama involving humanly scaled realities which the individual learns to recognize, encounter for what they are, and make some humanly enduring good out of. The good life for the individual has a metaphysical definition. It always has had a metaphysical definition, and it always will.

Only this can explain the vulnerability of men to the bitter but nonetheless metaphysical appeals of the Men of the Terror. In this the leaders are also tragic figures, along with their desperate followers. Only those whose experience has seared and sealed their hearts to the springs of compassion could do such terrible things. Yet they, too, are just . . . men. They are men chosen by a dark, inexplicable destiny to play out as surrogates the tragedy of life on a downward cycle; to be the hated but fascinating symbols of identity in a great collective drama—a drama which ends with the vicarious condemnation of all the deprived and self-depriving individuals of the mass, who have been both guilty spectators and helpless pawns.

To put an end to the possibility of such total defeats of mankind, the basic situation must be reversed. The primary metaphysic of meaning must belong to the individual, not to the nation or race. The one sense of meaning is always the shadow or reflection of the other, and we see what happens when meanings for individuals are only dim reflections of some ideological doctrine of meaning for man in the mass. The poverty of the individual's feeling of purpose or destiny invariably infects the larger doctrine with its longing for miraculous fulfillments, and these are then sought by the only means available to collectivist organizations—the brutal tools of dehumanization through absolute power. It is by this transfer of hope from man to political organization that the social coefficient of evil is raised to the highest power, for it is the desperate energy of hope denied, divorced from rational processes, and collected in the bottomless cups of frustration, which arms the demonic forces of history.

Why do men turn to the State for the solution of their problems, as they might turn to stone-faced ikons? They turn because they have lost belief in themselves—because, for one or two generations too many, they have lived without nourishing the roots of their being with the substances of individual realization. Now they live in the shadow of monuments erected to ignoble ends—structures which, under the multiplications of a mass society, become continuous testimony to the impotence of individuals and their captivity to the abstracted and collectivized drives of subhuman motivation. And this, they say to themselves, is what is "real."

It is the role of the hero to challenge this "reality," to denounce its image and to declare his allegiance to the inward gods of human dignity and autonomy. It is the role of the artist to honor with his creations only the authentic human spirit and to despise the entire gamut of representations of perverted human longing. It is the role of the poet to compose anthems which can be sung only by men, about men, in behalf of men, and not their mechanized shadows in organizational stances. And it is the role of the teacher and the philosopher to give the bewildered and insecure masters of collective organization no plausible and justifying rationalizations, no intellectual comfortings for what they do.

We need, not a handful, but an entire brigade of Emersons and Thoreaus. We need Whitmans by the dozen—all philosophers, teachers, *friends* of mankind, who will tell the truth about the nature and possibility of man with the rushing speech of invincible conviction. We need sources of belief that there exist in us, not yet still-born,

not yet killed by the defeats and degradations of the present, the germinal souls of such teachers and philosophers, which even now retain the capacity to grow strong and great. We need to construct with our minds the tender matrices of infant resolve to become whole human beings, to make a metaphysic compatible with both our present ignorance and our secret vision.

This means a flexible, humanly tendoned metaphysic which grows with the man and his thinking—which leaves blanks to be filled in from the day-to-day fruits of experience. The undertaking is *not* beyond our ability; no circumstances can be permitted to deny the possibility of remaining human in a world that human beings have made and can make over again. A man can always refuse traffic with monstrous evils. He can just *ignore* the engines of disaster, in the sense of rejecting any participation in their purposes.

Defensive neglects and pushings aside of outsize, antihuman realities are already painful negative facts in the lives of countless human beings. How can these people possibly *understand* the vastly complicated mechanisms of the world in which they are made to live? The sweep of events swirls them along like debris and the roofs of houses in a tornado. Such men could at least be helped to live according to their own choice of humanly scaled reality, instead of being forced to admit that their thinking and understanding are in continual default. Default to what? A dance of endless technical categories? The spurious dialectic of classical economic theory? The gamesmanship of the planners of nuclear war?

We quoted here recently a paper by Dr. Lester Grinspoon on "The Unacceptability of Disquieting Facts." Why not a paper on "The Irrelevance of Dehumanizing Doctrines"? Men can always leave premises which are no longer habitable, abandon machinery which does not work except to grind up hope. They can do this, of course, only by building other homes and developing processes of service which are scaled to actual needs; after a fashion, they are doing these things now, but only through a series of accidents, and in a kind of flight, which makes their humanity marginal instead of a fulfillment of deliberated action.

Being human is not a collectivized undertaking. It is begun, pursued, and completed by individuals. It requires a philosophy of life and a metaphysic of meaning. The philosophy proclaims the end and the metaphysic explains the difficulties and the means of working through them. A life so lived is a drama. It is a work of art. It is not something one man can do for another. It is not a play whose climax and denouement can be stage-managed by either priests or politicians. These would-be arbiters of human destiny cannot even serve as claques or coaches, because the play is a Mystery play. But we all have parts in one another's dramas, and hence the feeling of deep fraternity and the skill, so natural for some men, in supporting and encouraging others in their hour of trial.

These are the primitive, eternal, self-evident realities of the human situation. A society which grows up in recognition of them will be a good society, one made to stand.

REVIEW
"THE MATTER OF ZEN"

WE come to notice of Paul Wienpahl's book of this title with friendly inclinations, for Dr. Wienpahl has been a much-appreciated contributor to MANAS on several occasions in the past. *The Matter of Zen* (New York University Press, $3.95) is the outgrowth of an adventure in the practical Zen disciplines afforded in Kyoto, Japan. As a philosopher, Wienpahl has made a tour of the world's thought, and now, in his own maturity, has had done with systems. His approach to Zen is neither that of the dilettante nor that of the uncritical enthusiast. A few words from the Preface will indicate the tone of the volume:

> This book concerns the *practice* of Zen Buddhism. The practice is a particular form of meditation. In Japan, the only country in which it is any longer seriously pursued, the practice is called *zazen.*
>
> I am endeavoring to direct attention to *zazen* because it is being overlooked in the current interest in Zen. My purpose is not to provide a manual of *zazen*. Adequate instruction in this practice requires a teacher. The present volume may be regarded as though the author were a man who is pointing and shouting, "Hey, look!" when his fellows do not see the tiger lurking in the bushes.
>
> I have had a secondary reason for writing, which will be no more than mentioned. It is that of taking some of the mystery out of mysticism. For mysticism appears to me simply as a radical form of empiricism or common sense to which we can all pay attention with profit.

Every serious discussion of Zen makes much of the point that its meaning cannot be conveyed by books. The reason for this is simple: Zen means meditation. As Wienpahl puts it: "Zen Buddhism is literally Meditation Buddhism, and meditation cannot be transmitted in books any more than swimming or any other physical practice can." The description of Zen obviously should not be confused with that of which it is the description. It follows that "a person can learn more about Zen in a half hour of meditating than he can by reading a dozen books." But it also follows that, "words in the form of lectures, stories, or even books might help him with his understanding of Zen by helping him to improve his meditation practice."

We particularly like the first of the "Zen stories" used to differentiate Zen from descriptive metaphysics:

> The monk Fu, of T'ai-yuan, was first a Buddhist scholar. When he was lecturing on the Parinirvana Sutra while in Yang-chao, a Zen monk happened to stay in his temple and attend the lecture. Fu began discoursing on the Dharmakaya, which incidentally invoked the Zen monk's laugh. Afterwards Fu invited the monk to tea and asked: "My scholarship does not go very far, but I know I have faithfully expounded the meaning in accordance with the literary sense. Having seen you laugh at my lecture, I realize that there must have been something wrong. Be pleased to give me your kind instruction in this."
>
> The Zen monk said: "I simply could not help laughing at the time, because your discourse on the Dharmakaya was not at all to the point."
>
> Fu: "If this be the case, tell me what it is?"
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> The monk told him to repeat his lecture, whereupon Fu began thus: "The Dharmakaya is like vacuity of space, it reaches the limits of time, it extends to the ten quarters, it fills up the eight points of the compass, it embraces the two extremes, heaven and earth. It functions according to conditions, responds to all stimulations and there is no place where it is not in evidence. . . ."
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> The monk said: "I would not say that your exposition is all wrong, but it is no more than a talk about the Dharmakaya. As to the thing itself, you have no knowledge."
>
> Fu: "If this be the case, tell me what it is?"
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> Monk: "Would you believe me?"
>
> Fu: "Why not?"
>
> Monk: "If you really do, quit your lecturing for a while, retire into your room for about ten days, and, sitting up straight and quietly, collect all your thoughts, abandon your discriminations as regards good and bad, and see into your inner world."

Zen is sitting quietly, and Zen is meditation. The mystic perceptions which may come to the Zen devotee are not transmitted but simply encouraged. Or perhaps it may be said that they "emerge" from

dormant germinal points of awareness in one's own being.

In Wienpahl's terms, this is the true perspective of Zen. There has been so much talk concerning *satori* in the West that it has been confused with a conception of nirvana-like bliss, and the Zen disciplines imagined to be incentive-providing preliminaries leading to that end. The idea of *satori* as a state of ecstasy "out of this world" misses the central point of Zen philosophy entirely. In Wienpahl's words: *"Zazen* is not practiced to develop extraordinary powers or to produce magical effects. It is practiced solely to become quiet. Psychologists have supposed that the results achieved in *zazen* can be duplicated by taking drugs like mescaline. This notion misses the whole point of *zazen* and confuses *satori* with illusions and certain peculiar phenomena of perception. The latter can be induced by drugs, thus showing that drugs have nothing to do with mysticism."

Wienpahl also paraphrases a reply received from Goto Roshi when asked why, the further Zen study proceeds, the less *satori* is mentioned. ":We do not worry about *satori* or getting it, whatever it may be," said the Roshi. He continued: "If you suddenly see a thing as you have not seen it before, a little more clearly perhaps, or if you suddenly feel contact with a person, and credit these experiences to your *zazen* and your work with koans, that is all right. We call these experiences by-products of the process. But do not aim for them. We do not aim for them. And you may progress without them."

Dr. Wienpahl does not consider *The Matter of Zen* to be a systematic exposition of Zen, but rather a "report" on the impressions made upon him by Zen study and "notes" on some aspects of Zen which are frequently misunderstood. For example, and somewhat related to the overemphasis on *satori*, there is Wienpahl's criticism of the impression that Zen Buddhism is basically quietistic:

> The matter has not been improved by the fact that there are tendencies on the part of those who come to Zen to slide into mere quietism. On the one hand, unless the student is mightily determined and unless he works assiduously with his practice, he can come merely to sit. The effort may prove too much. On the other hand, even if he makes considerable progress, he may still get stuck in what is called the Zen cave and fail to take the next step out of it. That is, he may come to prefer the school to the world for which it is the school, the monastic life to the hectic workaday world. This is one of the obstructions to *zazen*, and it is a pitfall from which only extraordinary work on his part and that of his teacher can extricate him.

The importation of the tradition of Eastern thought to the West always gives rise to a certain amount of fadism, and because this is so the genuine teacher of Zen who travels to America or England is suspected of a kind of commercial proselytism. But Zen Buddhists, if genuine followers of the tradition, approach education in Zen from a quite different standpoint. Dr. Wienpahl comments:

> This interest in the transmission of Zen to the West was not a missionary interest. The Zen Buddhist does not go forth to help others with his teaching. He waits for them to come to him, when he will give of it freely. For he is a Zen, that is, a meditating Buddhist, and he knows that the pupil must want the teaching before it can be used. The interest in transmitting Zen to the West may best be likened, I think, to the interest of the painter in his art. He would little love to see this thing of infinite value die out. When it was threatened in one place he might carry it to another, not to bring painting to others but to preserve painting.

In his concluding chapter, Wienpahl suggests a relationship between Zen and the problem of attaining "knowledge of the Good." In Zen the steps to discovery of the Good cannot be systematized, but this does not mean that the essential question is unanswerable or irrelevant:

> How is this knowledge obtained? The practice of *zazen* indicates that the way to it may be direct and not through reason, although reason may help here and there. As with the metaphysical question so with the moral: the answer to it lies in direct knowing and not in science. Once again: this statement does not imply that the requisite knowledge has been made any easier.

We wish this book well. The writing is clear, and the points emphasized seem to us in need of the isolation from long discourse which a brief treatment makes possible.

COMMENTARY
WHY SYNANON WORKS

THE question of why the Synanon program *works* in helping drug addicts to become normal human beings, while other institutional efforts, no matter how richly endowed, do not, is probably best answered by saying that the Synanon program is uncompromised by other, contradictory purposes. It exists for no other reason and it would soon disappear from the scene if it failed in what it attempts.

In contrast, public agencies which have come into being, ostensibly to meet this problem, would probably not survive actual success in the reconstruction of people who have succumbed to the grip of narcotics. Why should this be? Mainly because the milieu of the public hospital or penal institution would have to undergo revolutionary change in order to serve the human growth-processes involved.

Public institutions, with some few exceptions, are not designed to serve human beings. They exist by reason of politically defined "social" needs and are subject to all the pressures and compromises created by public apathy and political necessity. They are shaped and their policies determined by over-simplified theories of law enforcement and popular myths concerning law-breakers and what should be done to them, by the unconscious egotism and hypocrisies of respectable people, and by the practical adjustments of bureaucratic administrators to these various requirements. These conditions, under which public institutions exist, produce an environment almost the exact opposite of the environment an addict needs in order to get well.

Characterologically, drug addicts have regressed almost to infancy. They must learn the elemental lessons of self-reliance, and in order to do this they must find in themselves the foundation for self-respect. They must also be helped to uproot in themselves a pathological skill in self-deception and rationalization.

The Synanon environment is both tender and tough. It is tender to the embryonic self-reliance of the struggling ax-addict, and tough on his self-indulgent propensities. It is an environment which has been developed, empirically, over a period of four years, to exercise these influences and meet these needs. It is an environment produced by people who personally experience its benefits to themselves and who have found out that their own further progress depends upon giving the same kind of help to others. The therapeutic vitality of the Synanon environment is daily renewed by the psychological impact of these discoveries on people who are remaking their own lives

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

FRANCONIA COLLEGE PROCEEDINGS

WE continue to be impressed by the innovating thought of the small group which founded Franconia College such a short time ago. While experienced educators may continually remind us that the higher learning cannot be transmitted or measured by segmented proficiencies, it remains for the non-institutionalized teaching community to illustrate what these elder statesmen of education mean.

A recent column by Sydney Harris (Nov. 8, 1963) will serve to introduce discussion of the ideal currently given clear focus by the Franconian program. Mr. Harris writes:

> Dialog consists of a speaker and a receiver, who keep interchanging these roles. Communication, as such, is too often a speaker who only speaks and a receiver who only receives. But this is not a living transaction, it is a mechanical thing, and has little human value.
>
> As Ortega wryly remarks in one of his books: "The idea that by means of speech we can arrive at understanding is an age-old misconception, and it makes us talk and listen in such good faith that we understand far less than if we kept silent and attempted simply to guess one another's thoughts."
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> When we read the best writers, we feel that they are conducting a dialog with us, not merely "communicating" their ideas as an orator or a politician may do. The best writers touch us in our inmost parts, provoke a reaction (whether of agreement or disagreement, it does not matter), and we find ourselves not only answering them but also talking with our faceless audience; . . . it does not impel us to resonate with response. . . .
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> "I believe, therefore," Ortega goes on to say, "that the measure of a book is the author's ability to imagine his reader concretely and to carry on a kind of hidden dialog with him in which the reader perceives from between the lines the touch as of an ectoplasmic hand that feels him, caresses him, or deals him an occasional gentlemanly blow."
>
> Communication that is addressed to everyone and to no one is either trivial or pretentious; it is spoken in a void, to a faceless audience; . . . it does not impel us to resonate with response. . . .

A "course" of study at Franconia involves a contract proposed by the students and submitted to their instructors. This contract states the student's personal goals and criteria for the course he proposes to take, and this statement becomes the basis for evaluating his work at the end of the term. Teachers and students together work out this appraisal. Franconia does not dispense with grades, but finds ways of continuously experiencing the limitations of the grading systems, thus coming to learn a great deal about the subjective and individual criteria which should bear on the matter of grade assignment. Grades have undeniable importance because the grade is there on your record, and you may transfer to another college or to graduate school from Franconia, yet you are apt to have a lively awareness of the fact that your grades are incidental, rather than crucial, in the learning process.

The essence of the Franconia program is something called a "core" curriculum. Following is an interesting description of how the "core" approach functions:

> Students manifest our ideals when they say that a certain kind of life is beginning for them. As one of them put it when we were studying the *Old Testament* concept of "covenant": "Beginnings and covenants are very difficult. They go from something known to something relatively unknown. Making a commitment to an ideal, an institution, a person—this is a covenant. Coming to Franconia College is making a beginning: wanting to come here and accepting the principles of the college is making a covenant."
>
> Visitors are not here long before asking "just what is this 'core' course?" We can explain it best by outlining the three reasons it is called "core":
>
> 1. It is the core of every student's program for two years. It constitutes almost half of his total curriculum.
>
> 2. Over the two years we study in depth twelve samples—we bore down into twelve "cores"—of crucial human experience. We choose twelve

moments rich in meaning from the distant past to the present. We search for the heart of these moments by not restricting our tools to those of any single discipline. It is not a course in History, Literature, Philosophy, Science, Psychology, Religion, or Art, but it makes use of all these and is taught by men and women who have been trained in one or more of these fields.

For example, last fall we started with the moment when Socrates drank the hemlock: an exact moment which is clear and exciting. But this moment, we soon saw, is only the focus of a most complex pattern of forces, ideas, and personalities which existed before and after the event. These needed to be studied. We had to try to come as close as we could to the words of Socrates, and to read what Plato and other people tell of him. Not only that. We needed to discover from Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Thucydides, and the visual arts, the progression of values and events which led to the condemnation of Socrates by a jury of Athenian citizens who bore him little ill-will. We met four times a week for six weeks on this unit. We learned that there is no simple answer to "what was Socrates' real decision?" Indeed we ended with more questions than answers.

To take an example from the end of the course, we plan to consider Truman's decision to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. What were the advances in modern physics leading to the development of the bomb? How much was known about the influence of radiation on living cells? What were the historical events leading to Japan's social and political attitudes at that time? What do we know of the personality and character of Truman, the Commander-in-Chief who was responsible for the final decisions? What are the ethical and religious issues?

We value this integrated General Education course as the central manifestation of our commitment to a liberal arts education: the study befitting free men. We still argue whether the goal of a free man's studies is *doing* or *knowing.* Do we seek learning to apply immediately to our own decision-making, or do we seek knowledge and understanding for its own sake?

Finally, the Core, like any good college course, is designed to increase—for students and faculty alike—power in those intellectual disciplines which open the door to knowledge and understanding: reading, speaking and writing. We read closely texts of merit. In groups we constantly test and improve our ability to speak in a reasoned and persuasive fashion. Since writing is one of the best ways we have of knowing our thoughts and feelings well enough to understand them fully and test them critically, the student is asked to write an essay each week. Our attempts to communicate with others are seldom successful until we can communicate with ourselves.

All of which indicates that the "dialog" spoken of by Sydney Harris is proceeding apace at Franconia College.

FRONTIERS

A Lesson from Current History

ABOUT a year ago, MANAS put together and published for the Synanon Foundation (of Santa Monica, Calif.) a pamphlet which tells the story of this pioneering therapeutic community where former drug addicts fight their way back to normal life. Most of the articles in the pamphlet had previously appeared in MANAS, but one contribution, "A Lesson from History," by Walker Winslow, was written to round out the rest of the material and has not been printed elsewhere. In this discussion, Mr. Winslow brought his intimate knowledge of the mental health movement (evident in his books, *If a Man Be Mad,* 1947, and *The Menninger Story,* 1956) to bear on the fortunes and possible future of Synanon. Using a historical comparison, he showed that the chief threat to public understanding, and therefore to appreciation and support, of Synanon will almost certainly lie in misleading and superficial imitations of Synanon houses, sponsored or aided by officials who have not the fuzziest notion of how to go about founding and maintaining a therapeutic community, nor any serious interest in finding out. As Winslow put it, the thing to watch for now is the "If you can't lick them, join them" phase.

This phase, it seems, is now in full swing, justifying publication here of a condensation of "A Lesson from History," preceded by a few notes based on material that will appear in Lewis Yablonsky's forthcoming book, *The Tunnel Back: Synanon* (scheduled for fall publication by Macmillan).

Dr. Yablonsky, who is a professor of sociology at San Fernando Valley State College, was some months ago accosted by one of his students who exclaimed: "Have you seen the good news in the papers? The state and the Federal government have finally approved Synanon!" This student had read an account of Governor Brown's approval of a California Parole Department "half-way house" and prison program for addicts, and he imagined that this meant a sudden reversal of the State's official policy of boycotting Synanon (parolees are ordered not to visit Synanon, on penalty of returning to prison) and of totally ignoring its achievements (officially conducted studies of state-wide narcotics control do not mention Synanon). No such thing had happened, of course. Instead, the unique identity of Synanon was being blurred before the public by reports of state-sponsored imitations.

A more deceptive blurring followed a visit to Synanon by an East Coast Chief of Probation. Apparently fired with enthusiasm for Synanon's demonstrated success, this official applied for and obtained a grant (of more than $390,000) from the National Institute of Mental Health to support a "Synanon-style" probation program in an Eastern state. That this cooperation by the National Institute of Mental Health exhibited a curious preference for untried imitations is revealed by the fact that the National Institute has rejected Synanon's application for financial assistance—an application made following Senator Dodd's strong recommendation, after a personal investigation, that Synanon be given substantial help. (Sen. Dodd is chairman of the Senate's Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency.) Dr. Yablonsky's comment shows great restraint:

> In spite of this bureaucratic hypocrisy, Synanon, with no government support in the year 1963, *successfully* involved and treated over one hundred and fifty addicts (mostly from the East Coast). In this same period of time, the "government approved" project, the pseudo "Synanon-style" program, has, according to several reports, failed with twenty addicts.

Dr. Yablonsky is a well-known specialist in juvenile delinquency and problems of criminology who has taught at Columbia University and the University of California at Los Angeles, and whose book, *The Violent Gang* (Macmillan), won wide professional acclaim. He has been studying the dynamics of Synanon's methods for some three years, maintaining intimate relations with the

members (who are also the staff) at the original Synanon house in Santa Monica, as both a researching observer and a consultant to Charles E. Dederich, Synanon's founder. The book, *The Tunnel Back*, result of a collaboration between Dederich and Yablonsky, will include a chapter analyzing the bureaucracy of public agencies and how this problem limits the possibility of effective help for drug addicts. It should also give ample insight into the reasons why Synanon can never be successfully copied by people who insist on remaining oblivious to the social-psychological discoveries-in-depth that only intensive personal experience of Synanon makes possible.

Following is a portion of Walker Winslow's article, "A Lesson from History" (which will also appear in more extended form in *The Tunnel Back.)*

* * *

Sooner or later in the life of any new and advancing organization some "authority" studiously dusts off a tired cliché and announces that it has "reached the crossroads." Usually this prefaces a suggestion that the time has come to embrace some sort of institutional respectability that can only be reached through accredited conformity. Such a day will come for Synanon Foundation, if it has not come already. At such a point it is to be expected that the status- and degree-seekers, bureaucrats who have piloted the failures in the same field, foundation men, representatives of project-hungry seats of learning, and the like, will be invited to crawl on board. Such crossroads are in fact but loading terminals for people who can bring in some money and status, or the promise of it, in exchange for an authority they can earn in no other way.

As the result of its success in really doing something for and with drug addicts, Synanon already has various imitators, and in the future will have many more. This imitation is a form of flattery that Synanon can well do without. Few will recognize the great possibility that such places will be run and dominated by the same people who failed so dismally with addicts in the past and that these new houses, under whatever name, are a means of perpetuating a bureaucratic and emotional investment in drug addiction. Even if good intentions are granted, the methods of application will drag in archaic survivals of the old punitive controls. *The greater menace is that these places, as they spread and get publicity in indirectly borrowing Synanon's reputation for success, can divert support from the genuine Synanon Houses and thus isolate and circumscribe the great work that Synanon has just begun.*

The history of mental health has an analogy for the dilemma which will confront Synanon more and more. Well over a hundred years ago, a schoolteacher, Dorothea Lynde Dix, happened to visit some of the jails and alms houses in which the mentally ill were kept in chains, fed like hogs, and tormented by bored and sadistic keepers. When people in the community were told about this they often righteously inferred that there was something morally wrong with anyone who went crazy and fell back on some variation of "Once a nut always a nut." However, Miss Dix decided that there was something she could do about the situation. Her demand was for hospitals for the mentally ill where they could be accepted and treated as the sick people they were. Suddenly this woman became a force such as this nation or any other rarely encounters. She was seen anywhere and everywhere, taking in England as well as the United States. She was fearless and she knew how to apply pressure where it was needed. Ruthlessly, she exposed those who were torturing the sick in mind. Where she could, she proved that understanding, acceptance, and kindness would work where chains and lashes wouldn't. Certain of the New England states saw the light and built hospitals, some which are famous today.

But while Miss Dix was crusading, reputations for humanitarianism were being harvested by the administrators, doctors, and

politicians who had climbed on her bandwagon. Long before the sign "Hospital" over the gates of the mental health institutions had taken on a patina, the wardens and keepers from the jails and alms houses were in charge. As citizens drove by, pulsing with the warm virtue of having done good, patients in chains were again being fed slop and were beaten in a setting that gave their tormenters a protection they had never had before. Moreover, the public had purged its conscience and didn't want to be bothered again. . . .

Synanon and Chuck Dederich are determined not to be caught in the trap that snared the first hospitals for the mentally ill and Miss Dix. Meanwhile, a knowledge of what has happened in the mental field in the past may help the friends of Synanon and all who are sympathetic to the movement to understand why at times Synanon has seemed grossly egocentric in its insistence that it *go its own way,* even to the extent of spurning apparently friendly offers from institutions, agencies, and individuals. Its destiny has to be its own, and unadulterated. Another point is that practically no one can come to Synanon with experience in the field of drug addiction and really offer its people anything. A history of failure is all such visitors have to offer and unless they are addicts Synanon has nothing it can honestly offer them. Only research that in no way interferes with the Synanon process can be condoned, and only for the purpose of furthering the work of Synanon. In any case, the spirit of Synanon defies analysis. Help given on faith—goods, services, and money—is all Synanon really needs anyway. That and friendship that will assert itself whenever the peculiar integrity of Synanon is threatened.

The imitations of Synanon that spring up, leaning heavily on Synanon's success and at the same time bathed in an aura of institutionalized respectability, are not a threat to Synanon, but only to the addicts it could genuinely help. How easy it is for what appears to be a house with an open door to become a psychological prison where the aim is serving out parole or evading an outright commitment. The open door can very well be an entrance to prison for parole violation. Almost certainly, the supervisors will be the same ones who have failed with addicts before. My experience in the mental health field has taught me the hard way just how difficult it is for the old masters of failure, window-dressing and deceit to let go. To let go is an admission of failure. For the penal-minded, it would even be an admission of failure to admit that a drug addict can get well and stay well.

The attempt to destroy Synanon has pretty well passed. The thing to watch for now is the "If you can't lick them, join them," phase. It is during this period that the strength of Synanon can become most apparent. There is nothing on earth less susceptible to fakery than the Synanon principles. The imitators' great mistake will be in forgetting that comparisons can be made from day to day, without waiting a hundred years.