

## THE ISSUES IN EDUCATION

THE issues in modern education are inevitably oversimplified by brief statement or discussion, but for our present purpose, which is to try to get behind the obvious issues to more fundamental questions, this defect may not be serious.

What, then, are the "obvious" issues? Most often argued, perhaps, is the issue between the essentialists and the progressives. The essentialists could also be termed "classicists," that is, identified with the contention that education must transmit to the young the essential body of learning evolved by Western civilization. This is an intellectual conception of education. It involves a number of leading ideas, such as that the Humanities contain lucid statements of the basic principles of great philosophy, which need to be absorbed and assimilated by students if they are to become humane and civilized people. It follows that essentialists also regard the tools and skills of thought as of primary importance. The disciplines which train the mind to think clearly and accurately are held to be an indispensable part of education.

The progressives believe that they are in much closer touch with the needs of children and with the requirements of the good society. They also regard themselves as embodying insights derived from the discoveries and disciplines of the sciences, which they think the more "rationalistic" approach of the essentialists tends to ignore. The progressives lay emphasis on what might be termed "real life" situations and are in fact more likely to focus directly upon the behavior of children in classrooms. You could say that the progressives try to be alert to the psychological realities of the learning process. If a progressive educator were asked what sort of a human being would be the ideal result of progressive education, he would likely give an account of a scientific humanist, fully engaged in the problems and issues

of the time, hungry for the knowledge which comes from experience, and spurred by the idealism which characterizes the social scientist. He would criticize the essentialist for neglecting the *child's* point of view, and would seriously question the validity of rationalist principles and traditional conceptions of truth and value. The progressive has little patience with abstractions, tending to be empirical in method and pragmatic in philosophy. But he also has a natural warmth and sympathy for children.

If you were to attempt a judgment of these two views, you might say that the essentialist has a better claim to attention at the college and university level of education, while the progressive may discover, to his chagrin, that his vicarious zest for "experience" on the part of the young has led to a curriculum spotted with a hodge-podge of unimportant experiences. The essentialist may concede that the student does indeed "learn by doing," but he will still have to decide what is *worth* doing and needs more than a collection of half absorbed "rules-of-thumb" to make this decision.

Superimposed on the issue between the essentialist and the progressive is the argument about national defense and the frequent comparisons made between Soviet and American education. The Russian stress on training in technology and the high standards of performance expected of Soviet youth are sometimes made to support the claim that American education is too easy-going, that we have fallen into the habit of catering to the young, and that American students have become "soft." This phase of the argument usually takes the problem of education out of its traditional context and puts it into the context of national security, changing the criterion of a "good education" from a vague cultural yardstick to a yardstick calibrated by degrees of service to

the State. While this sort of thinking about education is both frivolous and vulgar, in comparison with the more serious argument between the essentialists and the progressives, the nationalist compulsions felt by popular critics of modern educational ideas have practical effects upon what happens in the schools, one of which is to overshadow by technological emphasis any remaining attention to philosophical matters.

In fact, the demand that we turn out more and better engineers—creating a higher potential of inventors and technologists who will help us to beat the Russians in the armament race—serves to throw one basic question into strong relief. That question is: *Whom or what is education supposed to serve?*

The individual? Society? The State? Defenders of the idea that education must serve the State, especially in times of national crisis, will argue that if the State does not survive, then our society will no longer exist, making the idea of service to it meaningless; the individual, although he may continue to exist, will have no choice about his education.

This argument rests upon the proposition that the individual is totally dependent upon the State. It refuses to contemplate the possibility that there are times when the individual ought to neglect the welfare of the State, in order to go about what he conceives to be his own business. This proposition becomes insistent only during a national crisis, such as the present, but then it tends to dictate public decision.

Quite possibly, the crisis situation itself arises in human affairs because education is at fault, and education is at fault because there has been no clear answer to the question of whom or what education is supposed to serve.

We assume, of course, that we do answer it clearly when we say something like this: Education serves the individual, directly by giving him schooling in the cultural heritage, and indirectly by training him as a citizen, so that in

acting for the common good he will also serve himself.

This formula is reasonable enough, but it does not really tell us what a human being is, nor how the individual is related to the group. You may answer, of course, that precise knowledge of the nature of man and of the best possible relations between the individual and the group are not yet matters of scientific knowledge. But this is the point. If we do not know these things, then we have no business in pretending that we do and in pursuing educational practices which gloss over the fact of our ignorance. Any kind of pretense in education amounts to betraying the young and undermining the future. An education honestly founded on *ignorance* is also an education founded on *freedom*, since it openly invites the individual to take up the quest for knowledge for himself.

At root, educational theories and doctrines all stem from what we think human beings are, what we think are their potentialities, what we think about ultimate human goals, and how to reach them.

If you think that people are essentially the product of the combined influence of their heredity and their environment, you are likely to feel that unless *someone* goes about planning for either better heredity, or better environment, or both, the course of human development will be left to blind accident. This means that we must rely upon the experts, the geneticists and the social psychologists, to work out educational programs for the rest of the people. Carried to extremes, such programs end up in totalitarian revolutions such as the Nazis and the Communists accomplished. The Nazis founded their doctrine of human excellence on heredity. Given this assumption, you may be able to claim that the Nazis were wrong about who had the best heredity, but you can hardly object to their vigorous attempt to found a society along ideal blood lines. Or, if you admit that environment is the absolute determinant of human excellence,

then the aim of the Communists to create the perfect environment by any means available is in principle above criticism. You may charge, of course, that they have been making the *wrong* environment, but if you say this you are obligated to define the right one.

We come back to the idea of ignorance—actually, the Socratic sort of ignorance as the sole foundation for a workable philosophy of education; that is, an education which is designed to leave men free in all those areas of decision where scientific certainty is either impossible or does not yet exist.

It is difficult, however, to talk about education in an atmosphere of suspension and uncertainty. Great education no doubt has many components, but one of them is certainly great conviction on the part of educators. And how can there be great conviction, when the ground of education is conceived to be "ignorance"?

Well, this ignorance can easily have another name. There are a number of words which we use, almost to the point of monotony, to describe the desirable qualities of human beings. We admire "original" people. We stress "creativity" in relation to the educational environment. We come to see that the people who possess these qualities have some kind of intuitive self-reliance. As a matter of fact, we are slowly developing a quite autonomous set of values which have not much relation to either traditional science or traditional versions of the Humanities. "Maturity" is another term in this category. These qualities are obviously connected with the advanced thinking of certain psychologists and psychotherapists, but by developing thought about these qualities and identifying them as philosophical starting-points for a new philosophy, the psychologists have made a kind of declaration of independence of traditional scientific method. They still use the method, but they are beginning to regard man as a *subject* instead of an object. This is a veritable revolution in science.

If man is a subject, he can never be altogether defined in objective terms. For whatever parts of him are made "objective," there is always the subject who is making the definition. And the subject who makes the definition—who makes *all* definitions—also establishes the foundation values of human life. The values must serve man as subject, not as object, if they are to be taken as ultimate values.

This is the man who always has the power to transcend history and to refute the historical determinists and the economic determinists, and every kind of determinist. He is the man who *creates* the ignorance of the people who try to make rules for his creative behavior.

But men conform as well as create. More men, perhaps, conform than those who create. And a system based upon conformity invariably leads to revolution. What about a system with only a *little* conformity? A system which begins with a little conformity, ends, in a crisis, by demanding total conformity. But to be practical, we say, you have to have *some* conformity—some regulation, that is.

Obviously, we are vague about these things. We mix our ideals with practical necessity, our respect for individuality with utilitarian notions like the greatest good for the greatest number, our admiration for talent and distinction with the need for survival as a political identity (rapidly becoming the Garrison State), and hope somehow to muddle through. "Practical necessity" seems to throw the weight of the educational effort away from the individual side of the balance, toward the side of society, and now, more nakedly, toward the State.

The reason for this is plainly a lack of great conviction concerning the individual. We have no theory of the individual, no profound belief concerning what he is seeking, no sure feeling as to what would constitute a triumph in his life. How, then, can we plan for his education with any confidence? We are thrown back on shibboleths and pious slogans. We give illustrations, not

principles, in his behalf. We talk about the community instead of the individual. We continually compromise him in behalf of the group, even the crowd, because the crowd is so demanding and self-seeking in its desires and anxieties and fears. Response to the crowd turns educators into politicians. Our case for the individual becomes a case against his martyrdom, instead of a positive philosophy of man. The argument about education remains at a half-grown-up level, a semi-cultural, semi-political argument, with gross evidence of ineffectuality in present-day schooling being used as the weapon to win debates, instead of the findings of the study of man at the primary level of human quality and achievement. We tend to make educational policy the way we make laws—on a statistical basis. This is ignorance of the worst sort—worst because it is unadmitted. All admitted ignorance is good in human affairs, good in law-making, but best of all in education. The ignorance which is best of all when admitted is worst of all when denied.

The problem is to find the courage to build an educational program for man as subject. For this, we shall need first the conviction that he is a subject, and then the discrimination to recognize what in him is subject and what is object, and how the balance between these elements in human nature is maintained, and how the balance can be successfully pressed toward the subject—the part of man which is free.

## *REVIEW*

### TWO KINDS OF "FUTURITY"

ONE reason, perhaps, why we so often discuss the metaphysical question of "immortality" is the sharp contrast of the modern temper to that of older civilizations on the question of futurity. The Greeks, for instance, held no settled religious beliefs concerning the life of the soul after the death of the body, but, almost to a man, they felt this to be a real and important philosophical issue for the individual. Neither Socrates nor Plato—and in this respect they emulated Gautama Buddha—assured their pupils in specific terms of a life to come. But they talked of a principle of transcendence resident in the "soul."

Our concept of futurity has come to be collective, not individual. Futurity means improvements in medical science with resultant longevity—and finally the visionary, practically "science-fiction" prospect of chemically-induced eternal life for the physical organism. The future is almost exclusively considered in terms of material advances; we don't think about where the "soul" may go, but we do spend some time speculating on where men will go after they have gone to the moon. Philosophically, all this is an indication of cultural and philosophic materialism, as opposed to idealism. There is good and sufficient reason for truly great scientists, such as Oppenheimer and Schrödinger, to turn to the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Bhagavad-Gita* to overcome some of the psychological and philosophical biases which accompany the age of science. And already, in our opinion, the West has the beginnings of an intuitive language which enables any save the most doctrinaire to respond in some measure to Schopenhauer's assertion that "in the furthest depth of our being we are secretly conscious of our share in the inexhaustible spring of eternity, so that we can always hope to find life in it again."

One means of closing the gap between an antique world-view and our own—a way of re-

establishing connection with the past—is through the Great Books discussion programs, sponsored by the Great Books Foundation. Since the early days when this endeavor was the child of the University of Chicago, championed by Robert Hutchins and Mortimer Adler, all sorts of people in all sorts of towns and cities discovered that the classics could open up avenues to fascinating discussion. In Great Books seminars, everyone becomes a philosopher to the extent of his own capacity, and on this basis the Great Books program has been several times reviewed and praised in these columns. From a recent brochure issued by the Great Books Foundation, we quote the following explanation of the series:

A Great Books Discussion Group is people come together to talk about a book they have all read. A great book does not have to be discussed, of course. It can be read and then put back on the shelf. It can be lectured about, perhaps to save busy people the time it would take to read it for themselves, perhaps to save them the trouble, even if they have read it, of thinking about it out loud, of comparing notes on interpretations and evaluations with their peers. Yet a great book that goes unexamined in the free give-and-take of adult discussion is a book whose greatness is more a matter of reputation than of discovery.

Discussion of a book varies in value with three principal factors: (1) the book itself; (2) the leaders; (3) the participants. The program here described is based on the belief that the *best* books are the books most worth discussing, the books most likely to yield fruitful and entertaining discussion. There are many, many books that deserve to be called great—not one hundred, or some other magical number—and they were written in all times (including our own) and in all places (including our own). Yes, to some extent scholars differ as to exactly which books and which authors deserve the highest commendation, and yet there is an astonishing agreement on the stature of Homer and Sophocles and Plato, of Montaigne, Milton, and Shakespeare, of Goethe, Darwin, Tolstoy, and Freud—and of many others. No reader is obliged to find any one work, say Machiavelli's *The Prince*, especially to his taste, but such a book comes with the highest recommendation: one leaves it unread at his own peril. In the free, critical discussion of the germinal ideas, of the best minds the world has engendered, our own minds are enlivened.

What particularly caught our eye in this description, however, is the set of recommendations for those who intend to become participants. This is the sort of advice that "makes democracy work" at any level:

Read the book, completely, carefully: Yes, there is time for reading. If there isn't, it is because you have chosen for there not to be. Only a responsible reading of the book equips you to take part in the discussion.

Read with pencil in hand: And then bring the book to the meeting. Your question marks and marginal jottings will remind you of passages you want to enter into the discussion.

Listen—probe—challenge: Discussion is not a sequence of monologues. What is your fellow participant saying? If he is not clear, ask him questions. If he seems not sound, tell him so—and give your reasons.

Speak up, relevantly, briefly: Don't wait to be called on. Go ahead and make your point—and make it to the point. Droners-on lose their audiences.

Speak your mind freely: You are not required to agree with author or fellow participant. Think for yourself, but back up your opinion. If it is an interpretation of the book, try to be ready to cite chapter and verse.

Don't bog down on external facts: The discussion is about the issues raised by the book. Don't derail the discussion by asserting or arguing what can be settled another time by a dictionary or encyclopaedia or history book. (E.g., qualification of Athenian jurors, whether Jefferson owned slaves.)

Leave outside authorities outside: There is always enough and more than enough in the book itself to occupy the time. For a Great Books discussion, do your own reading and your own thinking. Leave the secondary sources for other occasions.

Bethink you, sir (or madam), you may be wrong: A rational participant admits his own fallibility, his own willingness to change. Be open to the wisdom in the book and in the group. Then make your decision—subject always to new evidence.

The Great Books Foundation is a nonprofit corporation.

It proceeds without formality, and there are no fees for attending discussions. A set of sixteen readings—selections from the classics—costs but \$10 for the first year. There are group leaders in discussion, but in a very important sense each member who participates is his own teacher, and the "leaders" are simply volunteers who have acquired considerable background and enthusiasm for this work. Information on the whereabouts of presently-existing groups may be obtained from the Great Books Foundation, 37 South Wabash Avenue, Chicago 3, Illinois, or 246 Fifth Avenue, New York 1, New York; or, in many cases, from the local Board of Education. The selections of sixteen readings for the first year are as follows:

1. *Declaration of Independence*
2. Plato: *Apology; Crito*
3. Sophocles: *Antigone*
4. Aristotle: *Politics*, Book I
5. Plutarch: *Lycurgus & Numa*
6. *The Gospel according to St. Matthew*
7. Epictetus: *Discourses*, Selections
8. Machiavelli: *The Prince*
9. Shakespeare: *Macbeth*
10. Milton: *Areopagitica*
11. Adam Smith: *The Wealth of Nations*, Selections
12. *The Federalist*, Selections; *Constitution of the United States*
13. Tocqueville: *Democracy in America*, Selections
14. Marx & Engels: *Communist Manifesto*
15. Thoreau: *Civil Disobedience; Walden*, Selections
16. Tolstoy: *The Death of Ivan Ilych*

## COMMENTARY

### THE SYNANON "FAMILY"

WE asked a Synanon worker who does public relations chores for Synanon House (see *Frontiers*) for information about what sympathetic readers may be able to do to help the project along in a material way. The best idea, he replied, would be "to think of Synanon as a large family, numbering forty boys and fifteen girls [one more than our story says!], who in the course of daily living are confronted with the problem of obtaining everything from the most elementary necessities such as food, clothing, bedding and toilet articles, to items which would serve to make our home seem liveable and lived-in."

But Synanon's number one need, he added, with a slight show of restraint, is for "a commodity first invented by the Phoenicians three thousand years ago—money." Contributions of money to Synanon are tax-deductible, as Walker Winslow points out. The giver can be pretty sure that his money will be spent to provide the essentials to keep the house going. The "way of life" of these fifty and more people is simplicity itself; their preoccupations are not with self-indulgence, but with its opposite. Perhaps the best assurance a prospective donor could obtain would be from visiting the Synanon Open House, held every Saturday evening, to which the public is invited. The occasion includes a seminar of the sort held every day, in which visitors are welcome to participate. The House has an easy, relaxed atmosphere—outcome, no doubt, of the feelings of young people who find themselves discovering their own inner reserves, and in the process learning lessons of mutual respect and self-respect which pass by many more fortunate members of society.

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#### SUBVERSIVE CHARACTER

An editorial note in *Frontier* for August describes an adventure of one of its correspondents in covering the stockholders'

meeting of a large West Coast corporation. While he was waiting for the meeting to begin, the secretary of the corporation's president reached up to pin a SMILE button on his lapel. She also had a gold mechanical pencil for him, as for everyone at the meeting. Evading the button, the reporter said "No thanks." It was as though somebody had refused to "think" over at IBM. *Frontier* continues the story:

The president's secretary was astounded. "Don't you want to smile?" she asked.

"I don't need a button to tell me to smile," our correspondent replied. "If I feel like smiling, I'll smile."

"It's company policy," the offended secretary argued firmly, putting the gold pencil back in a box.

"Unfortunately," our correspondent said, "I'm not a company man."

Stung by the exchange the president's secretary drew herself up erect. "Are you trying to be difficult?" she demanded.

By this time the vice president who had been pleasantly exchanging small talk with our correspondent walked off, but his place was taken by two or three other vice presidents and three or four junior executives, all of whom either stared stonily at the culprit in scornful condemnation, or asked the president's secretary what had caused her to raise her voice.

"He won't take a button," she explained, somewhat upset and angry.

"You won't?" asked a vice president.

"Since you put it that way," said our correspondent, "I won't. Am I a human being or a robot?"

The executive turned away, isolating the correspondent. "Don't let it bother you," a vice president comforted the secretary. "There is always one like that."

The last words our correspondent heard before the group drifted out of his hearing was an exchange between two union executives.

"Probably a beatnik," said the first.

"Doesn't dress like one," said the second.

"Those are the worst kind," said the first.

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Not unrelated to the case of the man who wouldn't smile unless he felt like it is a passage in William Bradford Huie's novel, *The Americanization of Emily*. At risk of his life and with casualties to his team, Jim Madison, who tells the story, has made a documentary film of the invasion of the French coast on D-day of World War II. He is going over the film with his superior in the Navy, and being reproached for showing bodies of the American slain. The Captain says:

"You're not making this film to depress people. Show us what happened to the Germans. They're the 'heavies.' They got gunned down. We won."

I eliminated the close-ups of American dead. I used long shots of our dead, close-ups of German dead.

I had shot dramatic footage, with shadows and effective lighting, of the bulldozer covering our dead with sand [a temporary "morale" measure]. I thought the scene conveyed the pathos of machine murder. But the Captain fought me on it.

"You've got a fixation about death," he said. "You must have wanted to die yourself. Do you know that a fifth of your footage deals with death? You're tipped over. Now hear this. You can never show a bulldozer covering American dead in any motion picture that's made with Taxpayers' money and that bears the seal of the United States Navy. You can go to the Secretary, and with all your goddam influence with admirals, I'll pin your ears back. Nobody will support you."

He was right about support: I'd never get it. So I cut the scene.

I won one battle.

"You've left out a 'gut' sequence," the Captain said. "Where's the chaplain praying over those demolition men before they get into the boat?"

"There wasn't any chaplain," I said. "And the men didn't want one. They preferred obscenity to prayer."

"You'll have to fake it."

"I won't fake it. I've gone along with you on eliminations. I draw the line at fabrication. You and your Hollywood sycophants have been jamming that chaplain sequence into every *war* picture. The sequence is a lie. The old atheists-in-foxholes lie. Fox holes multiply atheists. War doesn't draw men

closer to God. War causes men to curse God. So there won't be any chaplain sequence in this film. . ."

I won the battle over the chaplain sequence, but I lost so many others to the Captain that, in the end, I took my name off the film. The technicians said it was the best of the invasion pictures. The Admiral would like it. But I didn't. I completed it and it was ready for me to take to Washington.

Obviously, addiction is a word of many meanings. There is the kind that drags you down, but there are other kinds which will put you up, if you want to go that way.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves EDUCATION ABOUT WAR

THE enthusiasm of MANAS editors for both the personnel and the program carried on by the "Acts for Peace" group in Berkeley, Calif., has already been made evident. One activity of probable interest to our readers is the collection and dissemination of material which will assist teachers and parents on the subject of war. For example, a current "Acts for Peace" release reproduces a New York *Times* Magazine article by Dorothy Barclay, "A Child Asks: 'What's War?'" The first few paragraphs of the article show how misleading "education" about war can be. Speaking of the past, Miss Barclay recalls:

All through our early school years, at 11 A.M. each Nov. 11 a bell would ring in our classrooms and we would stand for a minute of silence in honor of the men who died "to make the world safe for democracy."

It was, of course, Armistice Day, known as Veterans Day now. There were recitations and speeches. The teachers read us poems like "In Flanders Field." Sometimes crayons were passed out and we drew pictures filled with poppies and graves and crosses or battle scenes with men shooting other men and all flags flying. We would accept these things quite easily. They were scary and sad but exciting, too.

The war had ended the year most of us in that class had been born and everybody knew that there would never be another. It had all happened "across the sea." We could play "soldier" if we wanted to, and "Red Cross nurse," and march around the house on rainy days to records of Sousa's band, imagining ourselves as heroes headed for the fray.

When, at 12 or 13, we were introduced to some realistic poetry about the war, most of us—the girls, at least—were shocked and angry. War didn't sound at all like a game in those poems.

Few children growing up today can preserve such innocence or ignorance of war for long. Even in homes where television is carefully controlled, war scenes may intrude in the act of switching the dial. Talk of war on news reports is incessant. Far more

fathers of this generation were directly involved in war activity than were the fathers of the Nineteen Twenties. Signs, portents, reminders of war are everywhere.

When parents least expect it, questions about war arise. "What's war?" a 4-year-old asks simply—and expects a simple answer.

"It's worse than 'Where do babies come from?'" a young mother commented recently. "We know—or we've been told—how to answer that. How can you answer questions about war? What should they know? How much can they understand?"

The present writer, having also been born at the close of World War I, certainly agrees with this interpretation, and reflection upon the transitions described can be extremely valuable when it comes to answering the difficult questions asked by one's own young children. As a matter of fact, it seems to us that the children need to know how war looked to their mothers and fathers when they were young, what has happened since, and how the earliest childhood impressions of their parents have undergone sobering transitions. Many of today's youngsters, whose fathers participated in World War II or in the Korean hostilities, are naturally avid for recitals of the dangers and excitement encountered.

But this, as Dorothy Barclay points out, is a very ticklish matter:

No man saw more than a tiny sliver of the whole picture. Few minds can encompass, let alone present to a child, a full picture of the extremes of courage and cowardice, exhausting labor and do-nothing boredom, vicious bestiality and consummate tenderness that make up life in wartime.

In telling of war experience a thoughtful father will be alert to the larger impression he creates. There is danger in talking of war so matter of factly that it seems as acceptable and inevitable as taxes; in presenting it so discreetly that it resembles a dreary, or diverting, stint in prep school, so interestingly that it appears a variation on the world cruise; so "positively" that it seems to offer the one opportunity for a man to show courage, daring and resourcefulness to the full.

One father interviewed by Miss Barclay told of his effort to develop a balanced point of view for his own boys:

We make clear that we don't like war games or war programs but we don't hammer them so hard that their attraction is increased. We say that wars happened in the past because people hadn't figured out better ways of settling their differences, that if everybody cares enough and is careful enough wars can be prevented in the future. Our boys know that war is real and that people are killed in it—and stay dead. But they know, too, that right in their own lifetime wars have been stopped or averted because there are people who are working to keep them from happening.

Looking through an old photo album, *circa* 1922, the present writer cringed at numerous photos of himself in a soldier suit, banging away with an air rifle from the various orthodox shooting positions—also marching complete with leather puttees. In the home, heroism in war was upheld by an uncle, and the various dramatic victories of the United States forces since the Revolution fired the childish imagination. Not only were we moved by "Flanders Field," but selected to recite same in grammar school, at a sort of assembly finale which symbolized a conservative community's patriotism every year for ten years or more.

Then came ROTC at a large university, and the childish games were repeated. But one day the young patriot lost his patriotism, or at least that part of it which had to do with soldiering, in a mock battle, for after deploying his "men" for skirmish, and after lining up his own unloaded rifle on a member of the opposing "team," the whole business fell apart. That was a human being looming in the sights, and the combination of revulsion and anger at being maneuvered into such a situation for some war of the future produced a stubborn anti-militarist.

Now, everyone should not be expected to make the same decision nor for the same reasons—to refuse to bear arms under orders. But whether one be a pacifist or believes that

armed might is a necessity for the protection of freedom, he needs as much perspective as he can get on the history and possible future of war, and he needs to know that opposition to military preparedness or service does not necessarily mean lack of loyalty to the country in which he lives or to the values for which it professes to stand.

Acts for Peace is an organization which helps a great number of thoughtful young men and women to become aware of the educative value of war resistance. More than a few MANAS readers, we suspect, might like to know more about present programs being assisted by Acts for Peace. For those who wish to write for information, the address is 1730 Grove St., Berkeley 9, Calif.

## *FRONTIERS*

### **Ex-Addicts, Incorporated**

A STRANGER wandering into the old but comfortable armory building at 1351 Ocean Front in Santa Monica, California, would, upon seeing the young people who live there, be almost certain to think that he had come upon some sort of a students' union, an experiment in communal living, or an above-average social club. He would be impressed with the health of the men and women, whose average age would be around thirty, as well as by the aura of intelligent and relaxed dedication that seems to set the mood for the place. The worn cliché, "like one big family," would find accurate application here and the stranger would soon observe that these people are dependent upon each other and proud of each other in a way that exceeds even family relationships.

When the stranger was told that the residence club he had wandered into is Synanon Foundation, Inc., "a nonprofit organization for the rehabilitation of narcotics addicts," he would undoubtedly be shocked, dismayed, and a little hurt to find that the prejudices he couldn't avoid absorbing from our society had been assaulted by a reality he wasn't prepared for. No one in the room would fit the popular image of the depraved, emaciated and slinking "drug fiend" that has been drummed into us by every medium of communication. Nor could he feel that here was a building full of doomed people, as we have been led to believe all addicts are. It could only seem that something like a miracle had taken place.

As one talks to the ex-drug addicts, learns the history of Synanon, and studies the principles that make it work, it becomes obvious that the "miracle" is latent in all people who have shared a blight that has led them to the edge of doom. The answer, for those whose vice, disease, or beliefs have caused them to be rejected and marked as pariahs by our society, is to form a society of their own. As pariahs they are, of course, already grouped. Unwanted elsewhere, they have to be

wanted by themselves—to seek out associations where acceptance is possible and rejection can only come from betraying those standards even the smallest and most unpopular group must set for itself.

In pariah groups, criminal and otherwise, loyalties have to be tighter, interdependence firmer. This is especially true of the drug addicts. Excluded from the larger society, made into felons, and rightfully suspicious of even society's best intentions toward them, they have developed their own language and *mores* and they know from brutal experience that understanding and compassion can be expected only from their own kind. To understand the completeness of their outcast state one has to realize that even to help each other when they are in the throes of addiction they have to commit a felony—obtain and dispense an illegal drug. Thus the price of compassion can be years in prison. This is loyalty and fellowship at an extreme that few of us care to contemplate. Even if it contributes to further addiction, it is awe-inspiring. But when by a moral alchemy this force is turned *against* drug addiction, it is little wonder that something like a miracle takes place. In reversing the destructive aim that bound the addicts together, Synanon has released a mighty force the force of redemption from within.

The first thing that comes to mind, of course, is that Synanon is like Alcoholics Anonymous. In a loose sort of way this is true, but alcohol is a chemical that can be legally obtained, and while society as a whole may deplore excessive drinking, it approves of moderate drinking and even finds some solace in the fact that most people can take it or leave it alone. True, the alcoholic may drink himself into jail, the asylum, or down to skidrow, but his place in the larger society is waiting for him when he returns to sobriety. He is likely to get an encouraging pat on the back for mending his ways. Because there is less estrangement between the society of the alcoholic and the society of the sober,

organizations of alcoholics are apt to borrow some of the worst features of the society from which they have been temporarily alienated. Religion plays a large role in their redemption and an amorphous theology is developed. The more God is relied upon, the less interpersonal exchange there is among the co-sufferers. In short, scripture becomes more important than acts. The act of attaining sobriety becomes ritualized.

In none of the available literature on Synanon is there the stress on the reliance on a "Higher Power" that is found in Alcoholics Anonymous. Rather, the stress is on the individual and his desire to help and be helped—to give love and be loved. The aim is recovery from addiction, not a spiritual experience as such. If the latter should come to the individual, well and good—that is a personal matter and to be shared only in the way one shares unusual experiences with friends. Synanon, so far as we could see, doesn't circumscribe its methods. At daily seminars, psychology, philosophy, religion and science get an equal billing and each is valued for the contribution it may make toward solving the problems of the addict. Charles E. Dederich and Adaline Ainley, the founders, seem to be people who can take the sick and rejected and bring them together in such a way as to create what Dr. Karl Menninger calls, "the atmosphere of people getting well," and this with the most hopeless people on earth.

Here, roughly, is how Synanon works. A desperate addict who feels he has really had it and wants to kick the habit gets in touch with Synanon. He is told he can come for an interview only if he is totally out from under the influence of drugs, no matter how sick that may make him, and an hour and date is set. Thus the addict has had to make a positive effort before even an interview takes place. At the interview, his sincerity about quitting drugs is evaluated. Then, if he is accepted for the Synanon house, he is promised

room, board, and fellowship for as long as he abstains from drugs and needs help.

Synanon is no hospital and uses no medical aids to withdrawal from drugs. What it does offer is "tender loving care" during the period of withdrawal. Every minute, night and day, a Synanon member, an ex-addict, will be beside the suffering addict, feeding him, massaging his aching body, wiping sweat from his face and giving encouragement. The man who once would have gone out and got drugs for a fellow sufferer now does everything in his power to discourage him from wanting to return to drugs. During this period of suffering the addict forms close ties of a new order with a friend who has been through the same ordeal. Often, as a result, his first impulse upon recovery from withdrawal pains is to help another who was suffering as he did. The desire to give in the best of ways has been released.

The addict, even after withdrawal, continues in what is called the first stage. The tender loving care and friendly concern go on while he is developing closer relationships with the Synanon member to whom he feels especially drawn. As soon as he is well he will be contributing his bit to the work in the house, washing dishes, cleaning, cooking, or what have you. When he goes out for a walk he will be accompanied by members who have been off drugs for a longer time than he has. Usually two will be with him, on the theory that there is safety in numbers. It is taken for granted that weeks and even months must pass before the addict is safe from moments when on an impulse he may seek drugs. However, if he feels, after giving Synanon a test, that he must return to drugs, he is provided with carfare and sadly released from his pact with the Synanon house. In that event, he is given to understand that he can't come back scratching on the door when he feels contrite, but that months must pass before he will even be considered again. Should he somehow sneak drugs into the house or return under their influence, he will be expelled.

A former addict can be said to have reached the second stage when he has helped others, made them feel the strength of his example and counsel, and established a degree of self-reliance and confidence for himself. At this point he may go out alone and seek a job or enroll in college, as many have done. Even though he works outside he will continue to live in the Synanon house and give to the organization what he can from his earnings. As Synanon's representative in the community, he has a great responsibility, that of breaking down the prejudice that exists toward even a former addict. This chore isn't made easier by the fact that almost every addict is an ex-convict who has been found guilty of some crime caused by his addiction. His efforts do have support, however, for his fellows at Synanon will be massively proud of his slightest accomplishment.

In the third Synanon stage the former addict has recovered and developed himself to the point where he is ready to move out into the community completely, returning to the house only for meetings and to work with newcomers and visit friends. The return to the community is perhaps the most difficult stage of all. Young as many of the Synanon members are, most of them have from five to ten years of addiction behind them, their habit having been established before they had time to experience the normal adjustment to society made by most young adults. At twenty-five or thirty, or perhaps older, with nothing but criminal and anti-social experience as adults, they are now trying to enter into the everyday life of a society that has excluded them. To succeed at all they have to demonstrate both superiority and humbleness. These qualities Synanon tries to help them acquire. Already, two years after the inception of Synanon, a few have made the adjustment. They are the people who hold the fate of the group in their hands, and so far they have held it well.

As a non-profit organization, Synanon can solicit funds for which donors can claim a tax

deduction, but as yet it has taken in only enough money to barely pay for the lights and rent. Members go out and get what food they can—wilted vegetables, day-old milk and bread, meat that has been in storage a little too long, and whatever merchants will contribute. There was actually a time when they had pheasant for dinner but no cigarettes, lacking the money to buy them. It is significant that the people who help them, although suspicious at first, become their friends and induce others to help them. Although a city official of Santa Monica has had a part in legal proceedings that could close the Synanon house, he has helped Synanon in practical ways through his business, in exchange for work done for him.

From the beginning, which was at another location further down the beach, Synanon has met with some resistance. People didn't want drug addicts for neighbors and may also have resented the fact that Synanon recognizes no racial barriers. This led, somewhat deviously, to a formal complaint that at the present address Synanon is illegally operating a hospital. The issue has been in the courts for nearly a year and although one adverse decision was rendered by the court, a stay of execution was granted and it seems likely that the case will be carried to the U.S. Supreme Court. Four attorneys have come to the assistance of the group and, up to now, the resistance Synanon has met with has only made it stronger. One event worth noting is that the man who signed the original complaint, a motion picture personage, has come to Synanon and admitted that he made a mistake. In the year he has had this group of ax-addicts for neighbors, he has come to respect and admire what they are accomplishing, and in a recent nation-wide television broadcast told the world about his new feeling. The former enemy is now Synanon's outspoken champion.

Up until August 18, former addicts who were on parole were allowed to live in the Synanon house. There were seven of these in the house on that date, when they were ordered to move out by

their parole officers, who had gotten orders from above. A strong protest is being made against this action. Out on their own, and without the close support of fellow Synanon members, there is a much greater chance that these people will return to drugs. With all the power it can muster, Synanon will oppose this ruling, and will probably gain strength from the effort, as it has from dealing with similar adverse happenings.

The little group of fifty-four people, fourteen women and forty men, who are living in the old armory in Santa Monica, have every right to feel that they may have come up with the most workable solution to the problem of drug addiction that has so far appeared. Because of this they are dedicated to making their plan work, not only for their own salvation but for the salvation of every addict who may in whatever future wish to avail himself of their plan. Drug addiction undoubtedly occurs most often among people who are revolting against things as they are. They would be the last to deny that drug-taking is an ill-advised form of revolt, but even this admission isn't going to make them into conformists. Perhaps their very impulse toward rebellion will be in their favor as they continue to develop Synanon. They won't look for easy answers, nor will they be shocked when they meet with further resistance. It will be interesting to report on Synanon a year from now. It seems doubtful that even the law can keep them from curing themselves, and that at the moment is just what the law is trying to do.

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