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NOT ENTIRELY BY CHANCE

SOMEWHERE in every man is a private place where he has to make decisions unhelped by anyone or anything. These choices are often nominal. People are nudged, so to say, into one or another position by circumstances, by unspoken longings, by fears, by undeliberated habit or sheer drift. But somehow or other, they move along. You are always somewhere, doing *something*, and you generally make, or try to make, some kind of explanation of the relationships you have established. The culture usually helps by supplying crude rules as to why things are as they are. For long ages the familiar referents were God's will and the sinfulness of man. Then came other explanations, such as the theory of evolution, with its struggle for existence, the triumph of the "fit," and other, more technical descriptions of natural process. Today there is quite a variety of explanations to choose from. One is the part played by heredity—not an openly popular doctrine, but many people quietly cling to it for a number of reasons. The obvious influence of environment is probably invoked more than any other single cause for the particulars of the human situation. Then there are the mysterious dynamics of the psyche, around which a full vocabulary of technical terms has developed, growing out of studies of mental illness, of individual and group behavior patterns. A person may come to think of himself as a certain "type"—extrovert, mesomorph, or whatever, and there is usually some evidence to justify the use of such classifications, even if they are misapplied and substituted for a more fruitful self-questioning.

One way of distinguishing between periods of history would be in terms of differing conceptions of identity and meaning. For example, there is the religious doctrine that human beings are engaged in a difficult ascent, the various levels of achievement being marked in distinctive ways. The more clearly these levels are given external characterization, the less the strain on the individual to make his own decisions concerning what to do next, and what to strive for. There probably was some basic truth in the old idea that earthly arrangements mirror a heavenly order. If a man belonged to a certain caste or class, he at least had a finite limit set to his problems and his ordeals. The theatre of his struggles was made familiar to him and he knew about what to expect in terms of obligations, crisis, and rewards and punishments. If he was puzzled, there were people he could go to for counsel and help.

Another way to set off one epoch from another would be according to whether the ideas of reality, meaning, and the good are stated specifically and in detail, or left vague and undetermined. There is certainly an enormous range of these ideas to choose from, starting, say, with the extensive blue prints of the medieval Christian synthesis, as dramatized by Dante, and reaching an apex of indecision in the teachings of liberal Christianity. At the turn of the century, for example, a distinguished theologian, Dr. James Orr, observed, on the question of immortality (in *The Christian View of God and the World*):

> The conclusion I arrive at is that we have not the elements of a complete solution, and we ought not to attempt it. What visions beyond there may be, what larger hopes, what ultimate harmonies, if such there are in store, will come in God's good time; it is not for us to anticipate them, or lift the veil where God has left it down.

It may be argued, of course, and probably should, that a lot of eschatological detail does not make the best kind of religion, so that the transition from Dante to Orr may be seen as religious progress rather than the other way about. But that is not our point. We are noticing the fact that, in the present period, much of the decision-making once taken care of by institutions and cultural tradition is now the responsibility of the individual. You could say, perhaps, that modern man has grown so sophisticated that he does not respond to detailed teachings about the topography of Heaven or the subterranean dimensions of Hell, leaving aside the question of whether such teachings ever had a

justifiable authority. Of more interest, in the present, is the question of what happens when people are obliged to take on more and more responsibility for decision-making, but remain unschooled in the subtle question of who or what it is in human beings that *makes* the decisions—if anything does, the skeptic adds—and how the issues of choice should be defined.

Two important aspects of this problem remain unexamined. One is the more or less inexplicable fact that human groups vary greatly in their interest in and capacity for individual decision. The cultural anthropologists keep turning up examples of peoples who are so adjusted to the rule of rigid *mores* that serious questions seem to have no meaning to them. These matters are settled, and they refer you to the tribal code. Then there are those whose tolerance of "settled questions" is so low that their societies are unceasingly turbulent with unresolved issues and competing theories. This is not to say that, exposed to provocative influences, such patterns of culture would not change, but to make an observation concerning existing societies. In any event, these factors, whatever their weighting, bear upon all the other values which surround the individual in his decision-making situations.

But after you get these influences out in the open and take notice of their effect, it still remains a fact that there is no cultural consensus concerning human identity in our time. The age supplies us with dozens of coeffficients, but no value to substitute for the X of who and what we are. On this question, it is every man for himself.

James Thurber's story, "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," comes very close to what happens to a lot of people when the question of identity is left to the lottery of free association. Another fragmentary insight, so accurate as to be embarrassing, was provided by the film, *Come Back, Little Sheba.* The pitiful "acting-out" of her dreams by a sentimental woman in declining middle age made a poignant illustration of how the blank of the inner life often gets filled in. The extraordinary popularity of Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead* is another indication of human longing to fill the abyss of self, and Norman Mailer's brilliant essay on the white Negro shows the effects of this emptiness in another segment of the population. We are now, you might say, at the *pathos* stage of awareness of the "lost" quality of human life, with recognition of *ethos* beginning to be felt on rare occasions—as, for example, in Gerald Sykes' *The Hidden Remnant.*

Well, what conclusions, if any, may be drawn from this situation? What judgments should we make—can we make—about an age in which the self-image of man is largely obtained by accident and improvisation?

Should we try to formulate some desperate announcement to the effect that the time has come to get ourselves ready for a new "world religion"? Are these symptoms of egoic uncertainty a sign of failure, of infidelity to whatever gods may be, or might they have another meaning? Is a moralist's verdict to be sought, or will some kind of empirical or "naturalistic" generalization serve?

The interesting thing about fishing for answers to these questions is that you can't make any sort of answer without smuggling in some conclusion about the nature of man. And there is a sense in which *any* definitive answer to questions about the nature of man will have an atavistic quality. It will put us back in some historical slot of the past, out of which we climbed with considerable effort and pain. Are there, then, any non-definitive answers that we dare to make?

But first there is the question of why we should bother, or try. In answer, we could say that the results of leaving the question of human identity to chance or improvisation are not very good. This way you turn people over to the pseudo-authorities of church and state, or to some other school of image-makers—the sectarians of the cults, the advertising agencies, or anyone who hopes to profit by appealing to certain innate longings in human beings. The attempt, therefore, is worth making. But how do you begin?

Well, you could start with the stipulation that since no definitive answers are wanted, the best beginning would be to make the assumption that there is an incommensurable reality at the core of all human beings, and that this reality can be "defined"

only in terms of itself—which of course is no definition at all, but simply an acknowledgement that the self defies definition. Call it "bare subjectivity." What can you say, then, on this general subject? You can say that the self—whatever "it" is—operates in a field, and that the elements of this field, unlike the self, seem capable of definition without mishap. The mishaps, when they occur, result from bad or inaccurate definitions, not from the primal error of trying to define the indefinable.

This is about as far as we can comfortably go with only abstractions to guide us. What might be said, specifically and concretely, about the field? Since this is an inquiry concerned with the self and its good, we could say that the field of human experience is filled with a vast gamut of ideas about good and evil. These come from two sources. They come from tradition—past theologies, philosophies, folk material—from any and all points of psychological influence external to ourselves; and they come from our own immediate intuitions and feelings about what is good, what is right, and what is bad and wrong. Usually, we have a hard time in distinguishing just why we think as we do concerning these matters. Many men do not even try, a fact which led to the Socratic reproach, "The unexamined life is not worth living."

Have we, here, the shadow of a judgment about the self? Socrates, it seems, was saying that the self of man prospers when it makes its own decisions, and it prospers best when those decisions are informed by stubborn search for truth and meaning. This is a way of declaring that the self is a philosophizing aspect of reality. The self is noëtic in action.

We can say this much without running into logical or practical difficulties, but only this much. For now we are confronted by the spread of apparently unerasable differences in the ideas of human beings concerning what is good and what is not.

It would be fine, we say, if all men could agree on what is good and fulfilling for the self. For if they could agree, they would probably stop hurting one another, and this would be a basic advance, since hurting one another is a manifest evil. But when you set out to produce a uniformity of beliefs concerning the good, you get into immeasurable trouble. Your will to do good finds itself in competition with other wills which claim a similar high intent. What, then, do you do? Evil to your competitors? We have tried that for thousands of years. It doesn't work, and the reason, perhaps, is that in order to put down your competitors you have to make a limiting definition of them, and this is *against the rules.* They, too, are selves. You have to say that they are bad, and that a good universe, a good field, will be better off without them. In order to persuade yourself and others of this claim, you work up a lot of arguments and assemble a lot of presumed facts to prove your case. But after some centuries of this kind of effort, a portion of the people involved develop the sophistication which enables them to label such arguments "propaganda." One form taken by this sophistication ends in the view that there isn't any real "truth," but only claims, and if you make the claims you are either naive or corrupt. This conclusion is all right for specialists who won't assume any responsibility for the quality of life in the human community, but you can't order a society with such ideas.

Then, added to all the other problems, there is the strange element of what we call "decadence" to cope with. If you are observant, and get around, you encounter what Erasmus' father found when he visited Rome in the fifteenth century and discovered that the Princes of the Faith were nearly all sophisticated unbelievers who could make plausible, self-justifying arguments for the way they behaved. Dostoevski put all these arguments in the chapter on the Grand Inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov* (which is why we have to refer to it so often).

Let us jump to a conclusion. A human consensus on the good may be desirable, but it will not work unless it is in some sense spontaneous—reached, that is, through voluntary means by individuals. Historically, you could say, Western man adopted this general view of the good in 1776. The men of the eighteenth century outlawed imposed theories of the good life and declared it possible for people to agree on methodological but not

substantive theories of the good. There is implicit philosophical utterance in the Bill of Rights attached to the Constitution of the United States. It says that truth about the good may exist, but that its political recognition (or definition) will inevitably destroy it.

So, in the environmental field created by this general view, we have our present situation—a culture in which ideas about the self and its good are an almost clandestine affair, expressed *sotto voce*, left to accident and improvisation. We have some conventions about this. From bitter experience of the sort noticed above, we have come to honor public skepticism as a kind of Sacred Ignorance, sometimes referred to as the wall of separation between Church and State. There is impressive precedent for honoring this ignorance in the finding of the Oracle of Delphi that Socrates was the wisest man in Athens, simply because he admitted he knew practically nothing.

Can we stipulate that the sanctity of Socratic Ignorance is a kind of plateau in human development, but that this plateau, however excellent as a launching pad, is no place for a complacent settlement? This seems one fair conclusion, based upon historical experience, about the field in which the selves of human beings operate.

Is it possible, now, to say anything about the mode of progress human beings make in their understanding of the field of experience and the consequent good of the self?

Well, there may be a useful way of saying that there is not much that can be said. You could propose, for example, the theory of Magical Random Progress in the human perception of truth. It is a theory which starts out by acknowledging the unknown X value of the self, and is careful never to violate this premise. The Magical Random theory has the virtue of fitting many of the facts of human experience. For example, it fits the educational process. The proposition that a teacher is a man who can never guarantee the quality of his product is a way of demonstrating this fit. Statistically, a fine teacher almost always shows a good record, over a period of years. You can usually find definite strains of beneficent influence in human society flowing from a single source in one man who knew how to teach. But you can never make tight, cause-and-effect equations in relation to a particular teacher and a particular pupil. For what you say about great teaching to remain true, you have to qualify by introducing the magical random theory of progress. And this, of course, goes back to the X factor in the self.

Curiously enough, there are some loose parallels of this theory in the natural sciences. The principle of Indeterminacy in subatomic phenomena is one; the biological concept of mutations is another. Whether or not there is some deep, underlying importance in these parallels is a matter for speculation, but it is a comforting thought that in the relative "realities" of the external world, there may be analogues of human reality or identity—a kind of inexplicable, *sui generis*, starting-point of meaning for both physical science and self-seeking psychology. You might even make a theory to the effect that there is a "band" of finite, measurable existence where mechanical cause and effect are supreme, but below that band some other principle of explanation—a principle not yet known—holds sway; and that beyond it, in the region of self-conscious existence, there is again another principle—call it spontaneity, freedom, indeterminacy—which originates action, the effects of which are continually invading the world of mechanical causation and giving the natural scientists a bad time in their attempts to define human nature and explain human behavior.

If you think this way, other analogies suggest themselves. For example, there is the innocence of the young and inexperienced, as contrasted with the innocence of the wise, and lying between the two the region of guilt, moral struggle, and endless "definitions." The young, it might be argued, have not yet begun to think about the problem of identity; they are total extroverts who simply engage themselves with the wonder of the world, and would continue to do so forever, if they did not encounter pain and the mysteries into which they are led by frustration and defeat. Then come the doctrines of elaborate explanation, the theories of finite reality and of measurable progress, and all that religion and science, as temporal institutions, are able to teach.

And finally, after much sorrow and disappointment, men reach the plateau of Sacred Ignorance. What happens then? Something quite natural: the men who get there first try to put this region on the map, so that others may find it. It can't be marked down with conventional symbols, since the plateau is in another plane than that of the familiar forms of measurable and definable reality, but its discoverers have to try. The poets and skillful inventors of paradox seem to do the best job of locating what has no location, but is rather a psychological stance within the observer or seeker. All such communication must in the nature of things outreach itself; it does not lead by dialectic, except initially and in preparation—to clear the ground, so to speak—but must invoke and induce, as by an alchemical operation in consciousness, a state of awareness which penetrates at least to the fringes of the world of timeless being, of true egoity or selfhood. It is here, and only here, that men come to make proper definitions of what they are; and the definitions are always circular: the self is defined in terms of itself; and only in that world are those terms allowable and sufficient.

Fortunately, there are seepages, and cracks in the consistency of the field of mechanical causation. Men are forever feeling strange intuitions of the world of transcendent reality. They have belittling feelings about their precise measurements and their grave and pretentious theories. And there isn't a human being without some part of himself, however small, which subsists in all three worlds—below, above, and within the rational world of definable causation. So it is that we shall never lack for the materials of new religions, new attempts at explanation of the paradoxes of experience, new declarations of self-discovery and ways to final meaning. And so it is, even in a culture which leaves accounts of the self to accident and improvisation, that some men are able to formulate and cherish secret and ennobling ideas of the self, such that their lives are fed by continuous spiritual inspiration, and when they act, they act out of a great, if unspoken, tradition.

But could not the culture be of some assistance in this process? Must it be left to lonely individuals who are strong enough, even in the isolation of private revery, to generate a sense of self which keeps them straight, though all the world turn against them? You would think it possible for a race of civilized human beings to create a cultural atmosphere which would not find it necessary to break every methodological truth on the wheel of finite formula before it can be given popular expression. You would think that men who have found their way to the plateau of Sacred Ignorance would be able to preserve the essential value of that stance and at the same time give an account of the longings, the needs, the behavior, and the aspiration of human beings appropriate to each level of the long ascent. Even just the methodology of the quest has its substantial categories, its partially definable frames, and these, when described, or even given tentative names, might retain something of the fragrance of the passing pilgrim, the Arjuna, the Ulysses, the Plotinus, the yearning, hungering, and finally self-fulfilling *Christos* who hides in every heart.

REVIEW
"IN THE MIDDLE OF A LINE"

IT is a grace of the task of writing reviews that there come, at irregular intervals, books which dissolve the conventional frame of the reviewer's occupation, turning the assignment into a privilege and a delight. On such occasions the writer may be tempted to forget or ignore all else and to celebrate the work before him as though it were the beginning, the middle, and the end of creative achievement. This is of course ridiculous and wrong; but it is also appropriate and right, since there is always a quality in a fine work which in some sense says what other fine works say, and the enthusiasm you feel for that quality in the work at hand means that your awareness of it has been brought to the surface once again. Once again the content of a universal feeling or meaning has been delivered to you in a particular form. So your excitement is not unjustified, your admiration not exaggerated, your unwillingness to measure and be soberly "critical" wholly correct.

Frederick Franck's *My Eye Is in Love* (Macmillan, $8.95), a book of Dr. Franck's pen-and-ink and wash drawings, accompanied by text telling why he draws, and what it means to him, has this effect. Dr. Franck has contributed to MANAS (Letters from Lambaréné, where he established a dental clinic for Dr. Schweitzer some years ago), and three of his earlier books have been reviewed in these pages, but we are not going to spend any time on these matters. *My Eye Is in Love* is a visual meditation which ought to be introduced in its own terms.

If anyone doubts the truth of the ancient maxim that man is the microcosm of the macrocosm, he should muse a while on the contents of this book. The world—or enough of the world—is in these drawings. But you need the text, too. You often hear manifestoes on the folly of "intellectualizing" about art. This is not what Dr. Franck does in his writing; these paragraphs about how his drawings became the antennae of his search for meaning add an indispensable dimension. They are the contrapuntal line which makes you look at the drawings again and again, until you feel their life, and the artist's love of life.

We are not really praising Dr. Franck; that would probably disturb him; we are sharing his ecstasy and feeling the serenity which lies at the roots of being and the world—in those great trunks of reality which support the teeming motion all about. The artist finds himself when he unlimbers and perfects his Aeolian aspect; and so, inevitably, a rare impersonality lights the joy the artist brings. When a man draws, draws well, and draws himself into the texture of the world, into the tired patience of the old, into the bursting ardor of the young—when he turns a few curved lines into the presence possessed by all women, and when he makes a wash spread off the page, out, out, into the night of space, with a seagull here, the Empyrean there—you come with him on these excursions. You draw a while with him; he lends you his eyes, his hand, which moves with the certainty of a falling stone that knows what it is about, pauses in the indecision of a startled bird, blurs with the aimlessness of human frustration, then returns to its swift recording of the panorama of the shapes and forms of being. For you, for Dr. Franck, as for the ancient sage, the universe grows I.

In this book, Dr. Franck has vanquished an ancient foe of human kind. He has put down Zeus, that severe caretaker of morals, and freed Prometheus. He has somehow penetrated the mystery of the compulsion to do what you *ought* to do—that horrid necessity which makes cowards and hypocrites of us all, and only beasts dare do without. There is in every man a child who needs the "ought," but in every child a man who needs to live in the world of spontaneous good upon which all "oughts" are enviously modelled. And there is a philosopher in every human being whose task is to pick out the oughts he needs and to leave the rest alone. Our world is awry because

this philosopher has not been tending to his business. He has been fiddling around, ignoring the one essential task of his career—to draw that secret line which is the tendril of private meaning in every human's life: the line which tells where we are free, and where we are still in bondage. There is a department in meaning which is beyond good and evil, and here we are gods; and there is a department presided over by the pompous judges of missed symmetries, broken rules, and violated orders, where we are creaturely and insecure. To live in both with neither pride nor whining is the trick; it takes a natural philosopher to do it, and it is a personal affair. You can discuss the project only in terms of echoes and shadows; this fane of meaning has endless vestibules constructed out of elegant profanity issuing from the mouths of men who think they can square the circle by passing a few laws, ordaining a few priests, and indoctrinating people in what they *ought* to do. It makes you sick.

But Dr. Franck is not made sick. He is like Olive Schreiner's Hunter. He just keeps climbing. Suppose you could take an abstraction like "Conscious Life" and put it into a form, give it memory and imagination, subject it to all the attractions and repulsions that sensitive intelligence can sustain, and then let it come to the realization that existence is endless, awareness infinite in its potentialities, that each combination of being with being is an expression of the Many seeking the One, with partial unions forever giving way to larger combinations. What, if questioned, would this "Conscious Life" say to you? It would talk, perhaps, of the great gamut of experience, of its fascinating variety, of its curious promise limited in each instance, all-inclusive in principle—of its inner vortex of joy and sorrow that finds resolution in divine discontent. It might say, as Dr. Franck writes:

> Once I thought I wanted to possess all the women in the world: thin dark ones, plump blondes, long-nosed, pear-breasted, snub-nosed hippy ones, cool classical aphrodites, long-legged elegant deer, dumpy earthbound peasants, budding pubers, and ripe full-bodied matrons. Then, fortunately, I discovered I could do with a limited number indeed, and just wanted to draw them all!
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> This did not apply only to women. Drawing became my way of seeing: I must draw whatever I see in order to make it my own. Thus the world becomes my world, in which I am free. Drawing grasps things and beings, yet "lets them be." There may be many other ways to liberation; this is one of them and it happens to be mine. Thus, drawing becomes even more a way of union with my fellow creatures and with nature. Drawing in this sense is a religious discipline, a probing of reality by mind and eye and hand combined. . . .
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> Drawing may begin in Eros; some nudes are a mere sexual caress, but who stops there becomes a pornographer. Development consists in moving toward *gape;* the indiscriminate acceptance of all that *is,* the impartial loving that makes the old and worn as worthy as the young and beautiful. This is what imbues Rembrandt's nudes with deepest compassion. As drawing develops toward *gape,* it often becomes "the art of leaving out," but it can always be felt that the deep structures as well as the skin have been touched by the fingertips. . . .
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> There is no doubt that there is a future in this kind of drawing, if human life continues on earth. There is a future in this pictorial communication with self, which, incidentally, communicates with a Bantu child, a New York taxi driver, a schoolteacher, or with luck a collector. To draw is not only joy, it is at the same time struggle, tension and despair. But, more important, it brings the artist liberation from compulsive concern with "style" and spurious originality, from worry about "being of one's time." Drawing unconstrainedly. I cannot be anything but myself, product of my time as well as of my culture, my whole heredity. In the eternal stream of forms I am just one, the one who notes them down.

The pen has the clean line of a solo instrument; it gets on paper the *moment,* with no retractions, no second thoughts. The drawing is without self-consciousness and so has no partisanships; finally it transcends its own discipline and becomes a kind of communication which is nearly all essence. Dr. Franck's pen has a life of its own:

> I feel a grave amusement while drawing the women under my window—clicking past on high heels, carrying their pastries home, waddling away on

worn shoes, dragging their children and vegetables, slinking home from dates, darting off to rendezvous, dragging themselves to the doctors, shuffling to church, running to subways, stepping to the movies, rushing to the cleaners, the office, the market.

The pen delights in composing these groups, spontaneously without plan or preparation. It is neutral and does not prefer women to men. It feels as happy where old men take showers as it does among the beauty queens. It hardly chooses. It sets the value on all things, the price on none. It cannot lie like the soft pencil that can be erased or the charcoal that can be rubbed. Its yea is yea and its nay is nay, and when it says maybe, the hand that holds it had better stop for a while. The pen demands absolute attention, complete awareness.

It is my great friend and has gone to the ends of the earth with me but it never flatters me. It rejoices if it can make me feel really small and miserable. It can do no Schiele in my hand—no Picasso, no d'Honnecourt, no Rembrandt, no Seeghers. It does only one kind of trick for me, though I have in weak moments implored it to do a Steinberg, a Topolski, or just a tiny little Kokoschka. It won't, it would rather break. I could imagine such violent, unadjusted reactions if I had asked it to do a Buffet, which of course I wouldn't. I once asked it to make those interesting lines à la so-and-so, for a *Fortune* assignment, I believe. It went on strike for weeks. I have asked it to hide me once in a while like my mustache. My mustache does, but my pen gives me away cruelly, without the compassion it showers on a dead herring. However, it does let me partake of all the beauty of the commonplace, it allows me to be aware of earth and flesh, season and latitude of life and death, of the one and the many and the uniqueness of each thing. . . .

By his awareness of form, the artist translates one cipher into another, and when, through the magic of his hand, a meaning is set ringing in the new form, the artist has made the vertical connection he seeks. "When I am drawing," says Dr. Franck, "there is nothing left in me of that notorious alienated man of our time and his loneliness " And he asks: "Could it be that, while drawing, I am released out of time into the ever present? That as I draw, I participate in the very life of nature, whether in the form of a tree, a stone, or a human face?"

This book ends, as life both begins and ends: "It is all here still. And so am I. In my hand a pencil in the middle of a line."

COMMENTARY
CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE

THE final paragraph of this week's "Children" article asks that the reader distinguish between "undermining" and "challenging" the value-charged beliefs of others. This might involve, for example, their religious beliefs. What is the role of the teacher, here?

A familiar claim is that the religious beliefs of others should never be disturbed. Unfortunately, this is often a way of saying that no one should be encouraged or obliged to think critically about religious truth. Years ago, in an article in the *Humanist,* A. E. Burtt suggested that behind this position is "a lurking realization that the norm of reason is impartiality and therefore that no form of individual or group egotism can be rationally defended." The analysis continues:

> Hence they [believers in exclusive revelation] must affirm that ultimate truth is irrational, discontinuous with the normal operation of man's cognitive faculties. This is self-deception however, because they are surely aware, at times, that whenever anything is said about God, Christ, revelation, or anything else the canons of reason must be obeyed, under penalty of collapse into meaninglessness and total failure to communicate any idea. The rejection of reason cannot be quite sincere; it is a protective device needed to cover the anxious sense that the claims involved in the theory of special revelation are intrinsically incapable of justification.

This, you might say, is a legitimate form of challenge to beliefs which resist examination. Dr. Burtt extends the challenge by offering an alternative view:

> In religion, the security that would be legitimate can only be gradually won through hospitality to all experiences that might be spiritually significant—readiness to find a revelation of the divine anywhere, that supports the quest for enduring human good. But to seek security in this way requires an emotional postponement that is difficult, an openness of mind and flexibility of spirit toward those outside one's inherited tradition that are as yet very rare qualities.
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> Impatient of these difficulties, man grasps at the premature and delusive security of concentrating the whole energy of his devotion on some lovable historical figure, marking the culmination of a selected sequence of events in the past, and fanatically claims that here, in this obviously special and local scene the fullness of the Eternal and the Absolute are disclosed.

This seems a remarkably good illustration of the difference between "undermining" and "challenging." Dr. Burtt is no advocate of a barren relativism, nor does he propose a "rat model" for man. But he does insist on the full use of the tools of reason in respect to the ultimate questions. Can any teacher do less?

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
TELEVISION DIALOGUE

[We have come by a summary of a recent TV discussion involving Viktor Frankl and Huston Smith. Dr. Frankl is author of *From Death Camp to Existentialism* and founder of the logotherapy school of psychiatry. Huston Smith teaches at MIT and wrote *The Religions of Man.* The theme of the dialogue is "values"—how they enter into teaching. In opening, Dr. Smith observed that Dr. Frankl works in two disciplines—neurology and psychiatry—and is a survivor of four World War II Nazi concentration camps.]

Smith: What is the place of values and meaning in human life?

Frankl: Man's orientation toward values in his most profound Motivation force. (He mentions his own "will to meaning" theory.) This is counterpoised to the will to pleasure (Freud) and the will to power (Adler). Man . . . is a being reaching out for meaning to fulfill. The pleasure principle is self-defeating.

Smith: Can meaning to taught?

Frankl: I doubt it. Values must be lived. And what we can give . . . is not a meaning but rather an example . . . the example of commitment to a cause worthy of such commitment, for instance, science, truth, scientific research, etc. This example we are giving will be watched and witnessed by our students. It has a contagious quality.

Smith: This bypasses the subject matter. (Smith asks Frankl if *example* is the only point where a teacher can effect the value level of students, and Frankl replies he would not think so.)

Frankl: The teacher should not undermine the basic meaning orientation of his students by offering them a relativistic, subjectivistic picture of man—by counteracting the original enthusiasm of students—their idealism. (Frankl objects to the practice of some outstanding American psychologists who conceive of values merely in terms of defense mechanisms and reaction formations.) As to myself, I would not find it worth while to live merely for the sake of my reaction formations or even to die only for the sake of my personal defense mechanism.

Smith: In what we teach, then, there is often an eroding effect? (Frankl: Yes.) What about the case of those students for whom all sense of meaning has collapsed?

Frankl: There is a growing incidence of a feeling of total and ultimate meaninglessness of life . . . The abysmal feeling of . . . an inner void. It is a crippling experience. This emptiness, this boredom . . . I've termed the existential vacuum. It is the frustration of the will to meaning.

(Frankl refers to his studies which indicate that 40 per cent of his European students had had some experience of this existential vacuum, his American students 81 per cent. Smith reports that Sherwood Eddy in visiting American colleges a few years ago found that the problem of apathy was the one most often mentioned by both students and instructors. Frankl suggests that one explanation of this condition is the thoroughly mechanistic approach so dominant in our culture.)

Frankl: Man is *nothing but* the outcome of various conditioning processes—sociological, psychological, biological. This might be one of the causes accountable for the present state of affairs.

Smith: Is man, then, not caused? Is there no conditioning going on?

Frankl: Man is also determined and conditioned. What I am against is . . . solely *pan*-determinism (full determinism. As a survivor of four concentration camps I can say that surely man is subject to conditions . . . but man is always free to take a stand toward whatever conditions he might be confronted with . . . There is a choice of which attitudes to adopt whenever confronted with an unchangeable situation.

(Frankl rejects the machine model or rat model as applied to man, and warns that there should be no surprise when persons exposed to such views behave like automatons—they've never been told anything else. "Man is determined but never pan-determined.")

Frankl: The more a man is meaning-oriented, the more mentally healthy he is likely to be. From sensory deprivation experiments it has been shown that finally what the brain needs is meaning.

Smith: How about coming to our students with designs on their value lives? Does this not smack of authoritarianism?

Frankl: Not at all. Tensions should be aroused by meaning confrontations. What man needs . . . is not lack of tensions but a sound amount of tension . . . aroused by the polar tension between a man who is longing and groping for a meaning to fulfill, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, that meaning which is waiting to be fulfilled by him—his unique meaning.

DR. HUSTON SMITH'S CLOSING SUMMARY

1. Dr. Frankl has made strongly the point that teachers should stand as an example before their students. This is of central importance and can have powerful impact on students.

2. But he did not belittle the resources in subject-matter for teaching values. Specifically, he pointed out concepts of man that have negative implications. No doubt he could have, if he'd had time, paralleled these examples with others from other academic fields, of similar significance. Value questions should never, however, be artificially dragged into the classroom.

3. Implicit in Frankl's position is concern with students as persons seeking meaning. There is a danger in our day of gigantic enrollments of the student being overlooked and lost in the shuffle. Teaching need not be student-centered in the sense of focusing on him—it ought really to be subject-centered. Students want material, insights, knowledge. . . . Yet "there is a danger if we should cut ourselves off from the inner life of students where factors of growth move in subtle . . . ways that do not mesh with the clicking of the IBM machine."

4. The question of indoctrination . . . There is a real difference between wishing to indoctrinate students and presenting for their consideration values which their lives will miss in irrevocable ways if these values which came to us are deprived them . . . The teacher is a sculptor of an invisible future. William James said: "A good teacher influences the future for all eternity." That's true—also the converse—a poor one does too!

[At the end of the summary here reprinted is a series of questions intended to aid teachers in discussing the program. Some of the questions are as follows: Does the idea of man as "a being reaching out for meaning to fulfill" fit your experience of yourself, your students, and your colleagues? Why shouldn't the "rat model" view of man be taught to students? Would shutting out this or Frankl's view threaten academic freedom? Frankl says that the instructor ought not to undermine the basic structure of meaning of the student—for example, offer him relativistic, subjective views of man . . . counteract the idealism of the student. Is there a real distinction between undermining and challenging? How do instructors tear down students' values? Do opportunities for presenting positive values outweigh the negative possibilities? Would you agree with Smith that college instructors are now the main bulwark against the impersonalization of mass education? How can instructors fulfill this role in the face of large classes, TV teaching, too many assignments, etc.? What values do yon have opportunity to discuss with your students, and how do you help students to explore them?]

FRONTIERS

"Discovery of the Self"

THIS volume by Claire Myers Owens (Christopher, 1963) is a sequel to *Awakening to the Good* (reviewed in MANAS, Nov. 27, 1963). A biography constructed by Mrs. Owens from the diary and notes of her aunt, Clairene Myers, *Discovery of the Self* is the sort of "amateur synthesis" of philosophy and psychology which first drew the attention of A. H. Maslow and others to Mrs. Owens' work. The last page of the text has some synthesizing reflections:

> As I see it, Thoreau was employing nature as a means to induce his own Enlightenment, as the Hindus call it, to develop his own potentialities of the good; whereas Socrates and Plato employed reason and dialogue, and Jesus and Numa used religious emotion as a means. But Jung, Maslow, Assagioli, Carl Rogers, and Moustakas use psychotherapy. Each discipline employs different means toward the same end.
>
> Their goal as I understand it, is to awaken the dormant good in man's inner self—through conscious *and* unconscious mind, to arouse him to live the good life in relation to the self, to the state, to things, and nature. The inference being in most cases that out of this individual transformation of character will eventually arise the good society for all.

The first chapter, "Vision," describes Clairene Myers' most dramatic "peak experience." Mrs. Myers was confronted by an objectivization of something she could only call a "spiritual presence." Later she reflected that a Christian would undoubtedly have seen the figure of Christ, but that she, revering all great religious teachers, did not "see" a limiting personification. Her account reads:

> I lay motionless, strangely unafraid, scarcely surprised, accepting this phenomenon with unaccustomed serenity, viewing it with a new detachment, which in turn did not even amaze me. Everything seemed quite natural.
>
> Did this image signify that the greatest success of which man is capable is not the fulsome praise of many people, not worldly acclaim, however sweet, not creative achievement, nor even a spontaneous awakening to the self, but that the supreme success possible to man is to see a god?
>
> I pondered and pondered. In a sudden flash I remembered a little paperback book I had purchased recently and had not read yet, *Psyche and Symbol.* It was a collection of Jung's writings selected by one of his pupils, Violet de Laszlo. It saved my life.
>
> In it Jung said that *a vision is merely* a *dream risen into the conscious mind, that Christ is a symbol of the self, that a vision of Christ in Christian culture is prophetic of a higher order in the future.*

For a time thereafter, Mrs. Myers lived in a kind of psychic ecstasy, seeing "the good" in every person around her, and she experienced glowing health. She found herself inhibited from making a personal religion out of what seemed to be her transcendence of mortal concerns. Because she did not fix on an idea of her own spiritual attainment, she soon saw that she was far from the goal that she had imagined herself to have reached, She had *had* a peak experience, all right, but beyond was a whole series of mountain ranges to be traversed, and tortuous descents into the intervening valleys were also necessary:

> I felt harmony with all people, with inanimate things, with my inner self, my body, and the universe. I felt capable of undreamed of feats—tomorrow! I was riding high on the crest of the wave, living on a plane higher than I had ever imagined possible for me—for any ordinary woman or man. It surpassed every experience I ever had day dreamed of in my whole life. All my problems were surely solved for the rest of my life, I blithely assumed. It had revolutionized my marriage.
>
> Then everything went wrong.
>
> I had been flying high above the earth. Like any self-actualizing person, I had been living in a state just this side of bliss.
>
> Now suddenly, swiftly, without warning I was plunged to earth. The impact stunned me. It has been my greatest joy to live in harmony with everyone. Now I am irritable and cross about trifles. I stumble and fumble.

In the next stage of her struggle, Mrs. Myers made what was probably her most important discovery—that every stage of psychic growth is

followed by a period of discouragement. She began to read the writings of Dr. Roberto Assagioli (Institute of Psychosynthesis, Florence), and from his formulation she began to see the meaning of the insistence, in Eastern philosophy, that periodicity is a universal law, applicable to the individual psyche as well as to the seasons:

> Assagioli stated that the ebb and flow of different stages in self-realization was natural. All nature moved in rhythms—night and day, summer and winter—and so did the growth of the human mind.
>
> An individual, he explained, should expect a physical reaction of the nervous system after the first joy of awakening should expect a period of insomnia, nervousness, exhaustion inertia, loss of will power, and aversion to action.

This is a way of putting William James' idea of progression through a series of psychological deaths and rebirths; and it is in this context that Maslow's study of "peak experiences" takes on greatest meaning. The soul, let us say, must learn to build a pathway from peak to peak, to recognize and appreciate every height, but to undertake the discipline that will make the subsequent descents significant, brought into relation by a maturing philosophy.

In an introduction to *Discovery of the Self*, Anthony Sutich (editor of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*) tells why psychologists may find value in such material:

> Time after time there is a lyrical account of attainment only to have it develop into discouragement, depression or even despair. So realistic is the presentation of the "rough side" of the road to the Self, that her very personal report concludes with the final stage still to come. Thus one can say that her book is more a portrayal of the ecstasies and agonies progressively experienced, rather than a version of "how-to-do-it," and over and over again she stresses that there are many ways and many methods available to the person who engages in the process of discovering his personal self, and each must find his own.