

## FAITH IN MAN

. . . when I look for reassurance as to our future, I do not turn to official utterances, or "pacifist" manifestations, or conscientious objectors. I turn instinctively towards the ever more numerous institutions and associations of men where in the search for knowledge a new spirit is silently taking shape around us—the soul of Mankind resolved at all costs to achieve, in its total integrity, the uttermost fulfillment of its powers and its destiny.

—TEILHARD DE CHARDIN, *The Future of Man*

THE humanistically inclined reader who approaches for the first time a work by the now famous Teilhard de Chardin is likely to combine hopeful anticipation—the notices and review-essays have been impressive—with a certain wariness. The skeptical questioning is not so much, any more, from an inherent rejection of a "spiritual" line of thought, but rather from the possibility that the arguments in this direction may eventually be seen to bear the trademark of a particular religious or "spiritual" institution.

However, in this case such suspicions seem unfounded. Whatever his vocabulary, and regardless of the accident of birth which made him a Christian—or even the urgent longings which caused him, in his time and circumstances, to become a Catholic priest—Teilhard is unmistakably Man Thinking, before he is anything else. He has nothing up his sleeve, no ulterior motives of hidden persuasion. Readers reared in other religious philosophies, or who prefer a different mystical vocabulary, will not be disturbed by the occasional use of words from the Christian tradition, which is here raised above partisanship and special pleading by a transparently honest and nobly endowed mind.

Teilhard de Chardin is a metaphysical thinker who has his ideas and feelings about the dynamics of human fulfillment from an imaginative reading of Christianity, and whose labors as a scientist

have given him a sense of the order and practical processes in nature. Through this synthesis the great evolutionary journey of life becomes the means of universal spiritual realization. His book reminds one of the sweeping vision of Johannes Scotus Erigena. It is filled with finely tempered arguments for faith in man, and faith, therefore, in the future. Its chief merit is not the "theory" he presents—not the vocabulary he uses—not even his peculiarly appealing blend of religious and scientific ideas: these are only the incidental excellences of the book: the truly distinguished contribution is a demonstration of how an individual mind may take the raw materials of the quest for meaning in the twentieth century and construct a philosophy of generous-hearted optimism.

This writer might have said, somewhere, as Socrates did in one of the Dialogues—"I do not claim that all that I have said is precisely 'true,' but only that something *like* what I have said must be the case." For this is the most fruitful way to read Teilhard de Chardin—to take him as a mover to high and farflung thoughts of one's own. Actually, all good thinking is of this sort. A man who gives you his best original thinking—without a borrowed inspiration or any heavily mortgaged ideas—exercises an *inductive* influence. He stirs you to originate, and gives you confidence in your own capacity, simply from the achievements of another questing intelligence. And the interesting thing about the deliveries of human intelligence thus stirred to action is that, while never identical, never copied one from another, they all have a family resemblance. They share in the richly varied consensus achieved by independently working minds.

People curious about Teilhard's work should read him first-hand. Only the central idea of *The Future of Man* (Harper & Row, \$5.00) can have

attention here. It is that the evolutionary process—which for Teilhard is a universal, cosmic flow—is now producing on earth what he calls the Noosphere. The base of the Noosphere is the Biosphere—the "terrestrial zone containing life." The Noosphere is an evolution or creation by Man, termed "the terrestrial sphere of thinking substance." The coming into being of humans, which he calls "hominization," produces the mind-stuff of the Noosphere, the medium of the reflective consciousness of man. As Teilhard says:

It is generally accepted that what distinguishes man psychologically from other living creatures is the power acquired by his consciousness of turning in upon itself. The animal knows, it has been said; but only man, among animals, knows that he knows. This faculty has given birth to a host of new attributes in men—freedom of choice, foresight, the ability to plan and construct, and many others. So much is clear to everyone. But what has perhaps not been sufficiently noted is that, still by virtue of this power of Reflection, living hominized elements become capable (indeed are under an irresistible compulsion) of drawing close to one another, of communicating, finally of uniting. . . . Anthropologists, sociologists and historians have long noted, without being very well able to account for it, the enveloping and concreting nature of the innumerable ethnic and cultural layers whose growth, expansion and rhythmic overlapping endow humanity with its present aspect of extreme variety in unity. . . . Thus we find ourselves in the presence, in actual possession, of the super-organism we have been seeking, of whose existence we were intuitively aware. The human conglomerate which the sociologists needed for the furtherance of their speculations and formulations now appears scientifically defined, manifesting itself in its proper time and place, like an object entirely new and yet awaited in the sky of life.

There is of course a great deal of supporting scientific argument for this view. Even the extensive achievements of modern technology are turned into evidence of the Noosphere, being seen as a kind of anatomical structure created jointly by the minds of human beings. Further:

We have only to consider any of the new concepts and intuitions which, particularly during the

past century, have become or are in process of becoming the indestructible keystones and fabric of our thought—the idea of the atom, for example, or of organic Time or Evolution. It is surely obvious that no man on earth could alone have evolved them; no one man *thinking by himself*, can encompass, master or exhaust them, yet every man on earth shares, *in himself*, in the universal heightening of consciousness promoted by the existence in our minds of these new concepts of matter and new dimensions of cosmic reality. . . . No doubt everything proceeds from the individual and in the first instance depends upon the individual but it is on a higher level than the individual that everything achieves its fulfillment.

Many pages of such material lead to the idea of a further evolution for man:

The second stage is the super-evolution of Man, individually and collectively, by the use of refined forms of energy scientifically harnessed and applied in the bosom of the Noosphere, thanks to the coordinated efforts of all men working reflectively and unanimously upon themselves. . . . I have already spoken of the recent emergence of certain new faculties in our minds. . . . Inevitably, as a natural consequence, this awakening must enhance in us, from all sides, a generalised sense of the organic, through which the entire complex of inter-human and inter-cosmic relations will become charged with an immediacy, an intimacy and a realism such as has long been dreamed of and apprehended by certain spirits particularly endowed with the "sense of the universal," but which has never been *collectively applied*. And it is in the depths and by grace of this new inward sphere, the attribute of planetized life, that an event seems possible which has hitherto been incapable of realization: I mean the pervasion of the human mass by the power of sympathy. It may in part be passive sympathy, a communication of mind and spirit that will make the phenomenon of telepathy, still sporadic and haphazard both general and normal. But above all it will be a state of active sympathy in which each separate human element, breaking out of its insulated state under the impulse of tensions generated in the Noosphere, will emerge into a field of prodigious affinities, which we already conjecture in theory. For if the power of attraction between simple atoms is so great, what may we not expect if similar bonds are contracted between human molecules? Humanity, as I have said, is building its composite brain beneath our eyes. May it not be that through the logical and biological deepening of the movement drawing it together, it will find its *heart*,

without which the ultimate wholeness of its powers of unification can never be fully achieved? To put it in other words, must not the constructive developments now taking place within the Noosphere in the realm of sight and reason necessarily also penetrate to the sphere of feeling? The idea may seem fantastic when one looks at our present world, still dominated by the forces of hatred and repulsion. But is not this simply because we refuse to heed the admonitions of science, which is daily proving to us, in every field, that seemingly impossible changes become easy and even inevitable directly there is a change in the order or the dimensions?

Teilhard makes it clear that he has no massive totalitarian "unification" in mind:

In the case of a blind aggregation, some form of unification brought about by purely mechanical means, the principle of large numbers comes into play. That is true: but where it is a matter of unanimity realized from *within* the effect is to personalize our activities, and, I will add, to make them unerring. A single freedom, taken in isolation, is weak and uncertain and may easily lose itself in mere probing. But a totality of freedom, freely operating, will always end by finding its road. And this incidentally is why throughout this paper, without seeking to minimize the uncertainties inherent in Man's freedom of choice in relation to the world, I have been able implicitly to maintain that we are moving both freely and ineluctably in the direction of concentration by way of planetization. One might put it that determinism appears at either end of the process of cosmic evolution, but in antithetically opposed forms: at the lower end it is forced along the line of the most probable *for lack of freedom*; at the upper end it is an ascent into the improbable through *the triumph of freedom*.

This book, like the work of a few other writers, is a sustained act of the imagination. That is why it needs reading in full—in order to grasp the sense of reality which its author has been able at length to generate for himself, and hence for many of his readers. A few passages, taken by themselves, may seem to embody almost blind optimism, or to reflect a disregard for the hard facts of our time. But even the most critical should grant Teilhard the right to assemble evidence of another order of fact, and to show how such data may be interpreted.

Apart from the sterile argument of a purely empirical Materialism, what are the most obvious objections to Teilhard's vision of the future? They are, we may say, two. One is the undeniable dilemma of power in relation to social organization and human freedom. The other is the desolation and private agony of human beings in a world where all admirable schemes of general meaning seem to have broken down in miserable failure, and where the available accounts of personal identity and the lasting significance of individuals seem too shallow or too demanding of belief for all except deeply intuitive persons.

To the man who points to the spectacle of ruthless power as a counter-argument to Teilhard's hope, we can make the rejoinder that individual activity and self-improvement in the light of an ideal is *still* about all there remains to do. Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* is a dark picture of the world's condition, but he nonetheless writes about the world in some kind of attempt to make it better. So, the rejection of Teilhard's evidence in behalf of some kind of psychic mutation in the direction of a truly fraternal society does not change anything important; it only makes the project seem more difficult. Yet, as the Existentialists make clear, we have to *try*. Camus' Sisyphus *smiles*. And from either a dark or a bright prospect, the work we have to do remains much the same.

What is that work? It is to resolve the dilemma of power, not by ignoring or belittling it, but by recognizing that dilemmas of this sort, which illustrate the breakdown of systematic thinking, systematic social organization, and systematic (contractual) conceptions of the relation between the individual and society, cannot be resolved in the terms which define the dilemma. For example: intelligent administrators, wise teachers, and sagacious judges and referees are continually using their minds to eliminate difficulties which mechanical applications of laws, rules, and contracts only multiply. In other words, such men create an area of *organic* relationships

within the crudely defined area of legal relationships. In organic situations, the conflicting values of freedom and order are no longer opposed, but are combined to enrich each other by the indefinable and unsystematized nexus of *wisdom*, and this happens when men are able to establish in themselves feelings of trust. What is the magic of a book like Camus' *The Plague*, but a demonstration of this resolving principle within a single man? He finds a way—not an easy way, generally a painful way, but a *way*—out of his dilemma.

Now the exercise of wisdom, as a way of life, is enormously demanding of the individual. The hope of getting a "rule" to make decisions easy and responsibilities light is the curse of the politicalized society, for the exploitation of this hope by politicians and other pretenders to slide-rule miracles leads to emotional faith in utopian solutions for all human problems. All that this faith can accomplish is to open the way to further dehumanization of the people and a sharpening of the horns of the dilemma of power. Eventually, disenchanted observers are driven to the conclusion that the dilemma is a "natural fact" that was written in the stars before it worked itself to the surface in the mass societies of our time.

Due to the human longing for simple explanations, we have the habit of speaking of our problems in absolute terms. A man can spend only a little time surveying the abuses of power, the victimization of individuals by authority, and the extreme difficulties of change or reform, and make you a massive report on the impossibility of doing anything at all about these evils. But another man, in the same amount of time, could show you the practical freedom he has made use of in diverse and humanly profitable ways. One man shows the breakdown of the system; the other proves to you that the operations of the system, and therefore its dilemmas, are far from "total."

In this case, however, another discouraging argument is usually made. It is that you have

produced the example of only one man, while the system victimizes ten or a hundred for each individual exemplar of freedom.

With this complaint before you, there is only one thing to do. You have to devise a common view of the human situation. You have to develop a working hypothesis concerning the conditions of the Good Life and decide whether they have ever really existed on a large social scale, and under what circumstances with what kind of people there is a hope of bringing them about. The devastating charge ranged against any kind of optimism, these days, is based upon our enormous distance from the dreams of Perfectionists. Argument here seems quite futile. For if you imagine an environment made completely perfect (by magic), there is still the question of whether men could be happy there and live wholly constructive lives unless they too have been transformed (by magic) into hypothetically perfect people.

This is obviously no resolution of the problem, nor can you, nor should you try to, talk the skeptic out of his painful awareness of the injustice and suffering which come from the abuse of power. But an examination of the norms on which pessimism is usually based helps to reduce the nihilism of the pessimists.

The other objection to Teilhard's idea of the future arises from its generalizing neglect of individual psychological problems. An internally produced momentum for brotherhood and a fearless acceptance of other men's integrity and good intentions (which are surely essential conditions of a free society) would require a maturity that is in extremely short supply. How will we get that maturity? How many are prepared for the ordeals out of which authentic maturity seems to emerge? Read Nietzsche, read Tolstoy, read about the Dark Night of the Soul; read Moustakas on loneliness; read Camus' essay on Sisyphus, again, in the light of this question. Read in *The Hidden Remnant* Gerald Sykes' chapter on "The Politics of Shipwreck." Or,

without all this reading consider the emptiness of the inner life of a man who is stripped of egotism, of acquisitiveness, of national identity, and of economic and social status. Are we ready for this condition of nakedness? Consider the state of mind of a man who lives as though each thing he does is an end in itself, and who feels all other people, creatures, things, to be of the same order of intrinsic value. Will an amiable invasion of our collective *psyche* by the higher intellectual fluids of telepathy transform us into such people?

Probably not. And yet Teilhard's hope from the general secretion of such saving soul-substances has ample precedent. You can find it in Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness*, in an essay by James, in the thoughtful speculations of H. H. Price at Oxford, and, strangely enough, in Edward Bellamy.

Again, there is the question of norms, and whether any human being can hope to avoid the abyss of his own self-consciousness, once his mind becomes emptied of unworthy matters. Yet will we, having suffered this cleansing, be able to turn renegade from the Promethean errand, or avoid the Promethean fate? Have we an arrangement with God, a pact with Nature, which permits such an easy escape?

All these questions need some kind of settlement, or there must be at least a temporary cessation of hostilities toward dreamers and envisioners like Teilhard, while we acquire the "Realism" we need to make up our minds.

## *REVIEW*

### THE DEATH AND REBIRTH OF PHILOSOPHY

OUR partial plagiarism of the title of Ira Progoff's *The Death and Rebirth of Psychology* hardly needs apology if one thinks that the activity of philosophy needs to be "reborn" for everyone all the time. This view may be extended to social and political realities by suggesting that the *atmosphere* of philosophy—the spirit of philosophical inquiry in every direction—was present during the formative stages of the American and French Revolutions. The Reign of Terror in France was possible, not because France had had bad philosophers, but because the philosophers who accomplished the basic changes in thought were mistranslated to the masses by way of slogans.

Philosophy, to our way of thinking, is primarily an optimistic undertaking. Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, and Paine, among others, seemed to the hard-headed diplomats of Europe to represent an extreme of wishful thinking. Yet the "optimism" of these men was rewarded, since the revolution which was first accomplished in their minds became the work of many hands—and their essential philosophical outlook is represented to this day in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights (zealously guarded today by a Supreme Court whose supporters are fortunately more numerous than its enemies). To these men, philosophy was *real*. It was the "activity" by which they labored to stretch their own minds in behalf of nobler human goals and a better society. The twentieth century, on the other hand, has suffered a strong devaluation of philosophy as having nothing to do with "reality," save possibly for those who defended academic philosophizing on the ground that it may provide a harmless and perhaps beneficial emotional release. For the psychologists and psychoanalysts had convinced us that conscious thought has very little to do with human behavior, aspiration, or happiness; the real motivating and guiding force was held to come

from what W. Macneile Dixon calls the "sub-basement" of our being.

It is in illustration of this contention that we quote a characteristic treatment of philosophy early in the twentieth century, from Alexander Herzberg's *The Psychology of Philosophers*. In his conclusion, Herzberg "defends" philosophy, but on grounds which are either amusing or annoying to someone who takes *philosophia* seriously:

Inadequate satisfaction of the impulses is a source of suffering; when it lasts for a long time it is also one of danger, since it may lead to neurosis. The danger grows with the intensity of the impulses and that of the inhibitions; the impulsive and highly inhibited person is foredoomed to nervous illness. Only an unimpeded outlet for the pent-up impulses can save him, and such an outlet is provided, not only by artistic and religious but also by philosophic pursuits. The pursuit of philosophy is thus, for those capable of it, of high psycho-hygienic value; it is for them, mentally, a form of gymnastics which is indispensable for the preservation of health and a substitute for the practical pursuits which are necessary if nervous illness is to be avoided. In so far as philosophic thinking thus acts as a safety-valve, it appears to me that this particular activity, which is often called useless and harmful, fulfills a highly important function, i.e., philosophic thinking acquires a psycho-hygienic value and thus a biological utility in the preservation of the individual.

The biological value of philosophy is threefold. Philosophic thought firstly serves as a substitute for practical action in the discharge of excess impulse-energies—secondly, it creates, in the place of harsh and intractable and therefore unsatisfying reality, a painless and tractable and therefore satisfying world—and thirdly, it leads, by means of a detour, to the real satisfaction of powerful interests. And in all three ways it serves to maintain mental health: its value lies in the realm of psychic hygiene.

If philosophic activity can serve as a safety-valve for pent-up impulses, this function is by no means restricted to the thinkers of genius but must also apply to less independent minds. The satisfaction which a philosophy provides by creating an artificial environment is by no means restricted to its creators, for the same consoling and elevating effects may be shared by anyone with a nature at all resembling

theirs who tread the same paths consciously and in good faith.

Herzberg was not alone in decamping before the onslaughts of a cerebro-centric psychology. The attitude has often been called "materialism." A contemporary work, *First Adventures in Philosophy*, by Vergilius Ferm, indicates how this becomes a kind of materialism of its own, subject to the same sort of questioning its votaries employed in challenging the classic position of philosophy:

Once begun, the behavioristic movement developed to tremendous proportions in psychological and metaphysical circles of America. But there are more factors behind this development. There was the old psychology with its notion of soul, which had already been regarded as leading nowhere except from confusion to confusion. There was the rapid development of the natural sciences and empirical observation with its laboratory technique. There was the growing emphasis upon positivism, naturalism, empiricism, realism—all anti-idealistic currents.

The stream of pan-objective influences kept coming in from all directions until it was inevitable that there would be an overflow of a variety of expressive currents. Metaphysical Behaviorism was but one inevitable expression in that great flood of pan-objectivism. In pursuance of clarity two sets of distinctions ought to be made in discussing the term Behaviorism, which has suffered from a certain ambiguity in current literature. In the first place, a distinction should be made between *methodological* behaviorism and *metaphysical* behaviorism, the one having to do with a method in psychology, and the other with a distinct set of implications for metaphysics which arise out of that method in its extreme form, specifically in its doctrine of mind. In the second place, a distinction should be made (which is, unhappily, not made by all expositors) within methodological behaviorism between its mild and its extreme forms. In its mild form behaviorism as a method undertakes to press the objective approach to the study of mental life to the limit of its forkability (which, as an ideal, is an ever-receding line) without annihilating but supplementing and correcting the so-called introspective method (*i.e.*, where the individual is asked to "look within" himself and bear testimony to what he finds going on within). In its extreme form behaviorism as a method ignores the introspective method altogether and treats the whole

matter in terms of Stimulus and Response (the so-called S-R bond). For the latter method, if we set up X as mind, the X-as-such is ignored, and psychology becomes a mere matter of S-R bond.

At this point it is valuable to recall what William James pointed out—that the methods of "instrumentalism," "pragmatism," and "behaviorism" must not in any way be permitted to limit the scope of philosophy. He affirmed that the "physiological psychologist" should explain all that he could about human nature in terms of the relationships of body to mind, but that the *philosopher* should then begin where the psychologist leaves off.

## **COMMENTARY**

### **THE "NEW SPIRIT"**

IT doesn't seem to be stretching Dr. Mayer's view of education (see *Frontiers*) to make it include the kind of influence sought by Judge Gardner for erring youngsters. The "testimonial" quoted briefly at the end of this week's "Children" article continues:

He didn't come on like a Joe Do-gooder, and this way he got our confidence. He came on like Gang Busters and he talked the language of the streets. He didn't pull any punches and he put across an image, the kind of an image that a guy in the reform school or on the streets goes for; but at the same time he compared his past life with each kid's potential future and showed them that crime didn't pay.

He didn't come across with this moral outlook that most people do. He just put the facts down and explained that. . . . if you go through life fighting society, you're the one who suffers; because society needs no one individual, yet each individual needs society.

The only way an organization could be of any value is if it appears to the kids as being completely separate from any law-enforcement agency or any rehabilitation program. It has got to appear completely on its own and with all attention on the kids; and they must feel completely free to express all of their desires and past experiences without fear of being prosecuted for it. All men who come in direct contact with the kids must be ex-cons or men who have lived through the same experience and are completely free from any official title.

While only brief attention is given by Judge Gardner to the role of an ex-addict or the ex-alcoholic in the education of those who now have identical or similar problems, the extraordinary possibilities in this direction have already been demonstrated by the Synanon Foundation in effecting transformation in the lives of one-time narcotics addicts. The trained social workers who manage "honor farms" and who practice group therapy in prison blocks can hardly fail to be aware of how badly they need the assistance of men who have had the experience of living behind bars.

Nor does it stretch Teilhard's vision to make it include the kind of education Dr. Mayer champions. Here, surely, is an instance of the "new spirit silently taking shape around us," an expression of that "power of sympathy" of which Teilhard speaks.

These ideas and feelings *are* beginning to characterize the new spirit in education. How are they "new," when you can find them in Froebel and Bronson Alcott, and others? They are new only in the sense that we are beginning to sense, understand, and *describe* what makes for great teaching—to add a certain self-consciousness to the enterprise without any reduction of the spontaneous warmth and humanity which are present whenever education takes place. Dr. Mayer has the knack of making such things practically self-evident.



## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

### NOTES IN PASSING

MANY of the readers of this column seem to be not only interested in reading about educational "innovation," but also in finding some practical contribution of their own to make. Two such individuals have recently established a small community-living school located between Orlando and Daytona Beach, Florida, offering capacities for dealing with disabled children. The environment is not that of a "special school" for the handicapped, however, for the students are by no means limited to those who need therapeutic attention. While the founders and teachers, Mr. and Mrs. Zindel Elmer, have done extensive work in remedial teaching and physiotherapy, their interests are not specialized, and they work for an understanding rapport between the handicapped and "normal" youngsters which may be of lasting benefit to both. A brochure on this enterprise is available on request from Hygea School, Orange City, Fla.

The following paragraphs give a broad introduction to the ideas behind this school:

In a school as small as HYGEA, special teaching techniques can be adapted to each child—handicapped or not—as he requires. Academic instruction is combined with remedial work perceptual training, neuro-muscular education, and speech and language therapy.

We will concentrate on helping the particular student surmount his disability, but we will also include a generous share of the fun and glory of living in a child's world—the world of experience outside the classroom. School trips and group projects broaden the handicapped child's life, and help him to find ways he can do useful and satisfying work.

HYGEA tries to provide its students with the kind of real life and creative experiences which every normal child should have—experiences which enrich the learning and integrate and enliven the struggle of a child to mature and develop his potential.

About the directors: Over a period of years, Mr. Elmer (himself born of a cerebral palsied mother) has worked extensively with children handicapped in many ways, some of them homebound, under the Bureau for the Education of the Physically Handicapped of the Board of Education of the City of New York. He has taken courses in the education of the handicapped at Hunter College in New York City.

Mrs. Elmer has taught brain-injured children at the Starpoint School in Pelham, New York, under a special grant as a neuro-muscular education teacher and speech therapist. She has done graduate work in speech pathology and audiology at Hunter College under a traineeship grant from the U.S. Vocational Rehabilitation Administration.

Students are coached in small groups, or individually tutored, as the individual or subject may require. The high school courses are mostly provided by the Extension Service of the University of Nebraska, and are fully accredited. The brochure continues:

We encourage our students to develop *their interests*. Out of an exciting, satisfying school experience can grow naturally the desire to pursue the more intensive, independent study to which our colleges ought to be devoted. The colleges already cry out over the waves of poorly prepared and ill motivated students that besiege their admissions offices. HYGEA joins with those schools that aim to stem this tide.

Our school openly admires the great Transcendental thinkers of early America—Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Thoreau, Bronson Alcott—and we plan to honor their annunciated truths through use.

This means we seek to practice universal brotherhood, and to look for common elements in our studies and in our experiences together that will link men—racially, nationally, culturally—and heal the wounds that are the inheritance of our age.

HYGEA is a co-educational country school. There are no age limits, no entrance requirements other than the student's desire to attend coupled with the directors' confidence that a constructive relationship with the school can be established. There are no religious, racial, or academic tests. A few scholarships are available.

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Conjecture, if not debate, is likely to follow any recital of the unusual decisions rendered in cases of juvenile delinquency by Superior Court Judge Robert Gardner, of Santa Ana, Calif. (as reported by Gardner in the *National Observer* July 27, 1964), Judge Gardner feels that the ex-offender has a great potential as a remedial educator in steering youths away from a life involved with habitual offenses against society. This jurist has seen very few beneficial results from the official juvenile institutions. After describing the success of a "graduate" of the California Youth Authority whom he allowed to assume custody of a delinquent younger brother, Gardner summarizes his views:

If the best man to help an alcoholic is a reformed alcoholic why not a reformed delinquent to help a delinquent? Sociologists agree that delinquency is primarily a group phenomenon and that the task of rehabilitation is one of changing the shared delinquent characteristics.

I think this concept can best be explained in the words of a delinquent himself. Some time ago I was being interviewed on a television program and mentioned my efforts in this field. Shortly thereafter I received a letter from a young man who described a similar experience he had had in another state.

In the interests of anonymity I will merely say that he had become a complete delinquent, and had finally been sentenced to a correctional institution. There he had come in contact with an ex-convict who was working with delinquents through an unofficial program known in that locality as Youth Anonymous. My young correspondent told me that this was the turning point in his life, and that he was now living a law-abiding, productive, happy life and that all he was he owed to his contact with this ex-convict.

Judge Gardner is interested in a new sort of organization to facilitate and encourage such a system. He believes, however, "that such a program cannot be established through official channels." He says further: "The possibility exists that the program might be triggered through some nongovernmental organization. It is my hope that as in the case of Alcoholics Anonymous, two anonymous ex-delinquents may meet and from their chance meeting develop an organization,

nationwide in scope, to which parents, judges, and police can turn in their effort to help the delinquent."

A particularly impressive "testimonial" comes from the ex-delinquent whose life was radically changed for the better with the help of a former convict:

He had a way of making a kid feel like a real punk, a fink, for pulling his ridiculous petty crimes, and at the same time made a guy think that he was important and had a lot of good in him.

## *FRONTIERS*

### **Education and Existentialism**

IN every way the existential viewpoint is divergent from conventional education and philosophy. To existentialism, philosophy is not a theoretical matter, it is not a prelude to objectivity. On the contrary, philosophy is an aspect of subjectivity. Our choice of values, thus, has lasting consequences on both the theoretical and the practical level.

In contemporary educational philosophy many attempts are made to classify ideas. Thus one may say that Hutchins is a perennialist, for he believes that truth is absolute and that it can best be understood through the Great Books. Actually, the more we know about a great thinker, like Hutchins, the less accurate any classification becomes. For example, in Hutchins' *Education for Freedom* we find both existential and perennialist tendencies. Similarly, William James is the fountainhead for both pragmatism and existentialism. The point in all this is that classification is a superficial procedure, since educational philosophy involves choice and commitment and intangible factors which go beyond categorization.

If philosophy reflects the fullness of life, there can be no absolute system, no complete truth and no educational system valid for all nations. *Education thus implies diversity and pluralistic attitudes.* The unifying factor lies in a complex exploration of life, in the striving for authenticity, in the attempt "to internalize the external" and to make education a living, subjective reality.

Such a philosophy points to the basic responsibilities of the teacher. He can retard civilization by conforming and by soul-less actions or he can be an agent of moral advancement by fearless questioning and bold non-conformity. His obligation extends beyond the classroom to the family and society. At the same time the student has deep obligations to himself and to humanity. It is not enough for him to acquire knowledge and

to be an expert; rather he must have an emotional encounter with knowledge so that his life is transformed and so that culture becomes a living actuality. He can never achieve certainty, for he must realize that education has no beginning and no end and that his own insights are bound to be incomplete.

In such a fallibilistic setting there can be no prescribed curriculum. The teacher can never cover a complete field of knowledge nor can he ever be neutral regarding the great issues of the day. His digressions and value judgments may be more significant than the subject matter which he conveys. When he speaks with the wisdom of the soul, then he becomes a real influence upon his students; otherwise he becomes a mere footnote to a textbook.

Existentialism, unlike pragmatism, subordinates society to the demands of the individual. This does not imply social lethargy. But existentialism points out that individual tensions would remain even in a social utopia, that the issues of life go beyond social reform. In fighting for a better society existentialism aims at the emancipation of the individual who in this way is striving for "the freedom of all." This struggle, as Pasternak observed, is not for an objective truth as determined by a party, but rather for a subjective ideal which is being universalized in a tentative manner. Existentialism upholds the concrete man against the masses which forever threaten to inhibit his creativity.

In education this implies a stress upon the individual student. The existential teacher will not demand adjustment, but will fight against adjustment. In avoiding indoctrination like a deadly sin, he will encourage rebellion and opposition as bases of progress. He will not be concerned with externals but instead will dwell upon the need for inwardness both in his own life and in the existence of his students.

For existentialist thinkers there can be no objective knowledge of history. Historical facts are subordinated to value judgments which

illuminate and clarify the dilemmas of the present. Existentialists refuse to acknowledge an inevitable pattern in history; rather they see it as an open possibility. In Emersonian terms they view the institution as the replica of man whose ideals and values are the center of study. Since no inevitability is recognized, history implies change which can be directed toward individual betterment. To existential historians, like y Gasset, history is always a conflict between the authentic individual and the mass-man and education's function is to fight against the idols of the masses so that genuine freedom can be achieved.

Art occupies a central place in existential education. Mere appreciation of art is inadequate. Mere historical knowledge about art is regarded as secondary. What is demanded is an active participation in art, which can never be a neutral enterprise. Art, then, demands a passionate engagement and in its implications defines the effectiveness of civilization.

To clarify the esthetic issue, we must distinguish between the creator of art and the critic. The creator speaks from within; he is eternally restless; he becomes what he does; he is in a state of constant receptivity; his vision is always unfulfilled. The critic, on the other hand, who tends to dominate education, speaks from without and tends to lack inwardness and understanding of the subjective agonies which the creator experiences. The task of education is to create participants in the enterprise of art who will view the creator with deep sympathy and who will regard art as the center of human existence.

In such a philosophy the humanities are far more valuable than the academic study of the sciences. The humanities give us an immediate view of life; they introduce us to the flux of experience; they transform our inner being, while the sciences demand detachment and present an impersonal view of the universe. However, it should be pointed out that science can be an aspect of the humanities if its concrete

applications are stressed, if it sharpens our powers of perception and if it illuminates the existential choices which we face in an age of uncertainty.

Liberal education, in existential terms, means that education molds our inner being. It does not imply a study of the trivium or the quadrivium or a mastery of the Great Books. Liberal education can be measured by its capacity to emancipate us from the idols of the tribe so that we develop a genuine sense of identity based upon an awareness of inner freedom.

The center of existential education is the dialogue between the teacher and student and, even more important, the inward dialogue which is part of the educational process of all individuals. Thus Socrates and Kierkegaard become our guides, for they teach us that truth is not an external process but an inward achievement which depends on our own receptivity. In existentialist circles the lecture method is regarded as a secondary device, for so often it creates a mechanical relationship between teacher and student. As for teaching machines, they may be valuable aids, but they are only preliminary steps to education, which depends on existential inter-stimulation.

Moral ideals can never be excluded in an existential scheme of education. This does not mean teaching about morality, censoring books, or presenting abstract schemes of ethics, but rather a development of perspective. *The teacher thus becomes a moralist without absolutes who develops within the student a feeling about the alternatives which he faces.*

Against a mechanistic view of psychology, existentialists point to man's uniqueness and his qualitative differentiation from other parts of nature. The existential counselor thus regards formal tests and evaluations as superficial compared with the immediacy of the person. The existential therapist tries to avoid preconceptions and he himself changes in the therapeutic process.

Carl Rogers expresses the innermost spirit of existential therapy in the following words: "I launch myself into the therapeutic relationship having a hypothesis or a faith, that my liking, my confidence, and my understanding of the other person's inner world, will lead to a significant process of becoming. I enter the relationship not as a scientist, not as a physician who can accurately prescribe a cure, but as a person entering into a personal relationship. I risk myself, because if, as the relationship deepens, what develops is a failure, a regression, a repudiation of me and the relationship of the client, then I sense that I will lose myself or a part of myself; I let myself go into the immediacy of the relationship where it is my total organism which takes over and is sensitive to the relationship, not simply my consciousness."<sup>1</sup>

While Freudian therapists stress the past in its deterministic aspects, the existential counselor is more concerned with the present and the future. His question is: Where are you going and why? He deals with three worlds: the world outside (*Umwelt*), the world of relationships (*Mitwelt*), and the world within (*Eigenwelt*). All are equally significant and a dynamic relationship has to be established so that the ego can function without being inhibited by self-limitations.

Sincerity is the keynote to existential education. "Be frank with yourself and be frank with your children," the advice given by Tolstoy to teachers, has a deep meaning for existentialists. All the questions of children are to be answered with frankness; they are never to be evaded. The problems of pupils are to be viewed with real concern and compassion, not with academic detachment. The aim of the teacher, however, is not to become an absolute guide, but a source of emancipation so that the pupil becomes an autonomous center of creativity.

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<sup>1</sup> Carl Rogers, "Persons or Science? A Philosophical Question," *American Psychologist*, 10:267-278, 1955.

The task of existential education is not preparation for life. Indeed, life is the test of education and ideas are verified by their livability. We are not merely lawyers or doctors or artists or teachers but human beings exploring the preciousness of the moment, strenuously striving for significance. Specialization, then, is never adequate, for all significant problems have a subjective meaning. It implies that what man is counts for more than his external achievements.

Specifically, this means in education that general knowledge is not the preparation for specific competence; on the contrary, specific competence is the prelude to general understanding. Our colleges usually reverse that process. They have introductory general courses while their advanced work is excessively specialized without real integration and genuine interdisciplinary work. The result is enormous fragmentation and the absence of a coherent philosophy of education. Thus a reform is indicated which would look upon specialization as a mere platform upon which general understanding could be built.

This type of education looks to the concrete individual and is concerned with his actual preoccupations. *Its conception of life is problematic; its aim is not a static balance but a dynamic equilibrium, which recognizes the dilemmas and perplexities of human existence. Such a philosophy begins and ends with questions.* The difference is that the first questions touch the surface of our being and arise out of external needs, while the final queries are symbols of inwardness and commitment and go to the heart of the matter.

The soul-searching questions, which are the basis of the educative process, indicate that no generation can be taught in a formal way, that the basic attitudes and motivations must be reshaped and redefined by every generation. We may be able to instruct others in quantification, we may be able to give them practical competence, but values can only be suggested and they have no real

meaning unless the individual finds them in the maze of his own experience.

Such a view of education and man accepts the fragmentary aspects of all experience. *Totality is an abstraction; my insight is but a pebble in the stream of eternity.* Yet I must not subordinate it to the commands of authority and fail to express it because it cannot approach a view of totality. The existentialist view is deliberately ego-centered for it believes that unless the individual has explored himself and has searched subjectively with vigor and earnestness, life becomes a cyclical exercise. It says to the individual: you are qualitatively different from all parts of nature if you will become aware of your awareness and if you seek an authentic existence through self-exploration and avoid all forms of dependence. The issue of existence then goes beyond life and death, it is the issue of drifting impersonally or living creatively with a Faustian thirst for subjective depth and unending enlightenment.

Real education thus is a constant protest against externality. It appears that man forever externalizes his problems and his situations. A subject, he wants to become an object; a creator, he wants to become a disciple. *Having an infinite capacity for self-deception, man mistakes the symbol for reality, the myth for God, the tribe for humanity.*

The existentialist perspective calls for a rendezvous of man with himself so that life becomes a dawn instead of a twilight experience. The basic questions that educators should ask are: Has the individual awakened from dogmatic slumber? Has he been emancipated from the taboos of society? Has he overcome the seductions of technology? Has he striven with sincerity and with a degree of agony? Has he become an active participant in the search for knowledge? Has he cultivated a sense of inwardness? Has he developed a sense of relatedness with others so that they are not merely objects for his own desires? Has he involved himself in a cause without abdicating his own

identity? In short, has he become genuinely creative?

No individual can give an affirmative answer to all these questions. This is part of the existentialist challenge which shows that education moves from the partial to the larger self.

In its central doctrines there are basic similarities between existentialism and Zen Buddhism. Both movements stress a basic simplicity, both regard the unessential as being essential, both cherish spontaneity, both limit the powers of reason, both appeal to imagination and insight. The great difference is that in existentialism wisdom demands an agonizing self-examination, which involves a sense of being forlorn in the universe.

In a society concerned with the externals of education, governed by technology and the multiplication of desires, and other-directed in its status consciousness, existentialism fills a desperate need. It calls for strenuous self-examination so that life may not be wasted with triviality and superficiality and so that the authentic individual can emerge with both a sense of moderation and limitation and a sense of unfulfilled possibilities.

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