VOLUME XIX, NO. 17
APRIL 27, 1966

SPIRITUAL VALUES IN A SCIENTIFIC AGE

[This article by Paul Wienpahl, professor of philosophy at the University of California in Santa Barbara, is much condensed from a paper presented in a recent lecture series sponsored by the University Extension Division.—Editors.]

LET us be clear that we live in a scientific age. It is certainly scientific in that we non-scientists are concerned with and affected by science to an extraordinary degree. It may be that the nineteenth century was pre-eminently the age of science. By this I mean that more original scientific exploration took place during this period than during all the previous centuries combined. We now feel the effects of that tremendous scientific surge, not only from the things which have come to surround us but also from the way in which we have come to regard them. There are the missiles, the bomb, the advances in medicine, the developments in chemistry—and these latter to the extent that many people advocate chemotherapy rather than psychotherapy for mental ailments. And our attitude toward these things is what the philosophers call positivistic.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, a French philosopher named August Comte gave clear formulation to the positivistic outlook. Under the influence of David Hume and Immanuel Kant and of the growth of science, Comte came to the following conclusion: Mankind, he reasoned, and individual men as they mature, have gone and go through three stages of attempts to explain or understand the world in which they live. There is first the religious stage in which man explains his world by means of powerful personal forces. Finally, he achieves the conception of a single God who is responsible for all creation. However, according to Comte, this sort of explanation turns out to be unsatisfactory, for it does not give man any control over his environment. Placating the gods and prayer to God may console but they do not enable man to predict the future and thereby establish control. In dissatisfaction, therefore, men move on to another type of explanation. They try to understand their world by means of impersonal forces: Plato's ideas, mind, matter, cause and effect. Descartes, the father of modern philosophical thought, concluded that the world is made of two substances, mind and matter. And much of our Western philosophical thought since then is a footnote to Descartes.

However, the criticism made of religious "explanations" can also be made of others which are commonly called metaphysical. They do not enable us to predict external events. Thus Western man was led to develop a new technique for understanding the world—the technique called science. And for the first time with this technique man found that he could predict the future—and with ever-increasing accuracy. This is what Comte called positive knowledge. Comte's outlook, which came to be known as positivism, had a widespread influence, partly because others without Comte's technical formulations were coming to believe, as he did, that science constitutes the only kind of knowing. The result has been a growing distrust of both religion and metaphysics.

Consider for a moment my own development. Until I was eighteen I was a member of the Episcopalian Church. I attended services regularly and took communion once a month. About this time I began to study philosophy and in a few years was working for a Ph.D. After the war, when I began to teach, I called myself a logical positivist. This is to say that I believed with Comte that the only true knowledge is science. I believed in addition that any claims to knowledge which are not in one of the branches of science can be reduced to a claim in one of these branches by logical analysis. I distrusted religion and metaphysics completely.

What did I do as a professor of philosophy, then? Isn't metaphysics of the essence of philosophy, as the dictionary says? Well, I performed logical analyses. In the sphere of ethics, for example, I analyzed the word "good." How, I asked, is it used,

and what are its relations to the words "right," "ought," "moral law," etc. I did not ask, What is the good? I raised questions about the word. I did not raise questions about the thing to which the word refers. I had become a child of my times.

We come now to the question, Are spiritual values, religious values, possible in a scientific age? Immediately, I think, we must distinguish this from another, though related, question. What happens to religious values in a scientific age? For these values must be possible in a scientific age, else I would not be talking about them (by now you must have guessed that I moved eventually from analyses of ethical language to an interest in religion).

The question of what constitutes "spiritual values" is not easy to answer, although I believe exploratory answers are possible. Let us consider a few historical examples. We commonly say, with all of our occidental provincialism, that science began in Greece in the sixth century B.C. Up to fairly recent times histories of Western philosophy were called histories of philosophy. We ignored the Orient completely. For several hundred years the spirit of reason and science flourished in the lives of the Greek thinkers, yet the Greeks had vigorous religions and it was during this period that the concept of the spirit or immortal soul attained some of its most vital development. It may even be urged that Socrates (to name but one) was concerned precisely with his spiritual life. Thus, spiritual values and science are not incompatible.

One more example from history. While people date the Renaissance differently, there can be little doubt that the Renaissance was well under way by the sixteenth century. That is to say, the beginning of our scientific age was then well under way. And yet the sixteenth is the century of the great Spanish mystics. Thus the outcome of these brief historical researches for our question is that, *as a matter of fact*, spiritual values may or may not exist side by side with scientific values. Whether they do or not probably depends on complex sociological and psychological factors—at least, judging from the foregoing historical perspective.

What of our own period? What are we to make of the view of Comte and the positivists that man is going through an historical development, the outcome of which is the death of metaphysics and religion and the pre-eminence of science? Here I can be simplest and clearest by being personal again. For some time I accepted the Comtean view that our future lay with science. That is to say, I thought that all our problems and difficulties could be solved by scientific means. In this I was thinking of our psychic difficulties as well as our physical problems and concerns. With Comte I believed that an increasingly better and more human world could be built by the means of science and technology.

But then, quite beyond my control and even unwanted, something or things else began to creep into my life. These manifestations were numerous and I shall not begin to catalogue them. I had children and learned from them that environment is not as important as I used to think. I began to feel sorrier for other persons than I had before. In moments of exhaustion I would find myself weeping for this friend and that acquaintance. Then I made an important step. I realized that I was not weeping for them. My tears were for myself. The more success I had in life, the higher I mounted the rungs of my profession and the more articles I published, the greater the need for tears. I wanted not to admit that there was emptiness in my life. For those who know the story of Job, mine was an ancient history.

The signs appeared in other guises. For years I have taught a long "history of philosophy" course, lasting a year. I have always enjoyed the course, but I found that I was interpreting many of the historical figures differently each time I talked of them. A case in point is St. Augustine—Augustine the philosopher, as distinct from Augustine the Church Father. Augustine discovered extraordinary things about what he called "God." I used to think that Augustine was describing his creator, but I came to see that he was analyzing his own inner life. For example, he found that, since God's will is limitless, God cannot be subject to the knowledge of good and evil. One cannot say that God has to save this or that soul, for that would be to limit God's power. Thus, whether you or I are saved depends on God's grace

and there can be no guarantee that you or I will be saved. This realization leads to a hopeless outlook. We cannot bind God by our good works. What, then, of good works?

This dilemma has no escape except from realizing that in talking of God, Augustine was talking of himself. At arm's length, so to speak, he was analyzing his own soul; and, by extension, the souls of all men. The "God" talk was simply a manner of speaking. And Augustine was saying of himself and of other men something very like that which the contemporary existentialists are saying. We are totally responsible for our lives. Like Augustine's God, we are, as we come to understand ourselves, beyond good and evil. What we do may be *called* good or evil. But in doing it we need not be bound by what we know of that which men call good and evil. We are free agents, which is to say that we are responsible for what we do and what we are.

Thus, through Augustine, I found myself in the camp of the existentialists. I ceased to be a positivist. On the other hand, I returned with fresh understanding to the work of the positivists and the pragmatists like William James and John Dewey. I realized that what we had been saying, these men, and I through their instruction, is that science is a means of controlling our environment. I had thought, you see, that Science (from the Latin *scio,* to know) is knowledge. That is, that the ultimate understanding of the world comes in science. But now I realized that science does not give understanding. It gives control. It enables us to navigate, to build bridges, to cure disease, but science does not provide understanding.

Out of my work as a positivist and pragmatist, however, there also came another sort of understanding of religion or, at least, of the religious life. It is not theology. It is first and foremost something else. During the Middle Ages a curious but powerful doctrine appeared—the doctrine of twofold truth. The two ways to truth are faith and reason. At first it was said that, if the two conflict, we must follow the lead of faith, but it is fair, I think, to say that the emphasis was finally reversed and in the age of positivism the way of faith came under ridicule (if mentioned at all), and the way of reason was held to be the only way.

I began to appreciate the doctrine of twofold truth in a new way. I found, in other words, that men have an inner as well as an outer life; a spiritual as well as a biologic, political, social and economic life. And the poets came to be of more assistance to me than contemporary technical philosophers. This is why, after mentioning complex sociological factors as probably affecting the possibility of spiritual values in a scientific age, I am ignoring them.

We now must inquire into the nature of spiritual values. You may have noticed that I have spoken of them interchangeably with religious values and I think that for some purposes we may equate them. However, in doing so, I have to make a qualification which is at the heart of what I am endeavoring to convey. It is that, although in common parlance the words "religious" and "spiritual" are commonly used interchangeably, this usage conceals something which drastically affects the question about the compatibility between religious values and science. The word "religion" comes from either of two Latin verbs, one meaning to re-read, the other to bind over or simply to bind. A1though I like the former possibility, most authorities favor the latter. Webster goes on confusingly to define "religion" initially as the worship or adoration of God or a God. The Oxford Dictionary more straightforwardly defines "religion" initially as a state of life in which a person is bound to the commitment of monastic vows. Only later or secondarily does it define "religion" as the recognition of some unseen "power." When we put these etymological considerations together, as we do when we equate religious with spiritual values, we gain an idea of these values which is at once familiar and, to my mind, highly misleading. It is the idea that these values have to do with the soul's relation to God. I believe that it is this familiar idea of religious or spiritual values which, together with increasing maturity, turned me from these values. The idea became at first untenable and then meaningless. I found that I could experience neither a soul nor the God to which it was supposedly related. And it further seems to me that turning from this idea was not an idiosyncrasy of mine. It must be inevitable in

an age when the worship of reason, and hence of science, is great.

Thus we get one answer to the question of what happens to spiritual values in a scientific age. They are seriously, if not irretrievably, threatened, *when* the ideas of religion, and thus of the life of the spirit, are of the sort we commonly hold. (I might add that some of the great views, such as the Taoist and the Buddhist, cannot be regarded as religions if we accept this familiar idea of religion.) It appears that we have to inquire more deeply into the nature of religion and, therefore, of spiritual values. I know of no logical way to proceed at this juncture. All I can do is turn to my own experience. At the time when something was going wrong with my life, I gave a public lecture in which I described something of what was happening to me. I called it "Philosophical Reflections." The paper was well received but none of the journals would have anything to do with it. Finally MANAS published excerpts from it and an editorial in the same issue said that Wienpahl sounded like a Zen Buddhist. [Published twice in MANAS under the title "An Unorthodox Lecture," in the issues for June 13, 1956 and Aug. 23, 1961.]

In those days, in 1956, I knew *of* Zen Buddhism but nothing about it. Nor did I read about it for two years. I wanted my development, my philosophic development as I thought to occur on its own. Finally, however, I turned to D. T. Suzuki and then to others. In the end, feeling that I had to see the thing itself and growing increasingly tired of words, I went to Japan. Through a combination of intricate circumstances I was enabled to study this form of Buddhism first-hand; that is, I went into a monastery.

What I found surprised me beyond measure despite my wide reading in Zen literature and the literature about Zen. For what I was taught was a discipline, a practice, a practice of sitting in a certain way and breathing in a certain manner. And I was told that that was all there is to it: to perfect that practice, to pursue that discipline. Stop reading, they said. Forget all that you have heard of enlightenment and satori. Concentrate on the practice.

In this way I came to learn that there is a tremendously important difference between the practice of religion and a religion. The practice includes a quiet, regular, disciplined and ascetic life. It implies detachment from worldly affairs and things.

I now think that we have spiritual values before us. They are quiet strength, simplicity, tranquility, detachment from material things. The silent figure of the meditating monk sitting alone with himself is one symbol of these values.

Religion does not concern the relation of the soul to God, *though by some people, the Christians, religion is talked about in this way.* (In the Buddhist religion, or at least one sect of it, we are told that there is no God and that we should abandon the idea of the self or the soul.) Religion has to do with that other part or side of our lives. We are being religious when we are being alone with ourselves. We can be alone and be with others. The "other world" of which all religious people speak is *this* world. Being religious, being in the so-called other world, is simply being in this everyday world in the religious way, the quiet way. There is nothing mysterious about it. It seems mysterious only because so few *have* practiced it. This step is so important and has such a vital bearing on our question that I want to explain it further. The other world of which religious people speak has been described in various ways. The Buddhists call it the other shore to which we cross by the raft of the Buddha's teaching. They also refer to it as Nirvana. Some Christians have called it heaven. It is that realm to which the immortal soul goes when it is redeemed. It is described by more sophisticated people as the timeless realm of being and is contrasted with the relative world of becoming. In this vein they go on to say that the way to this world is that of faith or intuition. Knowledge of the other world, the relative world, is obtained by science.

The step of which I speak is that of realizing that these two worlds are one. It is an immensely difficult step to take. Not only because our descriptions of the two worlds have it that they are different worlds, but also because the step requires considerable doing. It requires living with an intensity something like that of the monastic life to which I have referred. It involves first a retreat from

life, but eventually it issues in a return to life. The story of Christ is perhaps our most familiar example of this. For years he disappeared—or at least we know nothing of him from his early youth until he reappeared at the age of thirty for his three years of teaching. The story of the Buddha is similar. He was a wealthy young prince when we first hear of him. Then he left his family and for nine years led the life of a recluse, searching, as we often say, for the truth. In his early thirties he returns as a teacher—in this case to endeavor to help people spiritually for almost fifty years.

That the two worlds are one may be seen in another way. The impression that they are totally different worlds has given rise to the notion that one can get from one to the other only by a single tremendous "leap." Christians speak of the "sudden union with God." The Zen Buddhists speak of "sudden enlightenment." This notion is, however, mistaken or, at best, misleading. And, as with all disciplines, this one too is an affair of steps. In all religious literature the metaphor of the ascent of a ladder is present. One gradually mounts to ever increasing heights (of perfection). And in this the mounting must not be forgotten, for the mounting *is* the religious life. We too often separate means and ends.

Now, the fact that this life means taking first one step and then the next and that this is the religious or spiritual life is proof that these two worlds are one. This is to say that a person is religious (that is, quiet and detached) in *this* life. Remember the Biblical question, what profiteth a man if he gains the whole world and loses his life. Of course, this saying has other and important meanings, but it certainly stresses the importance of his life.

Now, what bearing has this on the question, what happens to spiritual values in a scientific age? I think that it helps us to see that there is no intrinsic connection between spiritual values and a scientific age. That is to say, there is nothing necessarily incompatible between having spiritual values and living in a scientific age. To put it otherwise, science does not threaten spiritual values. Why, then, are we who live in a scientific age worried about our spiritual values?

The answer is, I think, that our worries have nothing to do with this being a scientific age. Spiritual values are a matter of concern in any kind of an age. It is a simple and plain brute fact that spiritual values are difficult to come by. And they are so because their existence depends so much upon the individual human being. He has to want them, first, and then work unremittingly for them. Why blame science for our lack of spirituality? Probably, we do because some one or thing has to be blamed for our faults and our deficiencies. This, as we say, is human nature. Of course, it must be admitted that science and its resultant technology may make for busy lives and much interest in the acquisition of material things. And this, of course, makes spiritual attainment difficult, for busy lives and material things are the very opposite of spirituality. However, I still believe that the main resistance to being spiritual lies in ourselves. It is *we* who do not make the effort. Science, knowledge, does not prevent us.

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REVIEW
FRIENDS FROM THE NORTH

A PACKET of books for review has just come in from Canada, and your reviewer has been devouring them. Why they should excite all this interest is a puzzling question—except for the fact that two are by Henry David Thoreau; but there is a further explanation. These books are all untechnical, very human documents, distinctly *amateur*. You have the feeling that they surely came into existence because their creators, from author to publisher, wanted them to be, with no more thought than necessary about what money might be connected with them. The publisher is Harvest House, 1364 Greene Avenue, Montreal 6, Province of Quebec, and if you want to buy one of these books by mail you will have to write to the publisher and ask the price, since the review slips don't say.

The Thoreau books are *A Yankee in Canada* (paperback, 1961) and *Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers* (paperback, 1963), both of which first appeared in 1866, bound in a single volume. The latter collection includes the essay on civil disobedience, the writings about John Brown, and, along with several others, the essay called "Life without Principle," which is filled with that delightful, inoffensive snobbery possible only to whole human beings. Thoreau is always testing his readers. No honest man can read him without at least a little shame.

Nothing human was alien to Thoreau, but many of the things men do he regarded as anti-human and completely alien to him. On his trip to Canada, as soon as he reached Montreal, he visited the enormous church of Notre Dame (it would seat 10,000 people), and later reported these reflections:

> We walked softly down the broad-aisle with our hats in our hands. Presently came in a troop of Canadians, in their homespun who had come to the city in the boat with us, and one and all kneeled down in the aisle before the high altar to their devotions, somewhat awkwardly, as cattle prepare to lie down, and there we left them. As if you were to catch some farmer's sons from Marlboro, come to cattle-show silently kneeling in Concord meeting-house some Wednesday! Would there not soon be a mob peeping in at the windows? It is true, these Roman Catholics, priests and all, impress me as a people who have fallen far behind the significance of their symbols. It is as if an ox had strayed into a church and were trying to bethink himself. Nevertheless, they are capable of reverence; but we Yankees are a people in whom this sentiment has nearly died out, and in this respect we cannot bethink ourselves even as oxen. . . . I am not sure but this Catholic religion would be an admirable one if the priest were quite omitted. I think I might go to church myself some Monday, if I lived in a city where there was such a one to go to. In Concord, to be sure, we do not need such. Our forests are such a church, far grander and more sacred. . . .

Thoreau found many soldiers in Canada—far too many, for his taste—and considered them utterly useless, as usual. "They reminded me," he says, "of the men who are paid for piling up bricks and then throwing them down again." A large body of men drilling on the parade grounds evoked this commentary:

> Each man wore white kid gloves. It was one of the most interesting sights I saw in Canada. The problem appeared to be how to smooth down all individual protuberances or idiosyncrasies, and make a thousand men move as one man, animated by one central will; and there was some approach to success. They obeyed the signals of a commander who stood at a great distance, wand in hand; and the precision, and promptness, and harmony of their movements could not easily have been matched. The harmony was far more remarkable than that of any choir or band, and obtained, no doubt, at a greater cost. They made on me the impression, not of many individuals, but of one vast centipede of a man, good for all sorts of pulling down; and why not then for some kinds of building up? If men could combine thus earnestly, and patiently, and harmoniously to some really worthy end, what might they not accomplish?

A little later he returns to this subject, since in the Canada of those days the sight of soldiers was inescapable:

> I have no doubt that soldiers well drilled are, as a class peculiarly destitute of originality and independence. The officers appeared like men dressed above their condition. It is impossible to give the soldier a good education, without making him a deserter. His natural foe is the government that drills him. What would any philanthropist, who felt an interest in these men's welfare, naturally do, but first

> of all teach them so to respect themselves, that they could not be hired for this work, whatever might be the consequences to this government or that;—not drill a few, but educate all.

Well, this is a favorite theme for Thoreau, still needing to become more widely popular; but the book has other themes and excellences. Thoreau was thirty-three at the time of this excursion, and his companion was Ellery Channing, nephew of William Ellery Channing, founder of the Unitarian Association of the United States. A pleasantly informing essay by the Harvest House editor, Maynard Gertler, tells us that this trip of 1,100 miles was undertaken in 1850, and that Thoreau prepared himself by reading at least a score of books on Canadian history, geography, and natural history, the fruit of which appears when pertinent in the text.

It is far less of a change of subject and of pace than one might expect to turn from Thoreau to the two books of Brother Anonymous, a French Canadian teaching brother who, it turns out, supplied "the spark that set off Quebec's 'quiet revolution'." He would put an end to the celibacy of the clergy and invigorate in all ways the practice of religion. Brother Anonymous is the extraordinary combination of a learned, honest, temperate, pious, and free man. In his first book (originally in French), *The Impertinences of Brother Anonymous* (1962), he says:

> Nothing that is oppressive is Christian. Christianity is essentially a liberating force. One of these days French Canadians will discover that liberation. . . . Of the three lusts which all men know, the one that scourges mankind most harshly is the third, the one of which nothing is said, the one never denounced from the pulpit, the spirit of domination. Do you know any preachers who denounce the snares of authority? . . . Oh no, they always hammer on the same nail, as if our national vice was rebellion, as if we were not long since a dumb people, unable to express ourselves except by swearing and getting drunk.
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> They renounce money. They renounce sex. They never renounce power. Poor and chaste, but domineering, full of arrogance. . . . In the time of St. Augustine a disciple stood up in full assembly to discuss something St. Augustine had said. Do you see any worker—or any learned man—nowadays who would get up in the cathedral to argue something with his bishop? Evidently that would mean that the man felt interested, deeply interested, in what his bishop had said. It would mean too that there wasn't time for the constable to interfere. Finally it would mean that authority had a respect for man that we are not used to.

This sort of unanswerable, civilized criticism goes on and on:

> Spoiled beyond what we can see—the young people whom we teach in class are as far from Christianity as they can go without making a commotion. Their ideas, their feelings, about money, women, success, love are as foreign to Christianity as is possible. The failure of our religious teaching is plain. Yet what French Canadian has not lived under the influence of a cassock, or at least under the rule of one?
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> Would religion in our society survive the disappearance of the religious apparatus? In other words, are we as individuals standing upright on the basis of religion, or are we held up by the ears? In my first letter, I asked (Brother Anonymous cites Brother Anonymous) if we should work for a major crisis which would wake us up, but at a price. It seems that we shall not avoid a general disaffection from religion—we already have that. There will be no other crisis, no other outcry. Everything will happen calmly, politely, painlessly, the way a cathedral is swallowed up by an abyss.

The other, later, Brother Anonymous book, *For Pity's Sake* (1965), is autobiographical. Here he tells the story of his childhood and youth. He is not so old. He was born in 1927 to a poor family of French Canadians. Poverty dictated his choice of a career. After the last year of his studies, he discovered he was in the last stages of tuberculosis, and the next four years were spent in a sanitarium. Then, after an operation, he got well and began to teach. Two years later, in 1956, he began to compose his "Impertinences," which were first published as letters to the newspaper *Le Devoir*. The second half of *For Pity's Sake* is largely a discussion of the reaction to these letters. Plainly, Brother Anonymous is a formidable man.

There are a few more Harvest House books on hand, which we save for another review.

COMMENTARY
ON "TEACHING" PHILOSOPHY

PAUL WIENPAHL is a working teacher, and it is for this reason, no doubt, that his article will serve as a clarifying and integrating influence in thought for many readers. A teacher is a man who shares with others what he does seriously for himself. This is probably more true in philosophy than in any other profession, since technique has the least importance in authentic philosophy.

A philosopher is a man who tries to find out. A philosopher who is also a teacher (and it appears that a good philosopher almost always *wants* to be a teacher) makes reports on both the difficulties and the possibilities which he encounters. He tells about the self-deceptions he has suffered and he tells what rules he has made for himself as safeguards against further self-deception. A man who does this does a great deal for others since these are some of the means by which people gradually free themselves from any spurious form of authority.

An important tool of the philosopher-teacher is the history of philosophy, since here may be found material for making generalizations about the difficulties and possibilities encountered by a large number of inquirers. So that there is, after all, an element of technique in the practice of philosophy. The technique is largely a matter of learning how to criticise one's own thinking. Knowledge of this technique is probably best communicated by example, as Dr. Wienpahl has done.

But the seriousness of the philosopher's inquiry, for himself, is what makes the reader or student take him seriously, and therefore learn something. A serious man who teaches always gives a reliable account of his view of the human situation. This means that he reveals his own dire uncertainties, exposes his mistakes, yet shows why he is not giving up and what continuing the search means to him as a man. These communications turn out to be deeply reassuring to other inquirers who have in them the potentiality of being serious. They recognize that the self-respect of a serious man is rooted in respect for all men. Dialogue and some learning result as a matter of course.

"Conclusions" are hardly at issue in this relationship. "Agreement" is sought by no one serious about the undertaking. Yet it is true enough that the family resemblance among the conclusions of great philosophers and teachers can hardly be ignored. It is a kind of encouragement, to be compared, perhaps, with the "grace" spoken of by theologians ~ although the philosopher may legitimately think that he has somehow "earned" it.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

SUMMERHILL—OUTPOST OF FREEDOM

OF all the carelessly-used and much-abused words, "freedom" today makes a fair bid for the top of the list. Not only do such champions of freedom as the advocates of both capitalism and communism claim that only *theirs* is not illusory—but also, as psychologists often remind us, men may be subtly persuaded that they enjoy "freedom" when their minds are captive to a closed system of values. And if the mind is captive, freedom has no true human meaning.

The latest description of A. S. Neill's Summerhill School in Suffolk, England, comes by way of a brief photograph album, with comments supplied by a Mr. Herb Snitzer—*Summerhill, A Loving World* (Macmillan, 1964). Mr. Snitzer is not only a photographer with imagination, but he writes well about the meaning of Summerhill:

> Summerhill—a school for children where a philosophy of love is lived. Where at any given moment children are experiencing what it is to know themselves. A school where there are no laws of morality or religion. Where children are free to grow into adulthood without the psychological patterns most of us experience. Children who can express themselves without fear of beatings or unfair accusations. Where mental and physical conditioning are left to the child. Where coercive methods of compulsive education do not exist. At Summerhill the children regulate themselves.

Summerhill has existed since 1921 and, though the entire complement of young persons and teachers has seldom reached beyond 75, the Summerhill influence has been immeasurable. Neill's books have been translated into eight languages, and psychologists of note, after visiting the school, have invariably written about the implications of a bold assertion, which Neill puts in these terms: "There is no need whatsoever to teach children how to behave. A child will learn what is right and what is wrong in good time—provided he is not pressured."

Accompanying his expressive photographs, Mr. Snitzer reports observations attesting the validity of Neill's basic belief. Each Saturday evening, the complicated problems which attend self-government are discussed in a general meeting—a meeting, incidentally, during which the vote of a child of six counts equally with that of Neill or any of his staff. The youngsters themselves have exclusive control of the establishing of rules. Mr. Snitzer writes:

> I attended ten General Meetings in my time at Summerhill and the most dominating aspect of all was the vivid sense of fairness expressed by the children. Sometimes general rules were stiff or unusually severe, and within a week or two they were brought up again in the meeting, and usually changed. Most of the time I felt that what was dealt out was done for very constructive reasons, and here again it was rare when someone took it personally. It was not unusual to see someone accused of something, and that same person vote for the fine, whatever form it took. Each problem was discussed at length before proposals were made. Each side of the story was talked through. It was wonderful to see kids get up and say things without fear in their eyes. It was wonderful to see a child of six or seven say something, and the entire community treat that child as an equal.
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> Through all these meetings Neill sat, usually saying very little or nothing at all. The same held true for the staff.
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> The children feel the school is theirs, and the running of it is their personal concern. For the most part, the older students hold it together, although at times the older members could do much more. Few of the older children had come all the way through Summerhill from the time they were five or six.
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> But with all the problems they faced, I have never seen a group of people handle themselves in such a mature and understanding way as these fifty-two children. These children will take away from Summerhill an inner security, looking at life as a beautiful thing, where the sun shines most of the time.

Erich Fromm's preface to *Summerhill* (Hart, 1961) suggests why Neill's form of extreme permissiveness does not lead to irresponsibility:

> Discipline, dogmatically imposed, and punishment create fear; and fear creates hostility. The extensive disciplining of children is harmful and thwarts sound psychic development.
>
> Freedom does not mean license. This very important principle, emphasized by Neill, is that respect for the individual must be mutual. A teacher does not use force against a child nor has a child the right to use force against a teacher. A child may not intrude upon an adult just because he is a child, nor may a child use pressure in the many ways in which a child can.
>
> Closely related to this principle is the need for true sincerity on the part of the teacher. The author says that never in the 40 years of his work in Summerhill has he lied to a child. Anyone who reads this book will be convinced that this statement, which might sound like boasting, is the simple truth.

Everyone is supposed to know, these days, that all types of fear generate anxiety and hostility. But it remains for an exceptional "affirmative anarchist" like Neill to face this problem at its common root in childhood. Being convinced that most children learn to fear adults—because of their size and the coercive force often employed by even well-intentioned parents—Neill works to eliminate this fear at the outset of the Summerhill experience. In discussing the varied puzzled reactions to Summerhill on the part of its countless visitors, he relates how this absence of fear develops in the children a *working* belief in self-government. In respect to the General School Meeting, Neill says:

> But, says the knowing one, in practice of course the voices of the grownups count. Doesn't the child wait to see how you vote before he raises his hand? I wish he sometimes would for too many of my proposals are beaten. Free children are not easily influenced; the absence of fear accounts for this phenomenon. Indeed, the absence of fear is the finest thing that can happen to a child.

Summerhill children don't go to class until they wish to and many, transferring from conventional schools, announce with strong feelings that they will never attend any beastly classes again. But, it appears, the desire to learn through class attendance and eventually to prepare for examinations leading to Oxford or Cambridge, etc., awakens spontaneously. The average period of recovery from aversion to enforced learning is calculated by the Summerhill staff to be about six months.

What about the graduates who move directly into employment? The following conversation was reported to Neill by the manager of an engineering firm who called an ex-Summerhill employee into his office:

> "You are the lad from Summerhill," he said. "I'm curious to know how such an education appears to you now that you are mixing with lads from the old schools. Suppose you had to choose again, would you go to Eton or Summerhill?"
>
> "Oh, Summerhill, of course," replied Jack.
>
> "But what does it offer that the other schools don't offer?"
>
> Jack scratched his head, "I dunno," he said slowly: "I think it gives you a feeling of complete self-confidence."
>
> "Yes," said the manager dryly, "I noticed it when you came into the room."
>
> "Lord," laughed Jack, "I'm sorry if I gave you that impression."
>
> "I liked it," said the director. "Most men when I call them into the office fidget about and look uncomfortable. You came in as my equal."

Since we are often involved in discussion of the psychological aspects of both positive and negative "religious instruction," it is pertinent to quote Neill's expression of dislike for any religious teaching that presupposes an innate sinfulness in the child. "Fundamentally," he says, this sort of religion "is afraid of life." Neill continues:

> It is running away from life. It disparages life here and now as merely the preliminary to a fuller life beyond. This means that life here on this earth is a failure, that independent man is not good enough to achieve salvation. But free children do not feel that life is a failure, for no one has taught them to say nay to life.
>
> A greater danger is the danger of making a child a hater. If a child is taught that certain things are sinful, his love of life must be changed to hate. When

children are free, they never think of another child as being a sinner.

The new religion will be based on knowledge of self and acceptance of self. A prerequisite for loving others is a true love of self. How different from being reared under a stigma of original sin—which must result in self-hate and, consequently, hatred of others. "He prayeth best who loveth best all things both great and small." Thus Coleridge, the poet, expressed the *new* religion. In the new religion, man will pray best when he loves all things both great and small—in *himself!*

No wonder fascination by the Summerhill idea continues, for here we have "anarchy" evolving into self-government—and here, also, what many would call "irreligion" grows into a religion of ethical responsibility.

FRONTIERS

Toward a Vocabulary of Being

SOME questions from a reader may be of general interest, not because the questions can be answered, but because, so far as we can see, answering them in the terms requested is practically impossible. The writer comments on our review of *Existential Psychology* (a Random House paperback issued in 1961), edited by Rollo May, in MANAS for Feb. 16. In this book, Dr. May offers an outline summary of the subject, to which the questions refer:

> Your quoting of the six-point summary of some of the key ingredients of existential psychology leaves one with the following questions:
>
> If neurosis is the "method the individual uses to preserve his own center," then what of the advice to "Guard thy tongue before a fool"? If self-affirmation is a sign of health, then may I justify any crime on the ground of self-affirmation? If ability to participate in others is a sign of health, the question, "Participate in what?" becomes significant. And so far as awareness or self-consciousness is concerned, was not Louis XV "self-conscious" when he said, "After us, the deluge"?
>
> Is it sufficient in a theory of neurosis to rely chiefly on the "objective" vocabulary of a twentieth-century concept found in "process" in order to provide a meaningful theory of psychoanalysis? If you should reply that the six points I refer to are meant to relate to the therapeutic context, then we are still left with the problem, "What describes the person in need of therapy?" If you say that Dr. Rogers' concept of negative and positive responses is sufficient because, surely, Dr. Rogers is a good man, this is hardly "objective," nor does it tell us what to look for in subjective terms.

There is more to this letter, but we are not sure we understand it, so we stop quoting here. There are problems enough in these two paragraphs, anyhow.

First off, it must be admitted that every system of therapy, most of all existential psychotherapy, is honeycombed with inexplicit assumptions about the nature of man and human good. Clear theoretical statements on such questions are possible only in terms of some metaphysical system. Existential psychology speaks mainly to an intuitive consensus. Expressions such as "existential vacuum," "horror of lost self," and other generalizing abstractions have to do with the common feelings of human beings in this century, and the literature concerned with psychological health is largely devoted to developing an operational vocabulary devoted to identifying the meaning of such feelings, again, in operational terms.

Great subjective psychology has much in common with great poetry, so far as its understanding is concerned. Understanding is *evoked*, not produced through verifying measurements of some objectified phase of psychological experience. In fact, you could say that the understanding is precious precisely because it remains in the subjective area, where it can still be *alive*. Intuitive insight, one might argue, is made of the stuff of ambiguity, and can, therefore, be mocked as leading in any number of directions. Because it remains a *human* psychology, it participates in the hazard of human life, and is afflicted by all its uncertainty. Whether this can be called "scientific" or not is, of course, a matter of definition.

The meaning of what these psychotherapists are trying to do is not, however, as obscure as the foregoing would suggest. *Some* of the meaning—enough, that is, to interest us—is richly packed in the anecdotes of case biography. In one place, Carl Rogers writes:

> I think of another young person, this time a young woman graduate student, who was deeply disturbed and on the borderline of a psychotic break. Yet after a number of interviews in which she talked very critically about all of the people who had failed to give her what she needed, she finally concluded: "Well, with that sort of foundation, well, it's really up to me. I mean it seems to be really apparent to me that I can't depend on someone else to *give* me an education." And then she added very softly: "I'll really have to get it myself." She goes on to explore this experience of important and responsible choice. She finds it a frightening experience and yet one which gives her a feeling of strength. A force seems

> to surge up within her which is big and strong, and yet she feels very much alone and sort of cut off from support. She adds: "I am going to begin to do more things than I know how to do." And she did.

How could you put this account into the language of objective certainty? Its essence is a positive human presence in the midst of uncertainty. Some kind of a decision happened here. What kind? What "force" surged up as a result? Measure it for us: How big? How strong? Etc.

It doesn't really matter. She didn't know. Dr. Rogers didn't know, And it doesn't matter, in relation to our understanding of what is communicated here, if what "she did" didn't amount to much by some objective standard of human achievement, or even if she fell on her face a year later. We know about falling down. This report has to do with picking oneself up.

We don't deny, of course, that there may be theoretical systems of the anatomy of the subjective side of human beings; we would say simply that these systems have to have their meanings for individuals created for them by those individuals, and that these meanings, if they are put into a book as "truth" or science, could become as delusive as any of the dogmatic religions of the past, if anyone were allowed to suppose that he "knew" something as a result of reading the book. This view, we suspect, is the intention of the *Diamond Sutra,* and is behind the Zen dislike of conceptualization.

Conceptualization of essentially unexplored territory can never be the work of one individual, however brilliant. Because intelligent use of such conceptualizations is not a simple, logical process, but a cultural process achieved in a deliberately educational atmosphere, we have to learn to *grow* such concepts, never anticipating by very much the responsible discipline relating to their use. A. H. Maslow's *Toward a Psychology of Being* is a step in this direction.

This sort of arrangement, it seems clear, depends upon the moral community Michael Polanyi is talking about as necessary to the practice of fruitful science.

There is the further problem of developing these concepts in a way which protects them from becoming "merchandise" for people who think they see in them a rich stock for starting a new kind of business. One can imagine a psychologist keeping still about some new discovery he has made for the same reason that Leonardo put away some of the plans of his inventions. There is no area as vulnerable to exploitation as the subjective side of human life.

Meanwhile, if someone really wants to study a metaphysical system that investigates subjective reality in a nonanecdotal manner, there are the *Enneads* of Plotinus and the *Monadology* of Leibniz to read. These are start-from-scratch books, and very abstract, very difficult indeed, to understand. But if one wants working definitions or hypotheses concerning the subjective side of man and nature, these will not be easily found in the scientific literature of our one-dimensional civilization.