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"CAN THE ACADEMIC WORLD SEEK THE LIVING GOD?"
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The selectivity process of memory is interesting indeed. The imagination keeps retrieving from the memory bits of conversation, lines from plays, snatches of music. Often it is a one-time shot called up by a specific experience at the moment. Sometimes, though, one such piece of conversation or one such dramatic line keeps recurring at the oddest times. Like all analogies or poetic metaphors, the line and the experience have just that degree of overlapping identity or mirror symmetry that makes their combination more interesting than either one alone.

In recent years, the memory of Moliere's bourgeois gentleman ¹⁶ has recurrently intruded on my imagination with his wonderfully naive discovery that prose was what he had been speaking all the time.

The world of scholarship and the world of poetic discovery are, I am sure, children of the same intellectual mother, but they are often brother and sister temporarily out of sync with one another. We have long known that the joy of surprise and the joy of recognition are separate and distinct and reinforcing joys. In a flash of insight one puts together the heretofore un-membered pieces of a mathematical theorem, of a poem becoming, of a political decision. Out of the travail of the day-to-day and year-to-year non-sense of one's life, one begins to evolve a way of viewing, a mode of acting, a philosophy of living. Personally, individually, uniquely, it is your way of viewing, your mode of acting, your philosophy of living -- just as it was your mathematical theorem, your poem becoming, your political decision.

Then one day, the masters of erudition and scholarship begin to annotate your papers or corner you at cocktail parties demanding to know if your position

is not derived from that of Socrates, or that of Tillich, or that of Bergson. Unless one gauges that the erudite and scholarly questioner has a sense of humor, a sense of the dignity, but also of the partialness of scholarship, one had better not admit one's often partial and sometimes total lack of familiarity with the suggested scholarly ancestor of one's current thought.

Recently, both letter-writing and cocktail party inquisitors -- with and without a scholarly sense of humor -- have been badgering me to declare my dependence on Bergson. I finally acknowledged to a bright young philosopher on my faculty that it was about time I broke down and found out if it were Bergson I had been speaking all the time. And so, this winter, I am reading Bergson with my quite junior faculty member. (His version is quite probably that he is tutoring me.)

Already, it is obvious to me that I would recognize Bergson if I met him in written or spoken conversation. At the risk of real and/or perceived arrogance, I believe he would also have recognized me, had the scholarly interpreters of each and the both not filled the air with the overpowering noise of their interpretations.

In recent years, I have been preoccupied with the question of morality, of the personal responsibility for one's actions. When, then, Bergson talks about the morality of pressure representing a society which aims only at self-preservation and distinguishes this from a morality of aspiration which implicitly contains the feeling of progress, I know that we have shared a fundament of experience which makes for recognition. The recognition is full of both hope and frustration as I hear him saying: "Precisely because we find ourselves in the presence of the ashes of an extinct emotion, and because the driving power of that emotion came from the fear within it, the formulae which have remained would generally be incapable of rousing our will," unless in stirring the ashes, "we shall find some of them still warm, and at length the sparks will kindle into flame." In this context

he sees founders and reformers of religion, mystics and saints as souls opening out, breaking with nature; he sees heroism as possibly the only way to love, heroism as a return to movement, emanating from an emotion -- "infectious like all emotions -- akin to a creative art."

I am already involved in a basic contradiction. I led into this discussion with an obvious value judgment -- thinly veiled as a distinction -- a value judgment in favor of the world of poetic discovery over the world of scholarship. Having shot my barbs at the humorless sector of erudition, I have in real sophomoric style trotted out my beginning research findings in reading a very profound man. Should I apologize? If life and truth are linear and logical, indeed I should. If, instead, life and truth are non-linear, dynamic, multi-dimensional, paradoxical, and metaphorical, then instead, I posit my seeming contradictions, my unfinished puzzle as a true moment if not ^{or} a moment of truth.

Human learning, viable insight is, I believe, always the word made flesh in a person, incorporated, incarnated in a person. Data is present in random form in natural and man-made phenomena. Data is available in books and computers in selective edited form. Insight into the data and into the meaning of the pattern or patterns suggested by the data is incorporated by a person and becomes at best and at worst a hypothesis to be incorporated in whole or in part by other human persons.

Let us look briefly at the world of science--the world of modern man--as a world of invention. Is it a world of simple obsolescence? Is it a world that is true today only if it discovers and discloses the error of yesterday?

If we look at the world of technology--the transportation, communications, mechanical and electrical power systems (or especially the technological artifacts that make up those systems at any given time), then it is certainly a world of obsolescence. The inventions of today are discarded in the ash cans, the junk

heaps of tomorrow. The new civilization of today, aided by the bulldozer or the artifact that makes ~~it~~ ^{the bulldozer} obsolete, will become an archeological layer buried by the next strata of technological development.

Do civilizations, then, destroy one another so that new inventors may replace them with new forms? Is history best represented in the disjunction of synthetic artifacts or in the continuity, reproduction, and transformation, of organic life? What is the tension between discontinuity and continuity in the life of an individual person, in the life of a college or university, in the life of a nation, in the life of a church? The minute I choose "life" as the character not only of the person but also of his institutions, I have already characterized his institutions as possessing at least potential continuity by reproducing and transforming themselves in a quasi-organic life.

But--if human learning, viable insight, is always the word made flesh in a person, is always incorporated in a person, how can colleges or nations or churches learn? How can institutions read the data accumulated in their histories and present in their institutional worlds and in the worlds beyond their institutions? Even more difficult, how can institutions see into and beyond these data and discover the patterns presented by the data so that the new conceptions of reality are at once richer and more freighted with ambiguity even as they attempt to simplify and clarify that reality?

And still more difficult, how do institutions incarnate these developing conceptions into the body of man, the people of God? How is the word made flesh in the body politic?

Joan Bqez and *Joy Bishop* debate respect and responsibility, peace and murder in the midnight of television in Southern California. Robert McNamara becomes expendable to the Johnson administration--or does the administration become expendable to Robert McNamara? Robert Kennedy assaults the simple-minded anti-communism which is the moral rectitude of the students at his wife's alma mater. This is the same--or is he the same--Robert Kennedy, who once seemed to incarnate

some of the words of Senator ^{Joseph} McCarthy. And a different Senator McCarthy in what he sees as loyalty to his party announced his candidacy in opposition to the incumbent party leader.

Newspaper headlines disclose that the Viet Cong made abortive efforts to bring their case to the U.S. General Assembly and that the United States would "entertain" them only--interestingly enough--in the Security Council. And the White House calls it a false report. And we wonder first if the particular report is accurate or inaccurate; and, more important, if the contextual pattern of emerging data makes such a report likely or unlikely in fact or in possibility?

Augustine pondered over the city of God. Today we ponder over the city of the universe--the tangled, noisy, fragmented, diseased, warring world of alienated or unrecognized brothers for whom the "family of man" is obviously a word not yet made flesh, a theological conception perhaps true and safe as a theoretical abstraction, but subject not only to crucifixion but to infanticide if it somehow begins to become incarnate in the city of the universe.

And all the time--as persons here and their attempt to conceive and made fecund the family of man, to nurture the embryo lest it recurringly abort itself in an alien environment, you and your peers live in another smaller university world which to a large degree still operates as its own security council in power preservation over and against the general assembly ^{of the making crowd.} In the name of scholarship, in the name of rigor, in the name of intellectual discipline ^{the university} ~~it~~ continues to demand its own research designs carefully keeping out of the laboratory--the controlled environment of the contrived university--the tangled, fragmented, diseased, elements of the city of the universe. We introduce the theoretical abstractions and conceptions, the words in the university world--but the word made flesh--the flesh that will make for the new insights, the new conceptions is not always or even often appropriate to our rigorous reserach designs.

If we train teachers through theoretical abstractions to "play the game" in the military mode of most inner city systems, we will contribute to the pile of ashes of an extinct emotion. On the other hand, if we involve teachers in inventing curriculum and devising new processes of working with children in the sanctuary-utopia of our contrived university, we should not be surprised if our small sparks are soon smothered by the ashes of the system.

Only the fire kindled and fanned in the soggy wood of the market place can warm that market place. Only the continuing involvement of faculty and students within a university in the tangled, fragmented, diseased-elements of the city of the universe can keep the flame of relevance informing the theoretical abstractions.

I do not believe it is enough that faculty stay "current" by reading the latest articles in the journal and inserting current and relevant comments in their lectures or socratic discussions. The professor and his student must find ways as action-intellectuals of continuing to systematize from relevant experience conceptual formulations, insightful perceptions of pattern.

If the student is to be liberalized, freed to be such an action-intellectual, he must be allowed and pressed to share in the search for new patterns in the marketplace, even as he commits to the data bank of ^{his own} memory the formulations of other men of other times. Only so, I believe, can he respect the achievement and the fallibility of other formulations as he recognizes ^{in his own attempts} the necessary partialness and incompleteness of the inductive process which produced the formula.

There is on the wall of my office a beautiful black and white photograph made to show how waves can be brought to a focus by a lens. I had long admired it on the wall of a very dear friend who is a physicist. He sent it to me with a long footnote which means much to me because it captures, for me at least, a view of the world, a way of knowing, a philosophy of living that he--out of his formation as an empirical scientist who is an agnostic and I--out of my world of formation in religious commitment have come to share at a profound level.

Let me share at least the words with you, in the hope that they can summon up for you an image of the photograph: "This picture was made to show how waves can be brought to a focus by a lens. The waves are produced (near the bottom of the photograph) in a shallow layer of water as plane or straight lines--as though they were produced by a source of waves far, far away. In the ideal case of a large lens (large means simply many times larger than the distance between the waves) the focus would appear sharp and the waves, after passing the focus, would spread radially to form circular waves of ever expanding radius. But, as always, we have no ideal conditions. The focus is not sharp--the waves, after focus, are not circular, and the pattern is not clear. But a sort of focus is visible and a spreading of the distorted waves is apparent.

"But what is the moral of this story? If the wavelength were shorter, if the subject of an issue is narrow, then even with an eye of small scope, we can obtain some clarity. And for large issues, of great wavelength, we need vision or lenses of large scope, if we want to our focus or image clear.

"But we must learn from small issues something about the nature of sharp focus. Then maybe we can broaden our lenses and broaden our issues.

"This is a lesson from science."

I would rather say this is a lesson from a scientist, ^{humanist} his insight into a meaning suggested by the picture, by other phenomena--many of which I have shared, an insight shared with me in the process and the fact of its incarnation, shared now

now with you in the hope that you may incorporate it in some form into the whole of my sharing with you and into the way of viewing, the mode of acting, the philosophy of living that is peculiarly yours.

The insight, precisely because of its tension truth, its grasp of paradox, is helpful in our attempt to understand the dilemma and the potential power of the modern world of higher education. Unless we respect the discipline and the rigor represented by the world of research design, by the world of scholarship, by the world of deduction, ^{trues} reasoning, we will never bring to our poetic insights the sharp focus, and we will never learn the process of sharp focus by which, one day, we will invent the larger and more powerful lenses with which we can broaden ~~lenses~~ ^{our vision}.

Yet, the issues do not wait for the invention of the lenses. Indeed, perhaps only the perception of a sort of focus and the spreading of the distorted waves can provoke us to attempt to make the new lenses.

Poetic paradox is seeming contradiction--and yet, when it is successful--we sense its profound trueness. In the ~~part~~ form of poetry, it comes to us in the integrity of the artifact that is the poem. In the city of the universe, and probably in the university, it comes to us only through the distorted waves. When a sort of focus is visible, we are sometimes tantalized and sometimes terrified by what a broadened lense might see. We are, at the same time, if we are bright, somewhat put off by the dogged determination that must go into the invention of the new lense.

I think I share to some degree with many contemporary students their impatience with contrived and irrelevant deductive systems. At the same time, I see and want to see myself as an idealistic pragmatist, as a humanistic political actionist. Within this commitment, I am daily more convinced that rigor and discipline must be held in continuing tension with heuristic vision and poetic insight. If they are held in such continuing tension in the life of an individual or in the life of an institution, they will periodically lose their tension integration in

given actions. Unless, however, the person or the community of persons that make up the institution have both the faith and the agnosticism to live with the tension, they will study photographs of static pictures, but they will not train their lenses on that which lies beyond.

I have no clear focus of the life-style of the community of persons who comprise an institution. The spreading of the distorted waves says only to me that theirs is a life-style only if we see an institution as such a community of persons, not as an artifact in itself. The insights, both deductive and inductive, of these persons are shared with other persons--not only as completed poems, but also in the process of looking at the distorted waves. In this process, search for words becomes flesh (and even two-in-one flesh) as the community of persons struggle for new conceptions.

This, to me, is the mystery of the incarnation, the word made flesh, the divine life, the divine spark, continually being incarnated in the person of man and in the family of man who must build up the city of the universe. Only to the degree that there is such a city will there be a city of God. Only the secular city can incorporate the divine life, the divine spark.

Formal theology will return to the secular university and the living God will return to the city of the universe only if we can begin to live with the paradox of agnosticism and faith, only if we can begin to live with the wonder and terror of knowing and not knowing, because a living man, a living community, like any concept or reality of a living God, is beyond the grasp of framed photographs, beyond the grasp of finished formulation, beyond the grasp of dogmatic closure.

But precisely so, are they not within the grasp and search of persons and communities of persons who allow themselves to live in the tension, integration, and disintegration of agnosticism and faith?

If modern man can reincarnate within his pragmatic self, if university professors

can reincarnate within their rigorous (and sometimes cynical) selves; a sense of wonder and of contemplation, then indeed we may be able to broaden our issues in the city of the universe and in the university. The secular view which has stripped us of one kind of magic-myth may open us to the really wondrous pursuit of the unknown which is beyond our grasp, beyond our measurements, beyond our individual academic disciplines, beyond our particular institutions.

The quest for ultimates--which is called by some the quest for the living God--must, I believe, become again the fascinating and baffling quest of the family of man if there is within the members of the family the power of the sons of God. . .

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