Volume X Number 2 March/April 1977

THE CENTER MAGAZINE

The Caring Society by Elizabeth Douvan

THE CENTER MAGAZINE

A Publication of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions

Editor — Donald McDonald *Editorial Assistant* — Patricia Garvin Cathcart

Elizabeth Douvan's article, "The Caring Society" (page 26), is our cover piece, but almost every article in this issue is concerned with that theme. Ms. Douvan identifies some of the ways in which a political society can foster and encourage the caring that already exists, and she urges us to look more deeply for even richer possibilities. The ensuing dialogue is an intimation of those possibilities.

The California Supreme Court recently reaffirmed its Serrano decision which says it is unconstitutional to base the quality of education of a public-school student on the wealth of the community in which the student happens to live; that it must be based on the wealth of the state as a whole. John Pincus analyzes the political and educational implications of *Serrano* ("Spending for Education," page 60). It is a difficult article. But the Serrano decision is complex and Mr. Pincus' analysis will repay careful reading because he respects its complexity.

Walter Capps ("Religious Renewal," page 13) sees a growing interest in monasticism among young people. In one sense, this phenomenon could be interpreted as a turning away from society, an abandonment of one's responsibilities to others. In another sense, it is an affirmation of all that is good in the society and in the culture, and it is a determination, through prayer and meditation (through "positive disengagement," in the words of some), to contribute to the vitality of the society.

Mr. Capps' essay is followed by comments from one of his colleagues at the University of California and three religious — a Trappist monk, a Franciscan priest, and a nun from Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles.

Clifton Fadiman offers thirty theses on technology ("A Technologized Culture," page 71), including a Golden Rule for the Uncaring Society — "Don't Get Involved" — and he invites members of the dialogue to try to persuade him that he has either misperceived or misunderstood the signs of the times. Their responses and his further thoughts are included with the article.

A more sanguine view of technology — this from the perspective of developing nations — is offered by Lord Ritchie-Calder ("Science Is for All," page 2), who nevertheless recognizes the dangers of playing technological "catch-up" indiscriminately.

Leon Botstein, who was president of Franconia College at twenty-three, tells what life is like as president of Bard College at the ripe old age of thirty ("The Liberal Learning," page 22). He also discusses prospects for an intellectual community there.

The mass communications media are nothing if they are not indispensable instruments in a genuinely caring society. Our analysis of the newspaper and broadcasting industries in the November/December, 1976, issue ("The Media's Conflict of Interests") was evaluated in five pages of comments in the January/February, 1977, issue. The debate and argument continue in this issue with our report of a Center dialogue ("That Media Conflict," page 48).

—D. MCD.

MARCH/APRIL 1977

The Center Magazine is published bimonthly by the Fund for the Republic, Inc., 2056 Eucalyptus Hill Road, Santa Barbara, California 93108, an educational nonprofit organization. Center Magazine subscribers are members of the Fund for the Republic/The Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions. Associate Membership annual dues are $15.00, of which $5.00 is set aside for the publication costs of six bimonthly issues of The Center Magazine. Printing by Interweb, Los Angeles, California. Second-class postage paid at Santa Barbara, California and at additional mailing offices.

Catholicism believes in both an interior God and an exterior God. Such is the religious formula for its contradictions. . . . The ambiguity of Christianity on the political plane is perfectly comprehensible: when it remains true to the Incarnation, it can be revolutionary, but the religion of the Father is conservative.

— MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY

If my own sense of what is happening in the modern world is correct, then it is quite possible that we may yet see more dramatic reversals of the process of secularization. As we watch the stage of everyday life in the modern world, the action often seems to take place on one level only. The "official" reality experts deny the rumblings that may be heard from underneath — if necessary, they will sit on the trap door to make sure that nothing can come up from the ominous cellar. My hunch is that their effort will fail: the gods are very old and very powerful.

— PETER L. BERGER

Let us give Apocalypse a rest. We do not need it to tell us that our ways must mend, or that our business suffers from daily outrages. Pick up an issue of Time, Daedalus, *or* College English. *Purchase the latest radical reader or anti-text. . . . Yet how many see that we now strike at an older idea of man? A post-humanism is in the making. What will be its shape?*

— IHAB HASSAN

I have been summoned to explore a desert area of man's heart in which explanations no longer suffice. . . . An arid rocky dark land of the soul, sometimes illuminated by strange fires which men fear and peopled by specters which men studiously avoid except in their nightmares. And in this area I have learned that one cannot truly know hope unless he has found out how like despair hope is.

— THOMAS MERTON

WALTER CAPPS

Religious Renewal

There are fresh religious currents in the air these days. How they came about no one can be certain. What they signify and portend is difficult to penetrate. How they shall be identified is not easy to decide.

But some of their manifestations are discernible. One finds them implicitly, for example, in the new (or renewed) interest in Western (primarily Christian) mysticism. The same interest seems to lie behind another interest, in medieval culture and religion. The latter is stimulated by the possibility that underneath all the major religions there is a primordial tradition, of which classical medieval religion is a significant expression and refinement. Taken together, these manifestations support the growing dialogue between Eastern and Western religious traditions.

Similarly, the turn to the religion of the monasteries, the preoccupation with meditation and contemplation, the interest in spiritual discipline, in spirituality, and, indeed, in the dynamics of interiority — all of this seems to indicate that the Western world is witnessing the rebirth of an interior religion in deep and compelling terms.

I will be autobiographical for a moment. I knew the mood of the nineteen-sixties. I shared some of the aspirations of the counter-culture. I was an advocate of the "theology of hope" and all that this meant in terms of social action, political involvement, and this-worldly engagement. While I was not found frequently on the front lines of social and political demonstration, I believed in the cause. I believed in it theoretically and ideologically. I was excited about the portrayal of human salvation in this-worldly terms. I was inspired by possibilities for correlating the Biblical conception of the Kingdom of God with deep-seated human aspiration for the ideal society.

Most of all, I was fascinated by the conceptual innovations implicit in the new theology. Because it turned conceptualization on its side — using horizontal rather than vertical schematization — I found this to be the first truly sanctionable form of process theology. I was impressed by the way in which creativity, spontaneity, and certain kinetic elements became regulative principles. I exulted in the recovery of Heraclitus; most of the theologies I knew were manifestly Parmenidean. And I rejoiced in the celebration of time as the dominant theological temper; in most of the theologies I knew, time eventually gave way to eternity.

But a shock occurred during my first visit to the Monastery of Poor Clares here in Santa Barbara. My reason for visiting the monastery was the class on medieval religion I was teaching at the University of California. It had not been my custom to make field trips. But the class had been studying the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and it seemed to me that it might be instructive to visit local institutions whose origins date back to that time. So, we visited the Santa Barbara Mission, where we were given a fine tour and presentation by the Franciscans, Virgil Cordano and Maynard Geiger.

We also visited the Monastery of Poor Clares.

And it was in response to our questions about how these nuns justify their own withdrawal from the world, that I heard these words from one of the nuns: "We know what is going on in the world because we are near the center; we are present at the center; if anything happens at the periphery it must eventually reflect back upon the center; nothing can occur anywhere in the world that is detached from the center."

These were the convincing words. I confess that they impressed me, and that I won't forget them. But they impressed me less for whatever spiritual or religious force they carried than for what they conveyed about the significance of monastic life.

I had learned the terminology of the center from Mircea Eliade and his writings, particularly from his portrayals of sacred time and sacred space. From Eliade's influence, I had come to appreciate the way in which religion identifies and establishes the center, not only in personal and liturgical terms but also in cultural terms. When I heard the Poor Clare nun's words, I recalled Eliade's insight that "centering itself is a metaphor of creation." I sensed that the power of monastic religion had to be taken with scholarly seriousness.

I went on to visit a number of monasteries in North America. During my sometimes-monastic odyssey, I have encountered a significant number of persons whose account is very much like my own. More importantly, I have discovered that certain monastic centers in North America — as in Europe (witness the role of the Taize Community in France) — have become revitalized pilgrimage stations for persons who have embarked on like-minded odysseys.

Concomitant with this movement is the creation of a new lore communicated primarily in the form of oral tradition concerning the monasteries which radiate strong spiritual vibrations, the monastic figures who provide reliable personal messages and/or communications, and the monastic centers which are the most austere, innovative, open, and accepting.

Literature on the subject grows too; witness the recent publication of Yale Professor Henri Nouwen's *The Genesee Diary: Report from a Trappist Monastery,* an account of Nouwen's seven-month stay in a monastery near Rochester, New York.

I do not know how many persons are involved in this interest. I can only say that I find students are increasingly interested. We are trying to arrange a "monastic internship" for a select few of them. This would involve their living within monasteries for perhaps as long as an academic quarter.

Nor can I report very fully or accurately on how the monasteries are affected by the new surge of interest in them. But I do find interest in this subject whenever I am asked to speak about it, and these requests are coming more frequently.

What does this new interest portend? Will religious sensitivity be affected by it? What does it imply with respect to alignments and misalignments between religion and culture today? A number of hypotheses must be tested.

The first pertains to the relation of changes in religious orientation to larger, broader, deeper, and more comprehensive social, political, and ideological changes. I simply put the question: Does the alleged shift from a this-worldly to an other-worldly religious stance reflect additional changes in social and political behavior?

I addressed this question in much fuller fashion in my book *Hope Against Hope: Moltmann to Merton in One Theological Decade* (1976). There I correlated changes in religious orientation with more comprehensive social, cultural, and political changes. One of the chapters of this book is devoted to "The Dynamics of Positive Disengagement," a phrase with which I became acquainted through the influence of James E. Dittes, a psychologist of religion at Yale University.

In developing this theme, Dittes takes issue with Kenneth Keniston. In his book, *The Uncommitted,* Keniston identifies a certain malaise among contemporary young people which he depicts as being a capacity and a desire for commitment coupled with a sense that there is nothing worthy of large, unqualified commitment. There is nothing forceful or compelling enough for commitment. Nothing large enough. Nothing interesting enough. Nothing sustaining enough. Consequently, in Keniston's view, the capacity and desire falter, and young people remain uncommitted.

Dittes sees it another way. Instead of seeing a lack of commitment because there is nothing worthy of commitment, Dittes sees a deliberate dedication toward uncommitment. Perhaps it would be more

appropriate to refer to the disposition as being one of "a-commitment." Young people are committed toward being uncommitted. They are intent on exercising disengagement. Disengagement fashions itself as uncommitment, but not because commitment has gone by default. Rather, the young person's desire is to separate himself from commitments that are conflicting, complicating, debilitating, thus preventing him from exercising singleness of mind. It is disengagement because it seeks a withdrawal or release from previous engagement, commitments, and overcommitment. And it is positive, rather than negative, because it seeks to disengage in a manner that will allow the disengager to affirm the propriety of his withdrawal. It isn't as though he wished he could have done better.

This mood seems to be in keeping with the more pervasive sense of things that issued with increasing force in the nineteen-seventies. According to earlier proclamations, the era was to have been a time of joyful corporate celebration and deep personal fulfillment. This the songs, liturgies, and Sunday homilies foretold. It should have been the time following a successful nonviolent revolution, or so previous projections had read. It should have been an era formed by the raising of human consciousness, as many theologians, humanistic psychologists, social planners, ecologists, environmentalists, writers, lyricists, analysts, and commentators had proposed. It was supposed to be, and was meant to be, a new time, where human awareness had plumbed to new depths, a time marked by the bursting forth of fresh possibilities for humanity, with flowers everywhere.

Instead, "It is winter in America, or so it seems," wrote Robert Bellah in November, 1973. Watergate, the war in Vietnam, the increasing lack of confidence in government, inflation, violations of freedom of choice, as well as a general malaise regarding national purpose provided little occasion for festivity, nothing to celebrate, no feeling of accomplishment, no achievement of closure, no anticipation of springtime.

Alfred Loisy remarked almost a century ago that Jesus came to preach the Kingdom of God, only it wasn't the kingdom that came but the Church. Then Loisy added that when the church came it preached Christ. It was a similar phenomenon this time: not the new era, not the new realm of freedom, but something more common, less daring, more cautious, a surrogate for the dynamic reality that was expected. Thus, for both the theology of hope and the career of the counter-culture, there was large initial enthusiasm, aligned with espoused shifts in orientation of consciousness, followed by specific political action, resulting in apparent disappointment, debilitation, then diffusion. And so, the occasion for positive disengagement.

❦

Disengagement can take form in mystical awareness. Indeed, one of the ways of locating and interpreting positive disengagement religiously is to see it as deliberate withdrawal from a temporal, conflicted world. For the mystic, withdrawal accompanies a process of introversion through which the self seeks to establish and enjoy consciousness of reality's deeper levels and fuller dimensions. Mystics occasionally refer to this process as "a stilling of the surface mind" and as "a journey toward the center." Thus the mystic's efforts at disengagement can be referred to in positive terms too. They intend not simply to deny the existence of the disparate world, but, instead, to identify a standpoint from which one can affirm reality positively.

This must be the reason why the mystic is so often criticized for being other-worldly. It also must be the reason why the mystic frequently uses a word like "transcendence." The world of "the most obvious" holds so many threats and risks to religious sensitivity. Thus the mystic has always felt a certain aversion toward the world of process and change, sensing, as Plato put it, that the temporal world passes away while the transcendent world abides. When the here-and-now world is taken as being the only world, or the only normative context or orientation, the mystic senses that the conditions for establishing an authentic and sustaining center for the self are qualified or absent. The mystic feels compelled to assert that it is the transcendent world which is the real world, and that it is through the contemplative life that one can reach that world.

But that requires disengagement — indeed, a disengagement that is freeing, not guilt-binding. This is the gist of mystical positive disengagement. And it is very close in spirit to the variety of religious expressions which have followed a recognition that the self has over-invested in socio-political programs of a marked this-worldly character.

Significantly, the advent of the new mysticism followed disappointments regarding theologies of change and process. When change becomes too rapid and cumbersome, and when process leaves one unable to know where he stands, mysticism is standing by as a veritable and perpetual open space. Mysticism is a

vantage point from which to give change a relative and subordinate place. For this reason, mysticism is much more than a device for coping with the incidental malevolent side-effects of overcommitment to change and process. More profoundly, mysticism is the primary religious disposition through which positive disengagement is both exercised and expressed.

For more than two millennia, the primary institutional milieu for mysticism has been the monastery and the monastic tradition. Thus, the contemporary interest in monastic religion and monastic life is consonant with the dynamics of positive disengagement.

❦

A second question follows from the first: Has monastic religion a discernible contemporary cultural role? I am concerned with something other than the motivations of persons who show interest in monasticism today. I refer, instead, to the place of monasticism in the formation of Western culture, and I wish to assess that in contemporary terms.

Monasticism was the first counter-culture in the Western world. Within a society affected by the growing decadence of Greco-Roman culture — with all of the adverse consequences such decadence implied in every aspect of human life — monasticism fashioned itself as a vital and viable alternative. It was another way of being. Thomas Merton was fond of referring to it as a means of social reform. In Merton's view, established societies — both capitalist and Marxist-oriented — do not enhance the human quest for maturity, but, instead, fix the individual more firmly in infantilism and irresponsibility.

"The elaborate conventional structures of thought, language, etc., are all doing the exact opposite from what they originally pretended to do," said Merton. "Instead of bringing man in contact with reality, and helping him to be true to himself, they are standing between man and reality as veils and deceptions. They prevent him from facing 'anguish.' "

This is a consistent theme in Merton's writings. As early as 1947, in *The Seven Storey Mountain,* for example, he wrote:

"It is true that the materialistic, the so-called culture that has evolved under the tender mercies of capitalism, has produced what seems to be the ultimate limit of this-worldliness. And nowhere, except perhaps in the analogous society of pagan Rome, has there ever been such a flowering of cheap and petty and disgusting lusts and vanities as in the world of capitalism, where there is no evil that is not fostered and encouraged for the sake of making money. We live in a society whose whole policy is to excite every nerve in the human body and keep it at the highest pitch of artificial tension, to strain every human desire to the limit, and to create as many new desires and synthetic passions as possible, in order to cater to them with the products of our factories and printing presses and movie studios and all the rest."

Merton's primary metaphor is that of the pilgrim in the desert. He understood himself to be an alien or exile in a world in which he is not in control. Exteriorly, one lives as an exile because of social and political oppression, whether implicit or overt. Interiorly, there is alienation because the human heart is a wasteland. There is inner emptiness, a duality within. The desert is both exterior and interior.

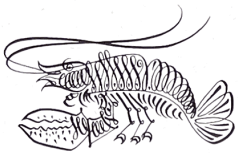
In his final address in Bangkok on the morning of the day of his death, on December 10, 1968, Merton said:

"Buddhist and Christian monasticism start from the problem inside man himself. Instead of dealing with the external structures of society, they start with man's own consciousness. Both Christianity and Buddhism agree that the root of man's problems is that his consciousness is all fouled up and he does not apprehend reality as it fully and really is; that the moment he looks at something, he begins to interpret it in ways that are prejudiced and predetermined to fit a certain wrong picture of the world."

This is the basis of his call for a change of the entire structure of human consciousness. It is not a matter of discovering remedies and of solving problems. Rather, it is necessary that men and women come to a radically different understanding of themselves. Problems cannot be solved if the conditions for centering the human being are not present.

Monasticism endeavors to base itself upon those truer conditions for centering human life. As such, it provides an alternative to the dominant mode of being in the world. It enjoins a variant reading of reality. In this sense it is counter-culture, a workable alternative to the dominant and/or established culture.

In addition, there may be direct links between the fate of the contemporary counter-culture and the revival of interest in monasticism. We refer here to one of the fundamental methodological insights of the early Warburg school, namely, that the components



of cultural composition are finite in number and tend to recur and reappear in new and unexpected form. This observation corresponds with Robert Bellah's contention that the counter-culture of the nineteen-sixties and early nineteen-seventies was in part the product of attitudes that had become lost, or lay hidden, from an earlier period in Western intellectual history.

Additional leads have been provided by William Irwin Thompson, who followed his counter-culture manuals *(At the Edge of History* and *Passages About Earth: An Exploration of the New Planetary Culture)* with the founding of an actual monastery, appropriately named Lindisfarne, near Southampton on Long Island. Is it too much to infer that the new Lindisfarne is a product of the counter-culture? I believe not, and cite the increasing interest in communal living, religious and quasi-religious communities, houses of prayer, the recovery of the traditional reasons for retreat houses, etc., as evidence. On various levels, the interest in the monastic way of life seems to be related to the extended fate of the counter-culture.

Historically, one can see a decided shift in the cultural function of monasticism during the period between St. Anthony (b. 250) and St. Benedict (480-547). St. Anthony offered a clear alternative to the relationship to reality found in the Greco-Roman world. For Benedict, two centuries later, monasticism played a major role in the reconstruction of culture. Monasticism was an instrument of transmission and transition to a compelling and pervasive new social order. Through Benedict's efforts, the monastic alternative became one of the principal means by which the classical cultural heritage was reconstituted, redesigned, and re-established.

Is contemporary monasticism assuming something of the same Benedictine role? To do so, it would need to stand in a transitional place at a transitional time — at the crossroads of cultural transmission and transposition. There, it would also need to function as receiver, modifier, and sustainer of heritages from an earlier time and/or another place. This time, however, the heritage being transmitted is not from the classical era or even from the Middle Ages. Instead, it is almost as eclectic as the counter-culture, selecting its components from Eastern and Western cultures and from classical and contemporary sources.

Indeed, contemporary monasticism may be one of the most significant and effective cultural institutions involved in sorting out the currents in the encounter and engagement of religious, philosophical, cultural, and ideological traditions, East and West. Monasticism may be engaged in the same reconstructive cultural task as the one that has marked its role in the West from St. Benedict's time forward. In the process, it can contribute elements of sanction and continuity to counter-culture objectives. It can enrich, deepen, and extend those objectives by integrating contemporary spiritual aspirations with established and tested literary traditions. In his book, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God,* Jean Leclercq says that the two constants of Western monastic culture are the study of letters and the exclusive search for God, the love of eternal life.

My third question concerns the intrinsic dynamism of the Christian religion and the dramatic shifts and alternations that are occurring as Christian sensibility tries to come to terms with the power of the modern world. Is there any way of making sense of these perpetual oscillations, the movement from exterior to interior religion and back again, the shifts between socio-political gospel and monasticism/mysticism/interiority, that tend to characterize Christian aspiration?

In the nineteen-sixties and early nineteen-seventies, Christianity was linked to a rather agential disposition. It was portrayed as a challenger of the status quo. It was involved in an effort to change things, to call things into question, to achieve something beyond the accomplishments of any culture or society. It pertained to political protest and was expressed in political demonstration. It tried to be socially astute, politically active, and this-worldly wise. It sought to be an active force, a positive catalyst of development, an instrument in humankind's move toward a greater maturity. In short, Christianity was agential.

The new disposition is a bit different. It is more reassuring. It seeks less to change things than to penetrate to the depth of that which is. It seeks to disclose a deeper dimension of things. It wants to put the religious person in touch with the core element, the hidden ground of things, indeed, the fundamental motion of things. It is motivated by discernment, perceptiveness, and sensitivity.

Because those caught up in this disposition recognize that the fundamental, underlying core of things can be grasped in a single moment of intuition or insight, the disposition is referred to as mystical. It is understandable, then, why it reaches out to a new appreciation of monasticism.

The reason for the shifts and changes in religious disposition lies only partially in social, political, and cultural matters. More significant is the dynamism of the Christian religion itself, the fact, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty observed, that an interior God and exterior God are worshipped simultaneously. But we must go further.

Religious sensitivity is refined and refracted in a wide variety of ways. Two self-consistent and fundamental ways are those which get expressed in political theology, on the one hand, and monastic inwardness, on the other. These two are self-consistent, but, in many important aspects, they are different.

I want to emphasize the differences by calling attention to the character and deportment of key words in monastic religion, in meditation, contemplation, interior reflection, recollection, memory, prayer. All have to do with a distinct modality of human consciousness. All pertain to interior reflective moves ("reflective" meaning that thought and consciousness are turned back upon themselves). Interior moves are fundamentally *re*-moves. Their goal: to make explicit something already there. They are *re*collective, *re*storative, *re*capitulative moves. They have effects upon content, but the content is already there. It is not created. Creativity is exercised, to be sure, but always upon something else. Its work is elucidatory. Its function is evocative. The *re*-moves draw things out. They help sensitize one to the workings and motions of the spirit. I am referring to the process of interiority which is both unitive and transformative in its objectives.

Political theology consists not of *re* but of *pro* words. It is not a recuperative venture. It is not exploratory, evocative, or elucidatory first of all. Rather, it is intent on creating, constructing, or designing something that has never been before. Indeed, Jürgen Moltmann makes much of the shift from "re" to "pro" when he describes the compulsions of the theology of hope. Hope theology believes in "provolution" rather than "revolution," "prostoration" rather than "restoration," indeed, even "proligion" rather than "religion." The intent of each transposition is to indicate the compulsions of the turn toward the future, and the necessity to create new alternatives.

My suggestion is that "re" and "pro" are uttered from different places, positions, or standpoints. The difference between them is more than a matter of temperament or intensity. It is also something more than relative directness or indirectness, as though "pro" is closer to reality than "re." Both are closer, in their own ways; that is, each is closer than the other to the reality it refines. The primary difference is one of modality. "Re" and "pro" imply differing modes of engagement. The engagement of reality is nuanced in two distinctive ways.

Because of variations in mode and nuance, there are corresponding differences in perspective, range, interest, mood, tense, and voice. Each of the two modes finds the "self" placed distinctively, yet both placements belong to the motions and aspirations of the same human spirit. Both can be legitimated religiously. And both are required for the fuller expression or exteriorization of a religion that seeks to worship an interior and an exterior God simultaneously.

The recent shift in mode enables us to predict the shape and character of the religion that is to come in the future immediately before us. It will be a religion of the contemplative kind. It will be strikingly non-agential. It will be devoted much more to exploring the occasions for communion than with exercising the powers of human agency. It will appear as if it is not trying to achieve anything in particular. It will not be translatable into programs; in fact, it cannot be easily modulated into any other key. It will not spur us to action. And it probably will not inspire missionary activity. In these respects, it will not be intense.

Similarly, the new religion will be more open to the power of irrational factors than was its predecessor version. (By irrational I also want to include non-rational and a-rational, meaning "other than rational.") The new religion will be formed by the content of dreams, visions, intuitions, stories, and chronicles. It will be much more polytheistic than monotheistic. It will be open to the many temperaments and passions which form human consciousness, and will be able to call some of them by a personal name.

Finally, to the extent that the intuitive and unitive are distinct from the agential and analytical — Joseph Campbell contends that reality *happens* to women, while men tend to *work at it* — the new religion will be more feminine than masculine. But the fuller portrayal of this distinction requires an application and assessment of Robert Ornstein's recent work on bimodal consciousness.

Moods come. Moods go. Styles come. Styles shift. Orientations change. Reality is engaged distinctively.

The theology of hope — the dominant expression of the social gospel in the nineteen-sixties and early nineteen-seventies — was first fitted to a theology of faith. There was a theology of faith before there was a theology of hope. And it was concerned about what could or should be believed: i.e., the content of faith, the substance of faith, the ingredients of doctrine. "Is there a God?" "How is knowledge of God possible?" "Is the content of faith natural or revealed?" These were issues of the neo-orthodox era, the era of Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich, and a host of thinkers under whom almost two generations of theologians were trained.

Then a shift occurred. Not, "What shall we believe in order to be saved?" but, "For what may we hope?" "How are human hopes sustained?" "How can human expectations be realized?" "How can the human destiny be accomplished?" "How can religion play a vital role in the realization of human hopes?"

Then the currents shifted dramatically once again, this time to love. Mystical theology is a theology of love. Mystical language is a language of love. Mystical aspirations are the interests of love. Whereas, in an earlier era, it was a matter of reconciling beliefs with thought, or, as it was said, faith with reason; and, whereas, it subsequently became a matter of translating corporate human aspirations into concrete social and political realities; now it is a matter for the human heart. Now, it seems to be the case that the heart is seeking a fit means of expression, because the heart has something to tell and portray.

This accounts for the revival of autobiographical, confessional writings among modern theologians. The personal document has become a chief means of expression and the content of that expression is the odyssey of the human heart. Just as it is possible to construe religion through the interests of faith and hope, so also is it possible to give it formation through the interests of love. The transposition is from the active to the passive night of the soul.

If this analysis is sound, our attention in the future will be captured much less by politicians and even by great thinkers, and much more by monks, mystics, hermits, spiritual teachers, masters, and directors; by those who have known and can trace the religious impulses of the human heart. And monastic culture — both traditional and revised — will be both the stimulus and the product of the religion now forming.

Walter Capps is a Professor of Religious Studies and the Director of the Institute of Religious Studies at the University of California at Santa Barbara.

COMMENTS

Raimundo Panikkar

Professor of Religious Studies
University of California at Santa Barbara

I prefer to use the term "monastic vocation" or the "monastic dimension" of human life, rather than "monastic religion." In this sense, monasticism appeals much more to modern man than does any kind of religious order. The monastic vocation existed before there was a split into different religious traditions. It is the oneness of the monastic vocation, the bringing of things together, as signified by the prefix "con" — consideration, compassion, contemplation — that is so attractive.

It would be a mistake to approach this phenomenon sociologically. Instead of looking at this part of the world called "North America," we should look at the whole, and we would find substantial differences not only between East and West but also in Western Christendom.

Also, I think the metaphor of "counter-culture" is misleading when applied to the monastic vocation. It may be counter-cultural in a few things, but not in its deepest meaning.

Also, the moment that monasticism becomes an institution, it betrays its deepest urge and its deepest core. Western society has made the survival of monasticism almost impossible without institutionalizing it. But the very core of the monastic dimension of life is refractory to being institutionalized.

The monastic vocation — and here I speak generally of all monks of all religions — implies an ascent to the divine. This ascent obviously implies asceticism, discipline, karma, love, liturgy, contemplation, intuitive awareness. But, as someone has said,

one cannot stand for long on one's toes. Once you ascend to the divine, you must descend again. The symbol of Mount Sinai comes to mind. In order to be a monk you must ascend *to* the divine, and when you descend, you must descend *with* the divine. You must not descend alone. You must descend with the divine to the world, to the others, to social realities, to things, to new visions which imply discovery. And this descent with the divine also humanizes the divine, transforms oneself, and transforms others in the world.

Here, I think, is to be found the tremendous force of the appeal of the monastic vocation. Even the monks themselves suffer today because they have not been given, for sociological reasons, the possibility of being such a witness for the world.

This true monastic vocation is the great thing that Walter Capps is pointing out. And it should not be sociologized, with lay people going to the monks and the monks going out into the world. Rather, each of us must discover in himself or herself the monastic dimension of life, and each monk must discover the secular dimension in his life.

Sister Anne Dunn, I.H.M.

Immaculate Heart College
Los Angeles

Always the first priority in the religious life, at least in my own case, is the pursuit of the inner life, the pursuit of mystery. Whatever I say or do beyond that is an overflow.

One of the first questions in religious life is, what kind of community do you want? You do not sit down and intellectually analyze that and then build a religious life on the answer. Rather, as you move into the practice of community and live it, you respond to the events of your time. The community grows out of that. So, one does have a hand in shaping the community, but that is not one's main object. The main object is the pursuit of the inner life.

When a woman freely chooses an option other than marriage — not, that is, in the sense of Shakespeare's "get thee to a nunnery" in *Hamlet* — then the woman has the right of self-determination within that choice and that life. In the case of my own community — the Immaculate Heart of Mary — the deeper changes we wanted to make came out of the quest and cry of all people who want to determine their own lives. Freedom has a lot to do with the shape that both the inner life and the community take.

It is natural for men and women to be able to choose the option of the inner life. That is part of human freedom. The institution of monasticism speaks, then, to that gift of freedom in human beings. Religious life is what it ought to be — for God, for self, and for the culture — when people are most deeply free. That freedom will be expressed by the shape that the monastic community takes and by how it influences culture.

Paschal Phillips, O.C.S.O.

Delegate of the Trappist Regional Conference, U.S.A.

People should be both intuitive and analytical, but the fact is that few have ever succeeded in being both. Perhaps our human psyche is big enough to accomplish only one of these two approaches to truth satisfactorily. Even the great saints and some of the most gifted people have swung to one side or the other. Not only in the Christian monastic world but in the Oriental also, each religious group becomes, one might say, specialized.

On the other hand, every civilization except our own and some stages of the Roman Empire has offered the intuitive or contemplative vision of truth as an option for normal people. Monasticism is not the whole expression of the contemporary life, but it is a good indicator of it.

Now the shift to the intuitive or contemplative is obvious. Anyone who goes to an airport and is approached by young people in Hare Krishna costumes who want to sell you books knows that there is a renewed interest in the intuitive vision of reality.

How did that vision get squashed in the West? Nobody sat down and said, "Let us crush out the contemplative vision." It was rather that, by spending all our energies on the analytical, the contemplative gradually faded away. But if the return to the intuitive is a return to the normal — that is, if a normal civilization offers the intuitive experience of reality as a normal option for normal persons — then today's so-called renewed interest in monasticism is a return to the normal, and returns to the normal in a society are long-lasting and deep. For that reason, I

suspect that the present change toward the intuitive insight is not a fad.

Why is this appearing at this particular time? One of the reasons has to do with art. It is interesting that all societies which have a strong contemplative vision produce a restrained and disciplined art — think of classical Buddhism, or medieval Europe. When the fire and the discipline of the contemplative experience fades, there is a real cultural loss.

At the same time, the person who is called to the contemplative or intuitive vision frequently fulfills that by engaging in creative art, provided that the creative arts in the society are not so noisy and busy that they can no longer serve as a surrogate for what a religious person would call contemplation.

Today the creative arts have come to that point. The artistic norm is no longer contemplative. And so, one of the ways in which people were once able to fulfill this intuitive need is no longer available. That is one reason why some people are turning to the intuitive.

A second reason — one much more frequently noticed — involves a turning to a sensate culture. Modern man became so analytical because he was so cerebral; his whole intellectual experience was based on writing. Today his intellectual experience is based much more on television — which makes for a more sensate culture — and it becomes impossible for him to be satisfied with only intellectual perception.

As for the role of the monasteries in culture transmission, that has been historically successful only when it has not been reflective, when it has not been consciously and deliberately sought or planned. When the monks set out to create culture, they failed. When they thought they were quitting a culture, taking only the best parts of it with them, they succeeded. The Cistercian monks, for instance, dominated eleventh-century Europe as few groups have ever dominated a century in Europe. The Cistericians were the very quintessence of that civilization. Yet they believed in all sincerity that they were rejecting it.

The fathers of the desert are another example. If you go off into the desert to create a culture, you will be defeated. If, as you march off, subconsciously carrying the culture with you, you purify it by rejecting what you perceive to be its bad parts, then it works.

This does bring up a mystery — the strange failure of the monastic life in the West, the contemplative vision of the West which is so beautifully attuned to the Western psychology and which is already in place and existing, to make not only no impact for good or evil, but no impact at all. Another mystery is why those involved in it do not see that they are making no impact and why they are not disquieted by that fact.

When Professor Capps asked me about the perception of the monks in a cloistered community regarding this new interest in monasticism, I was astonished at my own reply. I went down the list of the monks I know in my own and other monasteries, and I discovered that their perception and response are no different than that of the ordinary person on the street. The organizers among the monks get out and organize something. The intellectuals among them try to analyze it. The average monk goes quietly about his way, a little amused and a little bemused by it. This new movement, which should engage the whole life-transmission instinct of Western monasticism, raises no disquietude; and somehow there is no transmission either. The actual transmission of life in the West that I can see, the reintegration of the contemplative vision, is coming from the Orient, even though the seeds and roots of that life are here.

Virgil Cordano, O.F.M.

Administrator, Franciscan Mission
Santa Barbara

At one time, we Franciscans imitated the Trappists. We were quite monastic. Then, seemingly, we threw that out and got very much involved in the social apostolate. We took to the streets. We demonstrated against the Vietnam war. Rightly, we won the interest of our younger members.

But that has been dissatisfying, even for us who sort of rebelled against monasticism. Now we are trying to find a kind of religious aspiration — individual and community — that does justice to our Franciscan way of life, one that might link us with the monastics. We are trying to blend contemplation and activity.

The challenge for us is how to relate the monk with other people, with anyone who has a human heart. We have not worked that out yet. There are still some Franciscans who swing to one extreme or the other. We still have very much of a social apostolate. But some of our members are also going off to monasteries. Eventually we hope to have a true blend of what Professor Capps is trying to unite in his paper.