

ANTHROPSYCHOLOGY NOTE: The sacred must have some place to go when the latest secularization hunt is on. Some inkling of where it's going next is the rising guru movements [e.g., the Moonbeams and the Meditators]. Will the sacred, next, move--backward to shaman?

Today [22 Oct 75] a storeclerk said "Ford" to me. Before Watergate, he would have said "President Nixon." With the Presidency--excuse me, the presidency--desacralized and almost demythologized, things are looking up--a little. Americans are fairly well protected against politics as a faith-system. Indeed, we have the opposite temptation, viz. to put too little faith in statecraft and therefore invest in government too few of our youth with higher quality genes/dedication: ergo, "politicians."

That leaves the other three faith-systems, with their ritual leaders:

1. The ritual leader of religion, the "priest" [inclusive of minister and rabbi, in this sociological sense], has become so desacralized, demythologized, and desocialized as to be almost invisible. Television can have a Harlem-analysis program-panel of five blacks with no professional representative of religion: a fortiori, if that can happen to Harlem, how much more to any other section of NYC?But of course just as politicians should not control access to political power, priests should not control access to God....but....

2. The ritual leader of education, the superintendent of schools (and the boss of the teachers' union), had steadily rising numinous power in American history till the 1970s, when the people's "faith in education" began to erode for a variety of reasons I need not detail here. All along it had been clear that the correlation between education and wisdom was not high. But then, wisdom was, in the American psyche, not a high value. Money? That's something else! When the evidence came rolling in that the correlation between education and future income also was nowhere near as high as had been thought, and was declining, the handwriting was on the wall. The schools are undergoing painful desacralization, and the population movement toward zero growth is helping. Still, the super in our town has the power a medieval bishop had in his, and almost the affluence: \$45,000 [+ fringes!] in a system of only 2,000 children. "Church and state" in my town means school [= powerful church] and government [insubstantial, evanescent]. What about the churches in my town? Virtually invisible, their "priests" even less visible. In spite of the "interfaith council," which is almost nonexistent. [The religion of the school system? Maslowism, since the super's PhD is in Maslow humanistic psychology. A Catholic school? Always feeble; closed for good, i.e. permanently, two years ago.]

3. That leaves the ritual leader of health, the doctor. Out our way he's apt to have a six-figure income, and he [no shes] shares with the school superintendent the town's highest social status. As politician controlled access to power, priest access to salvation, and teacher access to wisdom and wealth, so the doctor, including the mind doctor, controls access to health, the ultimate loss of which is a nightmare greater, for Americans, than the fear of chaos [which the politician is to guard against, from domestic and foreign threats], the fear of hell [which the priest used to guard against], and the fear of ignorance and poverty [which the teacher is to guard against]. [Businessman? He's most of our town, but his occupation is not seen as salvific in past or present or future--even though he is the priest of the American \$ faith-system! A tale for another time.] But beginning in the mid-1960s the medics began to come under the corrosive blasts of public disenfranchisements. "The medical-industrial complex" is more and more clearly seen to be misothenatocentric [centered in a war against death, as \$100,000 of N.J. Medicaid to keep brainless Karen on her machine] instead of biophilous [centered on public health, which got precious little of the \$104 billion America spent on "medicine" in 1974]. (For a great article on the desacralization-demythologization of the doctor, see 26 Sept 75 CHRISTIANITY AND CRISIS.)