

\*I gave her nothing to read. She was already overfull, in fact constipated. I asked her to empty herself out in a diary written back-to-front with negativity, imprecations, nasty letters to her enemies (chiefly, God and husband); front-to-back with positivity, prayers of gratitude, notes of penitence. It worked.

Two incidents within the past week set the stage for this thinksheet: (1) A state conference of my denomination [UCC] asked me to do a retreat on "Anything but psychology! We've had that up to here!" I couldn't, and instead they hired--a psychologist! (2) A woman counselee, on her first visit, said to me "Give me something to read....not anything religious, something psychological; I'm desperate...."\* *What are you singing about and longing for?* is a heuristic question, drawn from Ps.84, I often use. Its parallel here is *What are you hoping through?* In a considerable sector of middle- and upper-class America, hoping has shifted from religion to psychology, and the clergy of such folk are mightily tempted, personally and professionally, to shift their hope accordingly.

1. In the competition between the old priest [religion] and the new priest [psychology, pop psych, psychotherapy, humanistic psychology, PSYCHOLOGY TODAY], the new priest wears the shining vestments of "science," with the sanction force, against the old priest, of more scientific than thou. That posture is now under massive challenge, even in the ultimate form, viz. the question whether psychotherapy (1) is neutral or (2) does more harm than good.

2. Yes, HOPE. I'm for whatever really helps folks, so I don't go around bad-mouthing my competition. But the control word there is "really": can we know what "really," in the long run, helps folks? I think so: I think I have that know by revelation--certainly not by "science." "Pastoral counseling" training in seminaries is certainly justified on the ground that the clergy should understand what's going on in the hope dimension of the public psyche, so as to be able (a) to respond helpfully and (b) to use whatever knowledge/skill appears through the psycho-disciplines, but also (c) to "discern the spirits, to see whether they be of God" [i.e., to do apologetic-polemic theology].

3. The doyen of the-psychologist-as-savior is Maslow, who in his last period shifted from experimental psychologist to guru [as clergy now tend to shift from religion to "psycho-salvation," my term for the Maslow-type shift, i.e. the self-sacralization of therapies to meet the public appetite for salvation by therapy [on which see Illich's MEDICAL NEMESIS]. Abe is one of the fathers of HPM ["the human potential movement"--the other being Fritz Perls], and his interpretation of religion, more than that of any other person, informs the movement. Important, then, that we see his philosophical assumptions as distinct from his scientific thinking: (1) "peaking" [i.e., mystical experiencing] is the core of religion; (2) what you experience when peaking is more real, "the cognition of Being" [Appendix D of his RELIGIONS, VALUES AND PEAK EXPERIENCES (Viking/71)]; (3) therefore, "private religion" is superior to public, formal, historical religion, which indeed tends to impede peaking; (4) what one discovers at peaks is the human potential, [paradoxically] the true self when ego is less. [For a devastating attack on assumption (1), and thus, domino, on the whole series of assumptions [though the listing is mine], see Lucy Bregman's "Maslow as Theorist of Religion: Reflections on His Popularity and Plausibility," in the Sum/76 SOUNDINGS.] (The new psycho-savior will be Jung, and we should prepare for the invasion with some hard pre-thinking.)

4. A great philosopher of science, Jerome Ravetz, came out with a book of great value in this area, SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE AND ITS SOCIAL PROBLEMS (Ox/71). TM, Maslowism, est, and many other current pop-therapies would fall neatly into his category of "folk-science" as hope-praxis (health, prosperity, more-life) the folk judge not by "its achievements in producing facts or knowledge, or in accomplishing genuine solutions of technical or practical problems," but by its effectiveness in consoling, reassuring, making sense of life, giving hope.