

RELIGION

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People, Values

Trying to Bug Human Souls

By Andrew M. Greeley

THE GLEE with which the liberal journals are dancing on the grave of Richard Nixon is obscene.

I am glad he is out of office. I lament the quick and easy pardon. I would be offended if he escapes the obligation to testify in trials. I hope that every last bit of the infamous story of his administration gets told. I think that these are sentiments which are consonant with respect for the values of law and the traditions of American democracy. I do not see how, as a citizen, I can feel otherwise.

But I deeply resent people mucking around in the former President's psyche. There is a legion of self-appointed psychoanalysts who have begun an "analyze Nixon" industry. I have on my desk a collection of these sick and disgusting articles.

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CONSIDER two of the worst: "New York" presents us with "Why Nixon Did Himself In: A Behavioral Examination of His Need to Fail" by an historian and an editor of a poetry magazine. The article was based on reading Nixon's book, his speeches, and his income tax return. Real science.

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But "Harper's," which devotes a whole issue to Watergate trivia, goes one better. It turns psychoanalysis over to a computer program at Cornell which analyzes the Nixon personality by counting the number of times he uses certain words from a dictionary of "100 revealing words" in the transcripts. On second thought maybe a computer dictionary is better qualified to engage in psychoanalysis than are a poetry editor and a historian.

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ONE CAN GO through almost all the official liberal journals and find similar gross examples of amateur Freudian analysis — "The New Republic," "The Nation," "The Village Voice," "Rolling Stone," "The Christian Century," even in a muted way, "Time" and "Newsweek."

It was also the great indoor sport at the watering places where the intellectual elites go for the summer — the Vineyard, Dorr County, the North Shore, the Berkshires. Everyone apparently has become an expert on the Nixon psyche. "New Times" reached the all-time low in its projected cover of the former President cowering for protection behind his daughter's torn dress.

To which I want to know how the hell do they know? Did he ever visit any of these people for psychother-

apy? Do they have access to his clinical records? Are they at all trained in the complex, difficult, confusing art and science of studying the human personality? Where are their credentials enabling them to express an opinion about another man's psychic health? By what right do they do so?

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I FIND this phony psychoanalysis as convoluted as bugging Larry O'Brien's office. Mr. Nixon made serious mistakes which brought about his own fall from office. Beyond that, all speculation about the personality dynamics is gratuitous.

Henry Ford once said that history was bunk. He was wrong. But psychohistory is bunk. I am offended when a brilliant psychologist like Erik Erikson messes around with the psyches of Gandhi, Luther and Jefferson. He never had these men on his couch. By what right does he invade their psyches?

But psychohistory is all the rage, and the nice thing is you don't have to have either training or data to make a success of it.

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SOMEONE with the improbable name of Nancy Clinch did a long, convoluted study of the "Kennedy Neurosis" without any evidence to substantiate her vicious interpretations of the personalities of the clan members other than her own ispe dixit. No professional experience as a psychoanalyst, no depth interviews with the subjects, and she still writes a 422-page book.

A cynic could turn the tables and say the book is an inkblot in which Ms. Clinch reveals more about herself than she does about the Kennedy clan. And the instant experts on the Nixon psyche do the same thing.

I just wonder when all the people who are worried about the invasion of privacy by wiretapping are going to get upset about self-appointed experts trying to bug human souls.

Pastor Back

The minister of the First Congregational Church of Berkeley, the Rev. Browne Barr, returns to the pulpit tomorrow at 10 a.m. with stories about his recent visit to South Australia.

While in the southern hemisphere, the Rev. Mr. Barr was resident guest minister at Trinity Congregational Church in Perth.

The Berkeley church is located at Dana street, Durant avenue and Channing way.