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SYNANON HOUSE—A CONSIDERATION OF ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR AMERICAN CORRECTION

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Synanon House in California represents a new approach to the problem of drug addiction. To what extent has it succeeded in its efforts to cure addiction? What are the prospects for expansion of its program in the area of drug addiction? And what broader significance may Synanon have in terms of the rehabilitation of criminals? In the following article, the author appraises the Synanon program in light of the generally held concept of rehabilitation and analyzes its significance to American correction.—EDITOR.

The past three or four years have seen the emergence in California of Synanon House, a private project devoted to the communal rehabilitation of narcotic addicts. During this period an increasing amount of popular literature has been devoted to its efforts and progress,¹ but as yet there has been little examination of its techniques and effectiveness in the behavioral science journals. An article by Lewis Yablonsky, entitled "The Anti-Criminal Society: Synanon,"² published in 1962 in *Federal Probation*, marks Synanon's emergence in the professional literature as a topic of therapeutic concern. The entire tone of Yablonsky's piece is positive and enthusiastic; he is quite convinced of Synanon's efficacy in sustaining the former addict on a "clean" path. Without deprecating Synanon's efforts and its seeming success, we feel that it is time to raise certain questions concerning its techniques and rehabilitative philosophy. The very fact that its success has appeared so spectacular in an area where countless heroic attempts have heretofore failed is justification enough for cautious and full appraisal. The further fact that Synanon House heralds its conception of addiction treatment as a primary path for future rehabilitation, proposes

it as a topic of importance far beyond the success or failure of its specific experience.

At Synanon a substantial group of former drug addicts live and work together in a state of total abstinence from drugs. Such abstinence begins at the moment the new resident enters Synanon. No decreasing doses of drugs are administered, rather, the addict must "kick cold turkey." The "cold turkey" policy is a product of both legal and therapeutic factors. Legally, Synanon (not a licensed hospital under California law) is prohibited from administering any narcotics whatsoever. Beyond the legal bar is the distinct feeling on the part of Synanon's founders and administrators that a sudden and complete break with drugs is a pre-requisite to committed, permanent abstinence.

When an addict first comes to Synanon his movements are restricted to Synanon property. He participates in general housekeeping and maintenance chores. Such a status is known to Synanon people as "first stage." As the resident hopefully matures and gathers strength, he graduates to the "second stage" during which he works outside of Synanon and returns in the evening. In the "third stage," the final one, the former addict lives outside of Synanon and returns for occasional meetings.

During his residence at Synanon the addict participates in thrice-weekly leaderless group therapy sessions patterned after those employed

¹ See, e.g., *S.S. Hang Tough*, Time, Apr. 7, 1961; Winslow, *Experiment For Addicts*, The Nation, Apr. 29, 1961; Weisenberg, *Inside Synanon*, FM and Fine Arts, Aug. 1962.

² Yablonsky, *The Anti-Criminal Society: Synanon*, 26 Fed. Prob. 50 (Sept. 1962).

by Alcoholics Anonymous. The basic goals of these sessions seem to be (1) to help the individual discover the emotional problems behind his need for drugs, (2) to convince him that healthy alternative modes of solution to his difficulties exist and are available to him, and (3) to reinforce and support his new-found conviction to pursue some alternative, conventional pattern of adaptation.

The group sessions most sharply focus the primary principle of group-supported abstinence which runs through the entire program of activities. Synanon's most valuable tool is the mutual, continuous, day-to-day reinforcement among residents of the will and intention to keep off drugs. Note that one's stay at Synanon is voluntary. That is, an addict is entirely free at any of the stages of "outward mobility" to leave Synanon, although the other residents will attempt, verbally, to change his decision.

With this brief initial description of Synanon's program, we move now to an examination of Synanon's position in the field of treatment and rehabilitation of addicts, and then to an appraisal of its potential for treatment of types of offenders other than drug addicts. The reader will gain a fuller picture of the Synanon program as the discussion unfolds.

THE SYNANON PROGRAM: REHABILITATION OR PROTECTION?

Synanon and the General Concept of Rehabilitation

The professional connotations of the term rehabilitation in the correctional field extend far beyond the common understanding of that term as a process whereby the behavior of deviant individuals is effectively altered. That is, change in itself is not seen as the goal—rather, change which will enable the individual to live again within the larger society is the consistently espoused end for the rehabilitative process in correction.³ And, further, the sooner re-entrance into the general community can be effected by the rehabilitative agent, the better. Thus we have seen in American correction the emergence of half-way houses for

committed delinquents and paroled convicts and short-term treatment centers for probationer delinquents, varying, to be sure, in specific techniques and underpinnings of therapy, but firmly united in an effort to make the offender's stay in their facilities as short as possible consistent with optimum chances for desired change and subsequent success in the community.⁴

Admittedly, the philosophy of "revolving the door" has been prompted to some extent by financial considerations: the shorter the stay of the offender the more individuals a given program can accommodate within its limited budget and facilities. And yet, beyond this practical dimension, there is a strong therapeutic feeling that the offender should not tarry too long in the "mid-stream" between full commitment and freedom, that he should be led back to the larger community at the earliest feasible time, lest he tend to acquire an institutional crutch constructed from the supportive features of the rehabilitation center.

In light of the wide-spread professional understanding of the concept of rehabilitation as a process committed to speedy return of an inmate to the community, we must question whether Synanon's program is pointed in this direction.

The Synanon Syndrome

It would manifestly appear that getting the drug offender back into the larger community as an autonomous, yet conforming, individual is not among Synanon's primary objectives. In fact, one might reasonably argue that Synanon's goals point in the opposite direction. To substantiate this empirically, we would cite the very small percentage of Synanon residents who have been accorded "third stage" status since its inception.⁵

⁴ For specific statements advocating short terms of residence, see MCCORKLE, ELIAS & BIXBY, *THE HIGHFIELDS STORY* 175-76 (1958); Blacker & Kantor, *Half-Way Houses for Problem Drinkers*, 24 Fed. Prob. 18 (June 1960).

The START program in New York State, the Highfields Program in New Jersey, and The Robert Bruce House in New Jersey, a half-way house for paroled Bordentown Reformatory inmates, are equally concerned with getting the inmate fully back into societal living at the earliest time.

⁵ To this writer's knowledge few individuals have yet reached the "third stage." Those who are at this level apparently live quite close to Synanon, e.g., in the Los Angeles area. Somewhere between 30 and 40 percent of Synanon residents come from the New York City area. Yet, to date, only one person has returned to New York after a successful stay at Synanon. The main reason for the inexact statistics here is that Dederich and other leaders of Synanon have been unwilling to release complete population statistics.

³ See the discussion of the term "rehabilitation" in KORN & McCORKLE, *CRIMINOLOGY AND PENOLOGY* 594-96 (1959). It seems clear that "changes" which take place in the individual during his institutional stay but which evaporate when he confronts society again, thereby giving him no added chance to succeed in the community, are not the kinds of changes that fall within the professional understanding of the concept of rehabilitation.

It might be answered that the peculiar problems of the drug addict, his over-dependency and gross infantilism, demand a much lengthier program than is required for most types of offenders. And yet one has the distinct impression that Synanon views itself more as an end than as a means. Witness Professor Yablonsky's assertion that "there is no compulsion to move out of this satisfying community."⁶ As further evidence of Synanon's reluctance to view its process as terminable, one might cite founder Dederich's frequent references to the project as an organization "where one can find his life's work." And indeed the careers of a number of the residents within the organization bear testimony to this view of the meaning and purpose of Synanon.⁷

The drug addict's strong dependency needs have been well documented.⁸ We submit that the relinquishing of a long-standing drug habit creates an emotional need-vacuum. It is our contention that Synanon's social structure has evolved, unconsciously in the beginning but with greater human design as the organization has developed, to respond to and fill that emotional vacuum. We further submit that, perhaps, Synanon has done the job too well. The former drug addict has substituted his dependency upon Synanon House for his former dependency upon drugs. He is, in fact still "hooked," albeit healthily. The overt manifestations of this secondary "addictive" process we would term the "Synanon Syndrome."

What, then, are the symptoms that enter into this complex? As one observer put it, "Everybody has something to sell at Synanon." What he meant was that one cannot but be impressed with the large verbal quantities that Synanon residents spend upon its praise and efficacy. We would term

⁶ Yablonsky, *supra* note 2, at 55.

⁷ One significant example of an apparently indefinite commitment to a career in Synanon comes from Vince Cavanaugh, a former addict and still a duly authorized attorney in the State of California. He has become Synanon's lawyer, and this is his full-time permanent job. Other examples would include long-term Synanon residents who hope to become founders and directors of new Synanons in other areas of the United States.

⁸ Berliner, *The Helping Process in a Hospital for Narcotic Addicts*, 26 Fed. Prob. 57, 61-62 (Sept. 1962); Lowry, *Hospital Treatment of the Narcotic Addict*, 20 Fed. Prob. 42, 45 (Dec. 1956). The statement that drug addicts are strongly dependent is a general one. It has never been shown that all addicts exhibit the same kind of dependency, but it seems valid to state that most addicts exhibit a tendency to rely upon external agents, be they people or drugs, rather than upon their own capacities and abilities, to meet their need-situations.

this recurrent and ubiquitous need to discuss Synanon's power and invincibility a kind of syndrome. Anyone wise to the drug-ways of addicts knows that they devote a large part of their verbal time to discussions about their addictive way of life, e.g., where to get the "stuff," who has the biggest habit, who is trying to keep "clean," how the "squares" will never know what they are missing, and so forth.

This same kind of preoccupation with a way of life that is somewhat unique, bizarre, or different from the life habits of the general population pervades the Synanon atmosphere. True, the *emphasis* of exclusiveness has changed focus (the talk is now about keeping off drugs rather than keeping on them); and yet the concern with being a "breed apart" and a not always thoroughly disguised disdain for the "squares" are very similar to the pattern of attitudes found in individuals who are still using drugs.

Synanon: The Protective Community

Many of the central processes delineated by Maxwell Jones in *The Therapeutic Community* (1953) are found in the Synanon social system. Merciless verbal "haircuts" (severe attacks upon ego defenses and pretense) that newcomers receive create the kind of anxiety which Jones feels is so important in creating impetus for change. Then too, Synanon uses the anxiety in a manner prescribed by Jones, providing an opportunity structure through which a rechanneling of attitudes can be effected.

And yet it would appear that the usual (perhaps *ideal* would be a more accurate word here than *usual*, since at this moment in therapeutic history true therapeutic communities have not reached numbers large enough to permit discussion of their usual features) therapeutic community turns its face toward the larger society to which it hopes to send its patients. As we have already argued, it is at least questionable that Synanon's vision is so directed.

The atypical features of Synanon's inward-directed community suggest that what has been created is a new kind of society: a *protective society*. It would appear that in this type of community goals are no longer strictly rehabilitative nor therapeutic in the sense of getting the resident prepared to leave. Rather, a new concept of help has been constructed: It is almost candidly avowed that a large portion of this sub-community's members

will not be able to leave its protective confines. Accordingly the goal is not the conventional rehabilitative one of expediting re-entrance into the larger world; rather the aim is to create a sustaining, supportive, therapeutic climate in which the resident can live comfortably for an undefined length of time. Through the agency of Synanon House addicts formerly caught in the hopelessly vicious circle of drug addiction have been liberated to the extent that their lives now take on large quantum of social and individual usefulness. In view of Synanon's record one has reason to hope that this usefulness will continue so long as these former addicts are sustained in the protective atmosphere of Synanon's society.

And this brings us to a crucial point: If Synanon's foremost goal is to support a former addict within its sympathetic social confines, if it cares little for conventional notions of rehabilitation that are almost always associated with time limits and return to the community, then it should be quite explicit in stating so. For to remain unclear on this point subjects it to all the criticisms that are levelled against short-term treatment centers. That is, if its goals are misunderstood to be those of conventional halfway houses and the like, Synanon is certain to come under heavy fire from professional correctional circles.

We submit that Synanon should slough off the old terminology of correction and rehabilitation, and consequently all the connotations of impermanency and transiency that they imply, and create a new concept of "therapeutic protection" which has as its end the support of a dependent type of individual in a protective community. To adopt such a concept is really only to construct an explicit ideology and terminology for what, in essence, seems to be happening in California. To take such an ideological step does not appear to us to diminish the significance of Synanon—rather it re-defines it along the lines of what is in reality being accomplished. The Synanon process is no longer seen as an out-and-out permanent cure for drug addiction (a notion which makes most people in the field, not given to panaceas, a bit suspicious at any rate), but rather as a quasi-permanent, effective way of keeping it from recurring. The question of utmost urgency is thus subtly shifted from "What happens when these individuals leave?" to "What happens if these individuals stay?" At this point Synanon's answer to the second question can be a fairly

confident assertion that its residents will abstain from addiction and pursue limited⁹ but rewarding human existences.

Synanon As a Step But Not a Solution

It should be clear from the foregoing discussion that although this author views the Synanon process as something apart from general notions of what a rehabilitative process should stress, he is not insensitive to its contribution. The hard fact is that over 100 long-time users of narcotics are staying "clean." It should, however, be equally apparent that this kind of thera-protective community is not the final answer to the problem of drug addiction. For no matter how supportive and rewarding is the Synanon program for the drug offender, one cannot deny the fact that it chains his scope of freedom and aspiration. And one can make this latter assertion while stating at the same time that Synanon has greatly *increased* the addict's range of freedom and decision.

SYNANON AND THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN PENOLOGY

It has been implied by Yablonsky and others that Synanon "appears to have possibilities beyond exclusive application to the addiction problem."¹⁰ Certain criminologists see an important part for Synanon in correctional, parole and probation policies of the future. The logic appears to run that if Synanon works for drug addicts, why can it not also be effective in combating the recidivism of other types of offenders?

And yet, as we have seen, the Synanon philosophy is not geared to rapidly equipping the individual for existence in the community-at-large. Is it contemplated by advocates of its application to fields other than addiction that the same kind of protective, quasi-permanent society should be established? If the answer is no, then what in effect is being said is that the original Synanon viewpoint and plan of attack must be severely revamped. For at the bedrock of Synanon's change-strength is the notion of security and permanence that its atmosphere has been able to create. Take this away and it is certainly questionable that the kinds of results reached in Santa Monica could be replicated.

⁹ It can, of course, be argued that *all* human existences are, by their very nature, limited. But there are kinds and degrees of limitations. Most citizens in the modern world are not limited to living in a sheltered, long-term community.

¹⁰ Yablonsky, *supra* note 2, at 57.

If, on the other hand, the answer is yes—that Synanon-type communities should be created for other kinds of offenders—then all previous conceptions as to the function of parole and rehabilitative centers must be torn down and rebuilt on fresh ground. If the in-grown, and in-growing, Synanon institution is to gain prominence in the general field of correction and rehabilitation, one must envisage the gradual development of multiple sub-societies of offenders, sub-societies, perhaps financed by the states, having no espoused responsibility or intention expeditiously to return convicts to the community. Whether, in any event, the taxpayers of any given jurisdiction would entertain or tolerate such a situation is a serious question.

Problems of Classification and Allocation

Passing, for the moment, further discussion of the politico-economic issues that state-sponsored support of Synanon facilities would raise, let us turn to the theoretical and clinical difficulties involved in an extension of the Synanon system to fields of offenses beyond drug addiction.

The common denominator at Synanon is the fact of prior addiction on the part of all its residents. What classification scheme would one use in assigning other kinds of offenders to Synanon experiences? Should all robbers be lodged together? Or all pick-pockets? All murderers? Certainly attempts to classify by the nature of the crime rather than the nature of the criminal seem foredoomed to failure. It would appear that the only fruitful direction would be in delineating group memberships in terms of models of criminal behavior and shared normative patterns, models that would inevitably cut across legal categories of crime definition. The writer has in mind, of course, criminogenic classifications promulgated by writers such as Sutherland, Cressey, and most recently, Bloch and Geis.¹¹

A crucial objection to the efficacy of this kind of social psychological classification for purposes of effectively assigning offenders to Synanon Houses should be offered at this junction: Despite some

¹¹ For extensive models of classification of offenders in terms of common backgrounds and behavior systems see the following sources: SUTHERLAND, *THE PROFESSIONAL THIEF* at v-vi (8th Impression, 1961); SUTHERLAND & CRESSEY, *PRINCIPLES OF CRIMINOLOGY*, ch. 13 (6th ed. 1960); CRESSEY, *OTHER PEOPLE'S MONEY* (1953); BLOCH & GEIS, *MAN, CRIME AND SOCIETY, Foreword*, p. 10 and Part IV (e.g., Behavior Systems in Crime) (1962).

promising findings and a good deal of enthusiasm for this kind of group typing, broad reliable generalizations about what kinds of personality types mesh with what kinds of criminally conducive milieus to make particular types of offenders have not yet emerged.¹² Thus, at this stage, clinical procedures to allocate various kinds of offenders to groups which contain other individuals of similar outlook and criminal socialization are not available.

Is Drug Addiction a Special Case?

Even if it should become possible to fit individuals into their proper offender groups we must ask whether such allocations and resultant social systems will create the kind of powerful, change-impelling group atmosphere that has been forged with a community of drug addicts. It is perhaps reasonable to contend that the kind of rejection that drug addicts usually experience, as a class, from the public is far more uniform and drastically negative than the more diffuse and mixed rejection meted out to more "ordinary" types of offenders. Writers such as Finestone and Bloch and Geis have commented upon the unusual degree of widespread alienation from the community that addicts suffer as a group.¹³ Pickpockets, in contrast, do not appear to have as much in common with each other as do addicts. They have not suffered from the same public revulsion; they have generally not sunk to the same depths of despair and agony

¹² Attempts to classify criminal behavior have usually been linked with the learning model of differential association. That is, criminal groups are seen as entities of individuals who have been brought together by differential association. If the validity of the concept of differential association is validly challenged, then all generalizations about particular criminal groups which stem from the concept are open to question. At the present time a controversy rages over differential association's value for systematic criminology. See Cressey, *The Development of a Theory: Differential Association*, in WOLFGANG, SAVITZ & JOHNSTON, *THE SOCIOLOGY OF CRIME AND DELINQUENCY* 86 (1962). Glueck maintains that the theory of differential association has failed to explain the common norms, techniques, and rationalizations of a criminal group studied by Cressey himself, i.e., embezzlers. Glueck, *Theory and Fact in Criminology*, in WOLFGANG, SAVITZ & JOHNSTON, *op. cit.*, at 93-94. The crucial point for our purposes is not whether criminologists will succeed at some future date in classifying offenders into behavior systems that will withstand large numbers of empirical testings; rather what must be stressed, in connection with our Synanon discussion, is that such a day has not yet arrived.

¹³ Finestone, *Narcotics and Criminality*, 22 *LAW & CONTEMP. PROB.* 69, 78 (1957); BLOCH & GEIS, *op. cit. supra* note 11, at 355.

that most drug addicts experience at one time or another. The same difference in degree of rejection and alienation that separates drug addicts from pickpockets might be said to distinguish drug addicts from other groups of offenders with attitudes and behaviors in common that criminologists seek to identify.

If the above contentions have validity, one might expect that addicts would be apt to design among themselves more unified and concerted social modes of "rejecting their rejectors"¹⁴ than would be evident in less ostracized offender groups. Whether, then, such intense experiences in common that occur in the socialization of the drug user can be approximated in any other demarcated group of law violators, is at least doubtful. And it seems to be precisely this peculiar intensity and commitment which the addicts originally had in common and which they communally sustain at Synanon, although now in a positive form, that has given Synanon its group power drastically to re-shape individual attitudes and social perceptions.

Note that the writer does not contend that no power will be generated by social systems comprised of other types of offenders;¹⁵ rather that power will be less due to an initially less urgent set of bonds that bring these other groups together.

¹⁴ The phrase "rejecting the rejectors" is borrowed from McCorkle's and Korn's *Resocialization Within Walls*, 293 ANNALS 88 (1954). In that original context it characterized a mode of inmate group response in a maximum security prison to institutional and societal pressures. It is submitted here that such a response can occur *without* the institutional walls, i.e., that groups of deviants in the *community* may adopt certain in-group social patterns and norms as a way of withstanding rejection pressures that they experience from the larger community. This seems to be the central contention in COHEN, *DELINQUENT BOYS* (1955). The present writer is advancing a corollary proposition: The greater the intensity and universality of the out-group rejection, the stronger the intensity and commonality of mode of response within the in-group.

¹⁵ It seems undeniable that groups united through less urgent or less easily identifiable common denominators than drug addiction and drug-ways have been able to effect some change in members' attitudes, perceptions, and so on. But note that such groups are not credited with the power to effect the kinds of *depth-changes* in individuals that apparently take place at Synanon. See Walter Reckless' observations on this point in his article *The Small Residential Treatment Institution in Perspective* in WEEKS, *YOUTHFUL OFFENDERS AT HIGHFIELDS* 161 (1958).

In actual fact, partly because of the rudimentary nature of offender classification, therapy groups in correctional settings are often composed of individuals with little more in common, in terms of background, than their mutual incarceration. See McCorkle, *Group Therapy in the Treatment of Offenders*, 16 Fed. Prob. 22, 26 (Dec. 1952).

Of course, it may be that offenders in many of the other kinds of behavior systems can be effectively reached at shallower levels of therapy than drug offenders. If this be true, then less compelling group instruments of change may be warranted. The argument would proceed that since other types may be less alienated from the larger society, less powerful forces would be required to bring them back. But such social-psychological equations are only tentative at this time.

The Issue of Voluntary Commitment

Another large issue in the feasibility of Synanon's use in the treatment of offenders in various chosen categories is the issue of voluntariness. One must quickly recognize an important distinction between convicted offenders and the Synanon residents. Paroled or probationed offenders are in the custody (at least in the sense of technical custody) of the state. Synanon residents, although most of them have been convicted of one crime or another and have generally served some prison time, are not at the time of their residence under prosecution or conviction. They enter voluntarily, and the same procedure for departure is open to them at any time. In fact, as we have seen, the concept of voluntariness is a key building block in the effectiveness of Synanon.

But can the man on parole or probation be allowed to determine for himself the date of his entrance or departure from a Synanon-type facility? Certainly such a procedure is difficult to envisage within the present structural confines of our criminal law and administration which are based on the notion that some agency external to the individual in question is empowered to make binding decisions about him. The convicted offender, then, must be coerced by the state into residency; and coercion is the very antithesis of the Synanon process.

Would not, then, the solution be to admit only voluntary offenders, of whatever type? The difficulty with this solution is that it solves too much. One wonders what people other than narcotic addicts would commit themselves voluntarily to a Synanon House for treatment. Surely one has difficulty in imagining a professional thief or embezzler knocking upon a Synanon door! There is both a social-psychological and legal reason why the voluntary commitment of members of offender groups in general would be rare.

In line with what the writer has already con-

tended, an offender of, for example, the professional thief type is not apt to be agonized by his life habit of thievery as is the narcotic addict. For the addict voluntary commitment to Synanon House is often synonymous with despair. The thief, on the other hand, is ordinarily content with his position and manner of livelihood. Due to the fact that "of all types of crimes, professional crimes appear to be among the most 'normal' forms of illegal action, in terms of the integration and adjustment to their behavior by individuals who participate in the activity,"¹⁶ the thief is able to function with a minimum of anxiety. Barring arrest and conviction his life is quite tolerable, and he feels no serious trauma in its day-by-day living; consequently there is no urgent need to make a change.¹⁷

In a sense Synanon seems able to operate because of the curious position of the drug addict vis a vis the criminal law. It is not a crime *per se* to be a drug addict,¹⁸ although certain activities associated with the use of drugs, like selling narcotics or illegal possession of drugs, are criminal; it is, on the other hand, a crime to be murderer or a pickpocket or a robber. Unfortunately, or otherwise, the law does not permit a man to give up the life of a robber without demanding some kind of retribution. Whereas the drug addict can quit his habit and usually be left alone by the sovereign state (because addiction is not a crime), no such unilateral disposition can be made on the part of the criminal offender. Thus for a professional thief voluntarily to commit himself would be a confession of crime, a confession that the self-committing addict does not have to make. Surely a Synanon House for professional thieves would have its membership frequently depleted by police officials and prosecuting attorneys. Such a threat-laden climate could scarcely provide the feeling of security and permanency which char-

acterizes the viability of the present Synanon House.

Is Synanon An Anti-Criminal Society?

We have seen that drug addiction cannot itself be called a crime. Note that the title of Yablonsky's article, "The Anti-Criminal Society: Synanon," perforce implies that a process of "decriminalization" has occurred at Synanon. But "decriminalization" from what crime or crime pattern?

Here we are squarely faced with the sticky causation problem between narcotics and criminality. Are the addicts at Synanon people who were *first* criminals and who secondly became addicts in later stages of their criminal careers? Or are they people who first became addicts and then necessarily resorted to crime to feed expensive and demanding drug habits? If the first chronology is the true one, Yablonsky can talk quite profitably about Synanon as an "anti-criminal society"; however, if the second causal chain is the true one, then it seems forced to view a collection of basically non-criminal people as ever truly part of a criminal society from which they must be weaned away. Both views have ample support in the literature.¹⁹

A newer view is that "both delinquency (or criminal activity) and narcotics use exist side by side as independent value patterns of behavior." This view holds that "many of those who became addicted and were forced to engage in crime to support the high cost of their addiction would probably have gone on to engage in crime as adolescents regardless of whether or not they had become addicted." (It is Finestone's contention that both adult addiction and adult criminality are prestigious forms of endeavor in certain lower socio-economic environments.)²⁰ This latter formulation of the narcotics-criminality issue, which negates the necessary importance of prior addiction or criminality, is more favorable to Yablonsky's position, since predisposition toward drug addic-

¹⁶ BLOCH & GEIS, *op. cit.* *supra* note 11, at 196.

¹⁷ The degree of trauma and disturbance associated with a given deviate behavior system might be charted on a continuum with professional thievery and drug addiction at the poles. The closer an offender pattern approached that of the drug addict, in terms of anxiety, desperation, etc., the higher would be the expectation that individuals engaged in that activity as a way of life might seek help in changing.

¹⁸ In 1961 the Supreme Court of the United States, in *Robinson v. California*, 370 U.S. 660, invalidated a California statute which declared the status of drug addict to be a misdemeanor. The court held that the statute constituted cruel and unusual punishment under the 8th and 14th Amendments of the Federal Constitution.

¹⁹ For opinions that delinquency and criminality precede addiction, see N.J. COM'N ON NARCOTIC CONTROL, THIRD REPORT OF STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS 34-37 (1957); U.S. BUREAU OF NARCOTICS, TRAFFIC IN OPIUM AND OTHER DANGEROUS DRUGS 6, 7 (1939); ANSLINGER & TOMPKINS, THE TRAFFIC IN NARCOTICS 170 (1953). For the view that criminal activity comes about as a result of addiction, see Lindesmith, *Dope Fiend Mythology*, 31 J. CRIM. L., C. & P.S. 199-208 (1940); Pescor, *A Statistical Analysis of the Clinical Records of Hospitalized Drug Addicts*, 43 PUBLIC HEALTH REP. 6 (1938).

²⁰ Finestone, *supra* note 13, at 75-76.

tion infers a predisposition toward criminal activity as well, no matter which activity actually came first in an individual's career. Synanon House can then be seen as instrumental in reshaping the criminal predispositions of its residents.²¹

Finally, let it be said that the chicken-egg problem of addiction and crime commission has yet to be resolved. Until, and unless, it be convincingly demonstrated that drug addiction follows or is contemporaneous with criminal attitudes and socialization, assertions that Synanon is "de-criminalizing" a formerly criminal population are open to doubt. And, as long as this doubt subsists, plans for extension of the Synanon process to the "de-criminalization" of non-addict groups cannot be seriously entertained.

State Aid and Expansion

Returning now to the question of state aid for Synanon, it must be stated that whether one is dealing with voluntary or non-voluntary offenders, with drug addicts or other types of offenders, the intervention of the state as change-agent in the process raises severe problems that go far beyond foreseeable difficulties in gaining financial support in the legislature and so on.

Suppose the state, convinced of Synanon's efficacy and determined to enlarge the number that the experience could reach, decided to create Synanon Houses for drug addicts, on a voluntary basis. Dederich has described the atmosphere at Synanon along the following lines:

"We have here a climate consisting of a family structure The structure . . . contains overtones of a 19th century family set-up A more or less autocratic family structure appears to be necessary to buy time for the recovering addict."²²

It can be strongly questioned whether the intervention of the impersonal state can be reconciled with the kind of emotional atmosphere described here by Dederich. Is not the need for a private, corporate, self-sustaining community inherent in the Synanon philosophy? The present Synanon supports itself. The very tightness of the

²¹ To utilize Finestone's formulation, however, in support of an assertion that Synanon is dealing with a population possessing criminal attitudes, one would have to demonstrate that a large percentage of the Synanon group comes from the type of lower socio-economic background postulated by Finestone; however, as noted, outside observers of Synanon have, as yet, no access to this type of statistics.

²² Yablonsky, *supra* note 2, at 51.

budget, the need to skimp and constantly cut corners, is a source of cohesion and useful pride. Picture the state intervening with its administrative forms, its intricate budgets, its total impersonality. Must not the therapeutic vitality of values such as family solidarity and self-support be lost?

It is probably true that the founders of Synanon House realize that a state-sponsored system of Synanon facilities would not be viable. And yet Synanon is in constant need of outside funds. The dilemma with which its directors are faced is how to get enough financial aid to sustain Synanon without going to the other extreme of public support which would inevitably lead to state intervention and ultimate control. Up to the present time Synanon has walked an effective tightrope, receiving donations in its capacity as a charitable corporation under California law. But its difficulties in this area are by no means over, since its size and ambition are in constant growth²³ and thus in demand of larger financial assets. Any plans to allocate to the Synanon process a major role in American correction's future, must take into account, regardless of all other kinds of objections that this paper has offered, the necessary and limiting condition of self-support.

CONCLUSION

A consideration of the philosophy and effectiveness of Synanon House in its work with drug addicts demonstrates, to this writer, that Synanon's in-grown, protective community fails to meet the criteria generally set for rehabilitation centers. It is submitted that Synanon should disengage itself from more conventional notions of correction and frankly describe itself as a new kind of treatment center with new kinds of goals that do not primarily include the speedy return of the addict to the community. It is further submitted that Synanon's work can be looked upon as a hopeful step in the successful treatment of addiction, but cannot be viewed as any kind of final solution since the addict appears to function without drugs only as long as he stays at Synanon House. It appears that expansion of Synanon-type programs to the treatment of groups of offenders other than drug addicts would be fraught with difficulties, because of the problems in classifying offenders and because of the social-psychological

²³ As this article was being written, the organization had opened its second full-scale Synanon House in Westport, Connecticut.

and legal characteristics that seem peculiar to drug addicts as a group. Moreover, until the relationship between addiction and criminality is better understood, it cannot be asserted that Synanon is, in fact, working with a genuine criminal population. With regard to the possibility of employing state aid in an attempt to increase the number of treatment centers for addicts, it seems that the imper-

sonality and bureaucracy which would inevitably accompany state assistance would destroy the therapeutic milieu of Synanon House—a milieu built upon corporateness and privacy. The condition of self-support thus seems a limiting one for plans of expansion and for possibilities that Synanon might become a major feature of American correctional policies.