

A Tribute: Dr. Charles Socarides, Lover Of Humanity

By Benjamin Kaufman, M.D.

At one time, the name of Charles Socarides was known throughout the world to every student of sexual development. Familiarity with Charles' work was required, particularly for those training to become psychoanalysts.

Now, for most men and women, simply to become such an icon with an unquestioned place in the heady atmosphere of the intellectual elite would be sufficient. To have achieved stature, name recognition, and be acknowledged internationally among one's colleagues as a distinguished member of prestigious faculties and professional organizations would be more than enough to satisfy a lifetime of ambition. Charles Socarides could have, for the rest of his life, settled back with a worldwide reputation. He could have remained aloof and apart from the trenches where the fiercest of cultural battles was just beginning to be fought. But in his 70th year, after forty years as a clinician and a scholar, Charles entered those trenches using his psychoanalytic knowledge to become a social critic in addition to being a clinician, researcher and scholar.

The impetus for Charles's calling to the cultural wars began in 1973 when politicized professional organizations turned a hundred years of hard-won scientific discovery, knowledge and theory of psycho-sexual development upside down and inside out. At that time, the diagnosis of "homosexuality" was removed from the manual of psychiatric diagnosis of mental illness, which was intended to reduce discrimination and accommodate those in psychic pain from incomplete sexual development. Over the years, this original intent has been elaborated and expanded into a variety of public policies, all of which Charles referred to as being part of the re-drawing of male/female design to make homosexuality the equivalent of heterosexuality in marriage, child-rearing, education, and in every institution of public life.

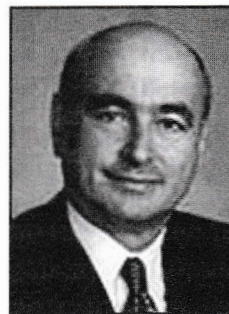
Charles always supported tolerance, but courageously emphasized the distinction between tolerance and approval of the paraphilias. He asserted that "there is

one thing I know as a psychoanalyst, I know this: people don't get to the bottom of their pain by lying about it to themselves or to the world."

Charles pointed out that "...at this moment in history ...a new sexual revolution has become inextricably bound to the concept of freedom." Charles was first among psychoanalytic clinicians to take to the public square and ask — but freedom *from* what, and *for* what? Does this freedom bring real happiness or empty promises? Is any form of sexuality as good as any other? And are we better off being set free of the constraints of responsibility and tradition? Charles poses these questions and many others in his work referring to the paraphilias, *A Freedom Too Far*.

I was familiar with Charles' academic writings on sexuality for many years. His publications stood alongside the most well-known of the theory builders and clinicians who influenced my training as a psychiatrist and later as a psychoanalyst. I was surprised to read that he had been picketed and protested at one of his talks, as I would have expected him to be just another psychoanalytic scholar whose work put him above the cultural fray, not one who would get into the cultural trenches and risk a pristine career.

I met Charles in 1991. I learned that he and I shared



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M.D.

the belief that we needed an organization where teachers and social critics would not be alone and isolated. We called on Joe Nicolosi, who was already as hard at work on the West Coast as Charles was on the East. Charles pulled a fast one and got us a room at The Waldorf Astoria during the December 1991 meeting of the American Psychoanalytic Association. We were surprised that 25 people showed up including Dean Byrd, the late Harold Voth, and Toby Beiber. Our committee created NARTH.

Charles said at that time "...you know they're going

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