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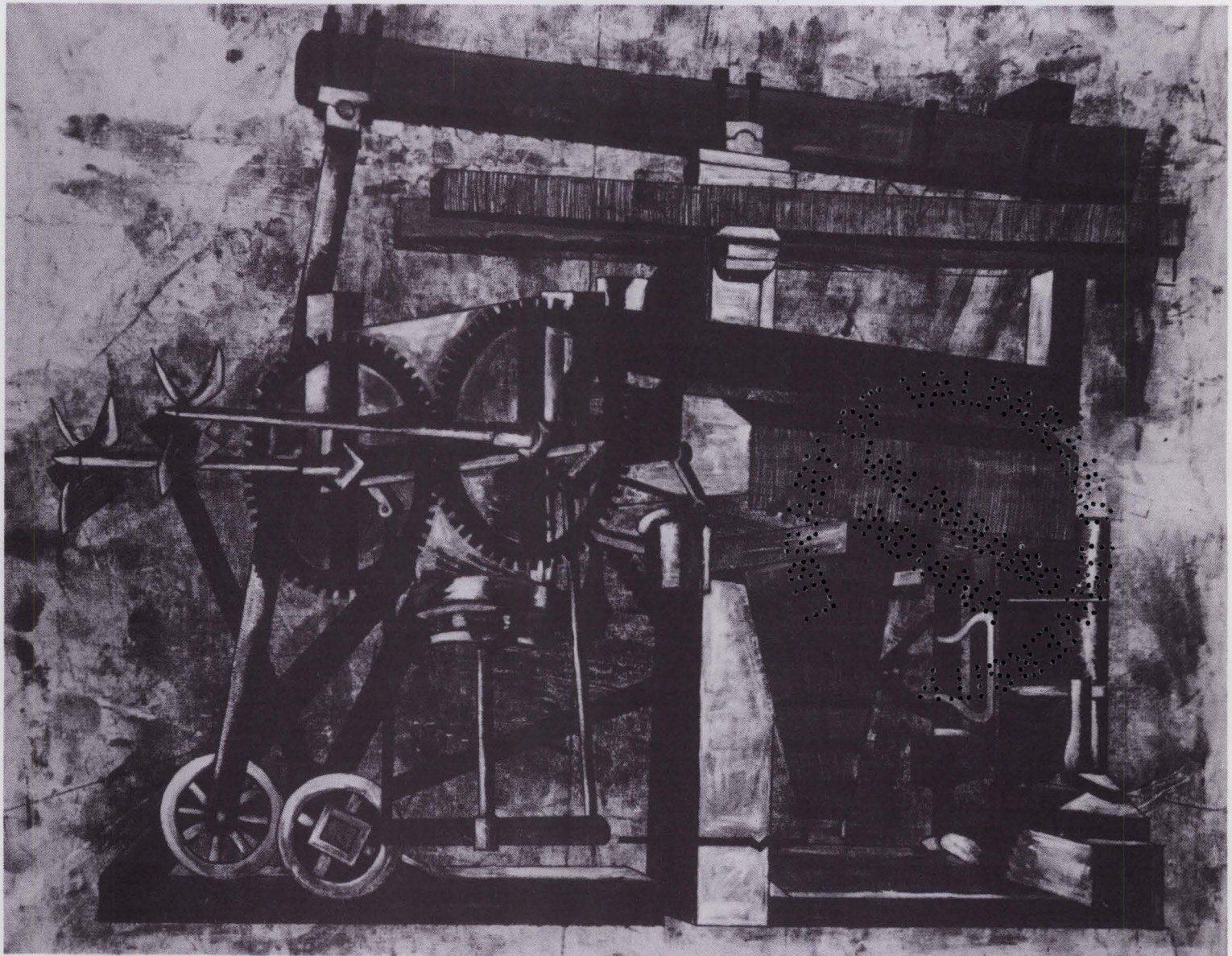
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- Mayor Koch and the Political Role of Churches
- Reflections on Political Protest and Political Morality
- Traditional Religions and Commercial Values in Japan

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A review of Literature, the Arts, and Public Affairs
February, 1986



ROBERT V. SCHNABEL, *Publisher*
JAMES NUECHTERLEIN, *Editor*

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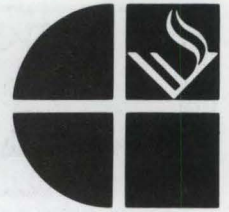


Above: Shingo Kuribayashi, *The Death of Linos I*. 1984, acrylic on canvas, 107 x 71 inches.

Cover: Molly Reynolds, *Loco-Motive*. 1985, mixed-media on canvas, 5 x 6 feet.

These artists have a duo winter exhibit at VU.

RHWB



Comment on Contemporary Affairs by the Editor

Political Protest and Political Morality

Ellen Goodman, a nationally-syndicated columnist with whom we are in agreement only on occasion, recently made a thoughtful point—and one that deserves some elaboration—concerning the current mood of protest against apartheid on college campuses.

It is striking, Ms. Goodman noted, that this presumably apathetic student generation should have taken up with such enthusiasm the cause of liberation for South Africa's black population. A number of plausible explanations for this anomalous behavior come to mind.

One can see in it elements of emotional contagion; a generation given to fads and to conformist behavior takes up anti-apartheid protest as its distraction of the moment. This afternoon the soaps; tonight the protest rally. Or one can see it as an exercise in political morality on the cheap. South Africa is half a world away, and concern over injustice there costs nothing here. As Ms. Goodman put it, "you can hang up on a long-distance cause if it gets too expensive." We would presumably see far fewer arrests at South African consulates if those thereby making their political statements could not be assured, as they are now, of immediate release. The protest movement may also include, as many conservatives suspect, overtones of political opportunism. Opponents of President Reagan find it easy to translate suggestions of America's complicity in apartheid into partisan ammunition against the Administration's policy of "constructive engagement."

One need not be a cynic to entertain such skeptical thoughts. Political behavior, after all, is no more immune to mixed—and sometimes dubious—motivation than any other form of human activity. Yet it would be unduly disbelieving of us to rest the matter there. Sometimes, even in politics, one can accept things as they appear on the surface. The best explanation for anti-apartheid protest is precisely the one that protesters claim for it: apartheid is an evil system that demands the opposition of decent people.

And that, according to Ms. Goodman, is why today's college students are drawn to attack apartheid when they abide so much else. Protest against apartheid, in her words, "offers the luxury of moral certainty." It is the absence of moral ambiguity in the issue that draws students to it in preference to other causes.

Today's students, she intimates, are instinctively suspicious of causes. This is a post-Watergate generation, one that grew up "against a backdrop of idealism de-

bunked, leaders defrocked, Nixon's expletives, Kennedy's women." They are wary of the big chill syndrome; they do not want to find themselves forced to "grimace over their naivete at some tenth reunion." And they don't think they will have to over their opposition to apartheid.

The appeal of certainty explains much. (Though not everything. As a friend of ours suggested, if moral certainty is the criterion, why aren't the students protesting the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan? Good question, a satisfactory answer to which would lead us too far afield from our present concerns.) It also, and more interestingly, suggests a perspective on today's students rather different from the prevailing one. Is it possible that they are not so much apathetic as morally cautious, even discriminating? Could it be that they ordinarily refrain from protest politics not out of narcissism or indifference but out of an instinctive sense—one that they perhaps do not know fully how to articulate—of the moral complexity of things? That may appear unlikely to many of their professors, but it is a possibility that should not be dismissed out of hand.

A cautious reaction to wholesale charges of apathy should come naturally to those of us who came of age in the 1950s and who recall with lingering resentment the similar charges brought against us at the time. Ours was the original Silent Generation, unconcerned with politics, incurious about ideas, preoccupied with individual and private matters—or so the indictment read. For many of us, indeed, it was largely true, as it has been true of *every* generation of American college students, at least in the modern era. That's what comes, after all, of mass education. Intellectual passion and political activism have always been restricted to a minority, a condition for which, on balance, we should be deeply grateful.

Yet even those of us who were neither unconcerned with politics or incurious about ideas shied away from collective protest or radical commitment. The dominant mood among those who thought seriously about politics was one of ambiguity and irony. As with every generation, much of what we were found definition in reaction against the perceived errors of our immediate predecessors. The great political causes of the 1930s appeared to us in retrospect as great follies—not the liberal centrism of the New Deal but the radicalisms to the New Deal's Left and Right (especially the Left) that attracted so many of that generation's young political activists.

We of the Fifties looked back at the political reli-

gions of fascism and communism and where they had led and decided that moral circumspection about politics made sense and that intense political passions and grand political ideas probably ought to be avoided. Eisenhower's America was unheroic, maybe even bland, but better blandness, we thought, than the bloody-minded zealotries of great causes and great commitments. And looking back on it thirty years later, at least some of us are still persuaded that we were, all in all, more right than wrong to think as we did.

As with the Fifties, so perhaps with the Eighties. Those of today's students who think much about politics (and they are still a minority) also look back skeptically on their predecessors, though their retrospective mood is not so much critical as incomprehending. Whence, they wonder quizzically, all the incredible passion and intensity of the late Sixties and early Seventies? And they too are not wrong to look back in a cautionary mood.

Important distinctions must be made. The causes of the Sixties had an intrinsic merit absent from the student radicalism of the Thirties. Infinitely better to have marched for civil rights and against the war in Vietnam than to have made excuses for Stalin or imagined that the key to social decency lay in public ownership and control of the means of production. (Even many of us from the cautious Fifties finally decided that it was all right to take to the streets with Martin Luther King, though we never got over feeling uneasy and ambivalent when we did so.)

But if the causes of the Sixties were noble (at least at the outset), much of the mood was ugly (especially at the end). Some of those who protested managed to combine deep commitment with moral humility, but they were finally shouted and elbowed aside by the true believers. Soon the air was filled with rantings about Amerika, and the judgment became commonplace that American society was morally unredeemable and would have to be destroyed, or at least radically rearranged, before it could be decently reconstructed. Utopianism frustrated turned sour and rancorous, and the prevailing mood of outrage rendered civil exchange and rational debate all but impossible.

It is this unlovely aspect of Sixties' radicalism that today's students find alien, almost unfathomable. And they sense, quite rightly, that behind the wretched excesses of the time lay a combination of moral arrogance and intellectual gullibility. The radicals of the Sixties were frighteningly certain of their own virtue and tragically certain of a whole set of ideological assumptions about life and politics that no serious person today even feels it worth his time to refute. Is it

any wonder that post-Sixties students developed a certain skepticism towards political activism?

It is possible that they, like we of the Fifties, learned their skepticism too well. It is certain that, precisely because they are young and because idealism belongs to youth, they harbored beneath the thin surface of their skepticism a yearning for a cause to which they could fully give themselves in good conscience and with informed intelligence.

All of which brings us, long way around, back to Ms. Goodman's point about anti-apartheid activism. Here is a cause to disarm skepticism, to support without equivocation, to give oneself to without fear of tomorrow's disillusionment. It is truly a good fight, one that today's activists are unlikely to have to look back on a decade or more from now with embarrassment and chagrin.

Though one recalls, of course, that the protests of the Sixties started out the same way. The trick for the anti-apartheid activists will be to retain their intensity of commitment without giving up either their humility or their sense of perspective. All of which is a great deal to expect of anyone, and especially of youth. What will happen when, as almost certainly will be the case, the walls of apartheid do not easily crumble and ambiguous and morally unsatisfying policies have to be formulated in response? Will the students succumb, as did so many of their counterparts in the Sixties, to a spasm of adolescent outrage that reduces politics to moral melodrama?

One suspects that much of how things turn out for the young will depend on the response of those of us who are no longer young. If we treat them dismissively or, as is probably more likely, indulgently, we will only act to prolong their political youth. What young people want of their elders more than anything else is that they take them seriously, and we will fail to do so if we either condescend to them ("you'll understand better when you grow up") or encourage, out of our own misplaced ideological and moral urgings, their tendency to demand of the world that it transform itself forthwith into the image of their desires.

So while it is well for us to support the students in their fight against apartheid, and to rejoice with them that they have found a cause that allows them moral certainty, it might be a service to suggest to them at the same time that certainty is a rare luxury in politics, and that most of the important work to be done in the political world will be carried on by those who have gone beyond certainty and who have learned to act and live morally nonetheless. We might even want to suggest to them that the real work of politics begins when the protests and rallies, whatever their moral origins, have ended.



THE MAYOR AND THE CHURCHES

Reflections on Mayor Koch and the Role of Churches in Politics

One characteristic incident captures Mayor Edward Koch of New York City for me. I am sitting on a chair at the Battery Park in lower Manhattan, in the "ecumenical section," waiting for the Pope to arrive. Wind is gusting and rain is pelting. People are wet, uncomfortable, and impatient. Soon we hear the noise of crowds, and we know that Pope John Paul II's retinue has arrived in the park. As the Pope arrives, the cheers intensify. He is regally garbed, and accompanied by other princes of the church.

But the cheers grow even louder for a tall, smiling man dressed in an orange "Parks Department of New York" windbreaker. He shoots his thumbs up in the air and hollers out his favorite line, a line repeated in every neighborhood in the city, "How'm I doing?" The cheers tell him he is doing just fine. For many, Edward I. Koch symbolizes the Big Apple: brash, a little offensive, tough, feisty, spirited, intimidating, street-wise. There has not been a more popular Mayor in New York since Fiorello LaGuardia, and there has probably not been a more controversial one.

A few years back Koch published *Mayor*, a book describing his early years in office. (He has more recently released *Politics*, a further work of political reminiscences.) This essay involves my own reactions to the Mayor and to *Mayor*, as well as some broader reflections on the role of churches in the political process.

Stephen P. Bouman, a 1973 graduate of Concordia Theological Seminary, St. Louis, is pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Bogota, New Jersey. He serves on the national Board of Directors of the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches and is an editorial assistant of Lutheran Partners magazine. His writings have appeared in Lutheran Forum, Una Sancta, Lutheran Standard, and Ecumenical Trends.

I read *Mayor* with no little interest. I presently live and am pastor of a church just across the Hudson from Koch's city in an area of New Jersey described by the Mayor in a *Playboy* interview as "the pits" and "sterile." More importantly, from 1973 to 1982 I was pastor of a parish in the Jackson Heights section of Queens, New York City. That neighborhood experienced the effects of many of the policies and events described in the book. I sat across the table from the Mayor as an adversary in negotiations and as a reluctant partner in borough and neighborhood concerns. And the Mayor had put our group (the Queens Citizen's Organization, a coalition of churches and civic groups from all over the borough) into his book.

As I read pages 75-78 of *Mayor* I went through the same emotions that I experienced at the time of the incident recounted (February, 1978): anger, outrage, grudging respect, a liberating sense of being present to my own history and destiny. And if the Mayor were to meet me on the street today and ask me, "How'm I doing?" I might answer, "Do you really want to know?"

II

In one sense, Koch has written an honest book. The persona which emerges is congruent with what I and others know about him. His strengths are very real. He truly loves the city. He is a shrewd and effective administrator. He has led the city into a more sensible relationship with the unions. New York, under Koch, has negotiated contracts which the city can afford to pay without mortgaging its future or its credibility. He has eliminated much waste and patronage. His charisma and courage energized commuters who walked across bridges during the transit strike. He has strong personal beliefs and commitments and acts on them. He has national stature as an advocate for urban concerns.

But there is another side to the man. He never forgets a slight or an insult. He gets even. His stories are full of him getting the better of someone. He seems to enjoy making sport of the discomfort and embarrassment of others. Some especially tacky examples of this bullying instinct include his description of a weeping Robert Milano and Ronay Menschel as they are fired or demoted. The details Koch provides are degrading and unnecessary.

Yet even here, Koch is selective. People who can't hurt or help him, who are out of power, are repeatedly given rough treatment: people like Herman Badillo, Bella Abzug, Jimmy Carter, Hugh Carey. Others with whom he must deal he is not willing to publicly humiliate, such as Walter Mondale or Governor Mario Cuomo. There is, on the whole, a sense of an almost gleeful use of power to crush those who disagree, a willingness to use power to keep people in line which becomes personal and petty.

The Mayor has also managed to be a part of the polarization which is too much a part of life in New York. He has managed to antagonize Blacks, blue-collar workers, unions, Hispanics, the boroughs, Protestants, Catholics, and Hasidic Jews. It's all in the book, and he seems to be proud of it. He would say that he is being fair to everybody, and will not allow himself to be pressured by any particular group.

And he has been consistent on this. He is absolutely opposed to quotas of any kind. By invading the prerogatives of the poverty programs and the Health and Hospitals Corporation he has intruded on the traditional turf of the Black political establishment. Lost in the resulting rhetoric and rage of offended groups is that Koch often eliminated waste and mismanagement in these areas. Yet too often the Mayor practices a style and politics which taunts, demeans, and insults.

An example is the closing of Sydenham Hospital in Harlem. On the merits of the issue Koch could make the case that the hospital is unnecessary, too much of a drain on the budget of the Health and Hospitals Corporation due to its empty beds for long term care, and that a strategically placed ambulatory care facility would make more sense. Yet he had absolutely no sensitivity to the depth of the issue in a poor community which has already been abandoned by available credit, adequate city services, doctors, employment opportunities, and other things which make a community more than just bricks and mortar.

He failed to see the hospital in the terms the neighborhood saw it, as a sign of either hope or abandonment. By the end of the debacle, which included everything from occupation of the hospital by activists to potentially dangerous confrontations between police and neighborhood residents, Koch had managed to

close the hospital and in the process to insult the Black leadership and leave people feeling that they had again become victims of raw, oppressive power. Koch's account of the closing of the hospital is mostly concerned with inside detail on how he brokered the various Black leaders into capitulating (at least capitulation in his version of things).

Through it all he exhibits a macho resolve not to be "intimidated" by anyone. He has the habit of lumping the true crazies and eccentrics of the city with all those who disagree with him. He calls them all "wackos." The Mayor could have reached a compromise with the people of Sydenham's Harlem community without communicating to them that he considered them "wackos" and their concerns therefore irrelevant. But I am convinced that he rather enjoys the tawdry insult derby.

Mayor Koch is a polarizing figure: he has managed to antagonize Blacks, blue-collar workers, unions, Hispanics, the boroughs, Protestants, Catholics, and Hasidic Jews.

Powerless, frustrated people come to regard the Koch style as arrogance. This arrogance comes through clearly in the book in a portion of an answer he gave at a town hall meeting in a poor neighborhood in Brooklyn. A young Black man questioned the Mayor's sensitivity and compassion for his role in the hospital closing. Koch responded, as he often does, by lecturing the man, and then closed with these words:

Let me close by saying this—it's nine thirty p.m., I want to close, hold it, we've been here two hours, please sit down. Now, you know, I told you that I've been Mayor for close to three years. And I've said that it will take twelve years to turn this town around. But I get involved in a lot of controversies and I make a lot of people mad at me, and so maybe at the end of these four years they'll say, "He's too controversial and we don't want him." And maybe they'll throw me out. That's okay with me. I'll get a better job, and you won't get a better mayor. (p. 223)

So there!

It becomes clear in his own self-portrait that the Mayor understands two things above all: self-interest and power. That's not surprising. They're what make the world go around. So how do you deal with someone like this, when you pastor a parish in a neighborhood which has real issues to bring before city government, and in which problems are often a direct result of little input into decisions made which shape the community? Well that's how we got into the book, and

onto Koch's list of "wackos."

III

It strikes me that religious institutions and even neighborhoods mistakenly think they can have effective input in the public arena of decision-making even while ignoring self-interest and power. The problem is that churches and synagogues are continually seduced into being lovable. The effect is for religious institutions to become closely identified with the status quo; indeed they are often chaplains to it. Their ministers invoke and bless and dress up the public piety. And this is what people like the Mayor expect from the churches and synagogues: not to be part of the decisions which affect or detract from creating human community, but to give the benediction to public illusions and leave public life to the "experts."

The place of the church and its ministers is made clear by Koch in his comments on his visit to a Black church in Harlem. "Carl Flemister, a leading pastor in the city, gets up to speak and he begins lecturing me. He is upset that I have issued an Executive Order barring discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation where city employment is involved. And he says he hopes I will be equally conscious of the rights of Blacks and the poor—very caustic, and, in my judgment, *not nice from a minister*." (p. 83—emphasis added)

Be nice! Don't meddle! The expectation is that the religious communities are *private* institutions. Politicians evoke this aura when they kiss babies and shake hands. Private relationships are built on trust, on automatic acceptance based on acknowledged kinship. We'll look the other way when Uncle Harvey wears the lampshade at the party. After all, *he's family!*

And who can blame the decision-makers for appealing to an aura of private relationships? Public relationships are based on scrutability, mutual accountability, the give and take of equals and fueled by *quid pro quo* arrangements as decisions are made. Power and self-interest are always present, and real things get accomplished. The drive by the religious communities to be lovable, to operate in the private arena, to "be nice" (although I would argue that it is possible to be nice, to be civil, even in the public arena of power and self-interest) is ultimately a retreat from politics, the business of having a say in decisions which shape society. And that is a spiritual sin, an evasion of responsibility.

There are religious communities that understand the public, activist dimension of Judeo-Christian faith. But they often choose tactics that have little use in gaining power to be a part of the decision-making process. The tactics instead are often designed to make a point, to humiliate the adversary, to go on re-

cord with one's convictions. These include demonstrations which are not a part of any ongoing strategy, policy statements passed by church bureaucracies and conventions, and guerilla theatre. It seems the main point of such tactics is not to win, but to be there, to register a dissent, to go on record. And these tactics *don't* win, either. Those who occupied Sydenham Hospital were carried out in the middle of the night by the police, and the hospital was ultimately closed anyway.

Symbolic gestures divorced from access to power to influence decisions are not generally very effective in trying to make one's values a part of the matrix out of which decisions are forged. I ought to know. In 1978 there was a rash of vicious muggings of the elderly on our neighborhood's streets in broad daylight. Five in one month occurred on my own block. We tried guerilla theatre and went to the local precinct with 30 people. We had no plan, no strategy, just an anger and a demand for "action." What we got was the commitment of the community relations officer to appear at a meeting to be held at our church. We could have gotten that with a phone call! We tried lovable.

Religious institutions mistakenly think they can have effective input in the public arena of decision-making while ignoring self-interest and power.

At the meeting at our church some of the anger and frustration came out. But to the community relations officer we were lovable and nice. But nothing got done. He lectured us about locks. He committed the department to nothing. But he did his job. He was one of the hoops set up by government and other power groups through which powerless people go. We were "heard," heard right out of the arena of power and decision-making. The local politicians were all there and made speeches. They beat up on the community relations guy for our benefit. They knew better than we that the whole meeting was an exercise in futility, which made their gratuitous scolding of him all the more cynical and self-serving. Through the entire process we never talked to one of the people who could have deployed manpower to address the problem: the commissioner of police, the borough commander, a deputy mayor or precinct captain.

We did not have the power or the institutional relationships necessary to break through the insulation. I closed the meeting with prayer. The community relations officer went outside and discovered that his car

had been stolen from in front of the church. The neighbors went home more frustrated than ever. Rodney Dangerfield is right. It's a matter of respect. We didn't have any.

IV

By February of 1978 we were done wasting our time with going through hoops. On page 75 of his book Koch begins his description of a meeting we had with him this way, "Not so charming was a little meeting I went to in February of 1978 out in the Bayside section of Queens." What followed in his description made it abundantly clear that the last thing he regarded us as was "lovable." He also demonstrated that he is as good as anyone in revising history, in caricaturing people in order to denigrate them and make himself the hero, in leaving out crucial information.

For openers he got our name wrong. The name of the community organizing effort our parish joined is called the Queens Citizen's Organization, not the Queens Civic Organization Koch referred to. As everyone knows, Queens is the approximate mythical home of Archie Bunker, with all that implies about imagined widespread blue-collar bigotry. It was to evoke that image that Koch identified our group as "primarily white and Christian middle-class homeowners."

In fact the group was, and is, diverse in its racial and class composition. Churches present spanned the entire borough and included upper-class sections of Flushing and bombed-out sections of Far Rockaway. Its diversity was reflected both in the leadership and in those who attended the meeting. The very diversity of the group made it unique in New York neighborhood politics; it defied easy categorization or ideological identification.

That didn't stop the Mayor from trying to caricature the group, though. He compared his meeting with us—a meeting he walked out on after several minutes—to the performance of the Stalinists who put the Jewish doctors on trial in Russia. This comment, an accusation of anti-Semitism, was widely denounced in the press and by the Queens Citizen's Organization. The Mayor apologized. He said he didn't mean it and never meant to imply anti-Semitism. The apology and the retraction, though, never made it into the book—only the caricature of the group and the accusations of anti-Semitism. Thus the attempt of over twenty institutions representing over 50,000 families to negotiate a piece of their history was pigeon-holed as extremist, and used by the Mayor to demonstrate how he handles such rowdies. We have come a long way from "lovable"!

I have my own memories of that meeting with the Mayor. They are no less colored by how I see things, and what I care about, than are the Mayor's. But my memories are decidedly different. I wrote down some of my impressions of the meeting shortly after it. This is some of what I wrote.

V

The night was February 27, 1978. From all over the borough of Queens 1,100 people came to St. Francis Prep auditorium in the Fresh Meadows section. The meeting was the focus of a lot of hopes and hard work. It was the coming-out party of a fledgling, broad-based citizen's power organization, based in churches and schooled by organizers from the Industrial Areas Foundation (founded by the late Saul Alinsky).

The Queens Citizen's Organization is not your normal civic group. It is not a political group. It is not a block club nor a neighborhood improvement organization. The QCO is an ecumenical group of churches from across the entire borough.

The Queens Citizen's Organization (QCO) is not your normal civic group. It is not a political club. It is not a block club nor a neighborhood improvement organization. The QCO is an ecumenical organization of churches from across the entire borough. It had shown in its fledgling stage a willingness to confront public officials, and a disciplined persistence in pursuit of its goals. Queens borough president Donald Manes, stung after a gruelling "accountability session" with QCO, predicted that it would be gone from the scene within six months.

Mayor Koch was meeting with it because he had signed a written agreement to do so several months earlier at a "candidates' night" in the heat of the mayoral campaign. There were hints that the Mayor was less than happy to honor his campaign promises. His staff was weary of QCO. The meeting was shrouded by tension, possible controversy, and much interest. The presence of TV cameras and media personalities gave the meeting the aura of a "happening." The spectacle of the mighty Mayor meeting feisty neighborhood folks on their own turf provided a public tableau of irresistible interest.

I had just left my wife, who was in the hospital to give birth in the morning by Caesarian section, and arrived late to a scene of electric excitement. I was immediately caught up

in it. As I walked through the cordon of police and QCO security and entered the arena the sight took my breath away. It looked like a miniature national nominating convention.

The delegates were all gathered around large vertical signs which identified church and neighborhood. I saw St. Catherine of Siena from Cambria Heights, a black Catholic church in a section slowly being abandoned by city services and available credit. Over on the right was St. Rose of Lima from a poor section of Far Rockaway. Gathered close by were a cluster of three churches—Lutheran, Congregational, and Roman Catholic—from the middle-class Woodhaven neighborhood. And then I saw the familiar faces of my own people, gathered around the Atonement Lutheran, Jackson Heights sign. We had only joined QCO a month ago.

We had voted on local issues to bring before the Mayor. We had recruited fifty fellow members to attend the convention with the Mayor. Some of us had been involved in the planning, role-playing, and prep sessions which went into the meeting. Among us were a public school teacher, a fireman, a welfare mother, a laborer, a shop owner, a high school student, a telephone repairman, a pastor waiting for a baby. We were white, Asian, Black, and Hispanic. One or two could have passed for Archie Bunker.

A few minutes after I arrived so did the Mayor. We were both forty minutes late. He came in surrounded by his retinue, like a heavyweight champ entering the ring, and immediately began hobnobbing with media folks. Soon Father Eugene Lynch, pastor of St. Mary Gate of Heaven Catholic Church and chairman of QCO, introduced His Honor, Mayor Edward I. Koch. The Mayor and his aides entered the stage to polite applause.

I will never forget my feelings of pride and hope at that moment. I felt history. My people and I were no longer objects. We were dealing with those who make decisions which affect the life of my family, church, and neighborhood. The drama was on.

If the Mayor and his staff were wary, so were we. We had worked hard on our agenda for the meeting. Each parish had voted on city commissioners with whom it wanted to negotiate. We had distilled the list to three: police, sanitation, and transportation. We were going to ask the Mayor to deliver them for negotiating sessions in Queens. We also wanted to ask the Mayor to assign us a deputy mayor as our direct liaison with city hall.

Finally, our parishes forwarded twelve specific issues on which we asked the Mayor to take specific action. These were each small, easily accomplished actions which nevertheless symbolized persistent problems and persistent government neglect within the parish communities. The list ranged from a request for a stop-light at a dangerous corner (they had been trying for twenty five years!), to demolition of an abandoned building, to an investigation of pornographic bars and theatres, to drug busts on a notorious corner, to cleaning catch basins. The Mayor had been sent the agenda well in

advance, and had made no negative response. We were afraid he would attempt to take over the meeting, override our agenda, and turn it into a "civic" or "townhall" lecture and question-and-answer format. Such had been his early style as the new Mayor.

The session started amicably enough. After Father Lynch had introduced the Mayor to the warm reception of delegates and guests, he motioned for Mayor Koch to be seated. He announced himself as the moderator. He said he would reserve the right to insist that a question be answered more fully if he felt that the answer was evasive or otherwise inadequate.

At that point, Koch said he would like to make an opening statement. Lynch said the agenda made no provision for an opening statement, and all present would have to abide by the agenda. Koch insisted, and Lynch said he could have fifteen seconds for his opening statement. "No, I'd like two minutes," Koch said.

I will never forget my feelings of pride and hope at that moment. I felt history. My people and I were no longer objects. We were dealing with those who make decisions which affect the life of my family, church, and neighborhood. The drama was on.

"I'm sorry, we do have an agenda," Lynch said, to which Koch replied, "If you will not extend the courtesy of allowing me to speak for two minutes, then I will not be able to take part in your program."

Lynch repeated his offer of fifteen seconds and said that it was the best he could do.

"I'm not running for office now," Koch shot back.

"This is the condition for your remaining here?" Lynch asked.

When Koch said, "Yes," Lynch was at first reluctantly disposed to grant the Mayor the time. "It appears we have no choice then," Lynch said, "as much as I resent it."

At this point Lynch caucused with his negotiating team on the stage. He returned to the mike and announced that they were willing to compromise to the extent of one minute—but absolutely would not give the Mayor two minutes of speaking time.

Koch then got up and without another word walked out, as the crowd hissed and booed.

Few of us realized it at the time, but at that moment, the Queens Citizen's Organization was born, and entered—kicking and screaming—into the public arena of decisions and power. At the time, I was confused and let down. We had worked so hard for this opportunity to help our people

negotiate a piece of their history, now it was gone. There were doubts. Had we blown it? What's two minutes anyway?

But beneath these initial chaotic feelings was a gut-level anger. I felt my people and I had been insulted. The Mayor had come to lecture us, not deal with our real concerns in concrete, accountable ways. I experienced the frustrated rage of the powerless. The Mayor's walkout helped focus a lot of the anger I had been feeling lately about the condition of my community, its neglect by the city, the growing torpor of my people who could not seem to get a handle on their community problems.

But I also felt a sense of self-respect and dignity. We do, after all, have a right to our meetings, and a right to determine the affairs of our organization. It had been too recently that a meeting hosted by our church over neighborhood crime problems had been taken over by politicians and community relations experts. We got nothing done, not even the ability to hold our own meeting. But this time we were not used.

In the wake of the Mayor's exit, there was initial chaos in the auditorium. I walked out into the hall to compose myself before facing the members of my church's delegation. As I leaned against the wall, Gloria Rojas, a reporter for ABC Eyewitness News, came over with a cameraman. She asked my reaction. That night on the eleven o'clock news thousands of New Yorkers saw a dazed, angry, expectant father talk about his frustration, his feeling of powerlessness, his resolve to meet the Mayor again with twice as many organizations and people. I saw myself say, "We're not going away. There is too much at stake!"

VI

The reaction to the meeting was swift and sustained. We were front page news for over a week. A guest reporter from the *London Times* did a lengthy feature on us for the Sunday *New York Times*. CBS national nightly news interviewed us. Pete Hamill, in his *Daily News* column, said, "All day yesterday, the telephones were ringing at this newspaper, as residents of Queens expressed their fury at Koch. . . . He is the Mayor. . . . He is from Manhattan. As a bachelor, he has never had to handle the daily grinding round of frustrations that accompany the raising of a family in this city. He fails to respect the genuine rage of the working people who pay and pay for services that are not rendered. . . ."

Our failure to be lovable cost us. We lost some people and an institution to the organization because they were uncomfortable with the conflict and thought we should have let the Mayor set the agenda for our meeting if he insisted. They could not locate their sense of church and religion in the direction the meeting took. I can empathize with that. Religious institutions and people are not usually at home in the public

arena of power and self-interest fighting for their self-respect and dignity.

The respect came. Within a week I found myself in the Mayor's office with a team of leaders from QCO. We were in his office at the Mayor's invitation. He agreed to come out to Queens and try again. We developed the agenda together.

In the next three months the respect paid off concretely. While publicly the debate about the meeting continued, the Mayor nonetheless delivered the commissioners of sanitation, police, transportation, and parks and recreation to negotiating sessions in Queens. A host of local community issues were solved at these meetings. Within a short time the Mayor's staff quietly handled all twelve of the specific issues we had been unable to negotiate at the first meeting due to the walkout. We were a far cry from the powerless and unorganized people who crowded a station house in Jackson Heights and never got near anyone who could make a decision.

Our second meeting with the Mayor saw the exercise of mutual respect, the give-and-take of partners in the making of community. This is what Francis X. Clines, political analyst for the *New York Times*, wrote in his column:

In a way, Mayor Koch has found the perfect mirror image in Queens: sharp, cocky, self-centered and blunt to the point of insult. . . . Shining on the wall of the crowded auditorium is a slide-picture taking his responses to the acute questions of the eighteen Queens churches newly aligned as the Queens Citizen's Organization. As he responds about housing, education, and transportation problems, boxes are checked off on the slide, his answers distilled to the simplest levels, yes/no/other. . . . The sea of faces is heartening. Over one thousand people gathered like polite conventioners under spikes of identity: "St. Mary Star of the Sea" over there, "Lutheran Atonement" back from the stage. This must be one of the healthiest experiments in city politics at the moment. . . . The Mayor cannot afford to ignore the group, which claims forty thousand families as members. This is a rematch after an initial bristling confrontation in which he walked out of their rigid, rather Socratic forum—which is itself satisfaction for the group in avoiding the usual pat-in-the-hand speeches politicians like to deliver. . . . A woman from Ridgewood, seated at the "Meet the Press" type of panel confronting the Mayor, sums up what is at stake: "We're asking to be a part of the meetings where decisions are made. . . ."

No one simply gives you respect. To be a part of where the decisions are made involves critical choices. It involves acting on values and beliefs. It involves doing homework, organizing, devising tactics which can achieve results, a willingness to compromise, a basic faith that working within the framework of American democracy and politics can be a hopeful and just vocation.

It involves an affirmation of what James Madison understood in the *Federalist Papers*: all competing factions in the public arena must have a voice and the

ability to influence decisions. Families, religious institutions, and neighborhoods have had political laryngitis for too long. We have lost our voice, and the ability to make history. To be a part of where the decisions are made means we must stop wearing ourselves out going through the hoops and fighting each other.


It involves an affirmation of some Judeo-Christian beliefs. It is a spiritual decision. We believe that any notion of salvation is historical, worked out not in some other world, but in this one. We believe that building coalitions which bridge the divisions among us—and the listening, compromise, mutual support, and *quid pro quo* arrangements which make it happen—is a step toward the human solidarity undergirding our religious beliefs. We believe that humans are, by creation, political, and that the ability to participate in the creation of human community is part of the core of that humanity. To help give a voice to those who previously had none may not make us lovable. It may make us loving.

I remained active, with my parish, in the Queens Citizen's Organization until I was called to another parish across the river in New Jersey in late 1981. Jersey has issues enough to call forth the community building dimension of the beliefs of its religious institutions. I am presently involved in organizing a coalition like QCO here in New Jersey.

Since the meeting with the Mayor in 1978 the Queens Citizen's Organization has grown in numbers, diversity, and its ability to be helpful to its people in the public arena. It took on the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey over the effects of the expansion of its airports on contiguous communities. It had enough respect to hold up the lease between Port Authority and city until a compromise with the neighborhoods made possible both airport expansion (in mutually accountable ways) and also community revitalization. The Port Authority contributed several million dollars to this neighborhood improvement. In a city in which the poor and middle class and competing boroughs are too often played against one another, QCO encouraged with people, resources, and funds the growth of a sister organization, East Brooklyn Churches, whose Project Nehemiah is literally rebuilding sections of Brownsville and East New York.

This participation with the Mayor in the give-and-take of community building is not apocalyptic. In itself it will not bring on the Kingdom of God. It is proximate, fluid, a part of how we live out our most deeply-held beliefs. If there is any enduring quality to people finding their voice and respect in public life, it is that the process is a sign of hope, an affirmation that the Kingdom of God, like a rash, breaks out in the rhythm of human life based on justice, respect, dignity

and, yes, even love. It is an affirmation that history is not turning in on itself, but headed toward redemption.

A final reason that the Mayor's book touched me in such a deep and personal way is that on the morning after that meeting in February of 1978 my daughter, Rachel, was born. Just another reason to keep at the hopeful task of being a part of creating the kind of world where "wackos" like Rachel and Ed Koch can live together with respect and love. 

After the Divorce

Carrying all the things not really yours
might be your life
but for a Sunday of wet grass
passing, that smells of singed love and toast.
Fresh oranges, the newspaper on the walk,
suspicions pushed to the wall,
silent and useless as morning ways
dusted from your face.
All of this pulling to the breakfast table.

The life I'll never know of
walks at night through the halls
of your house,
switching on the lights in every room,
then turning,
wondering what it was looking for.
It's waiting to glimpse your
hands that reach without thinking,
under the paisley light of morning.
It's trying to smell
the sections of days splitting
to form some new sphere.
Forgetting, it settles in your palms
lush with the spray of citrus.
Strange, you think, pulling your hands
together like a fresh peel,
how the touch of certain smell
sets a life unwinding.

From the doorframe of the kitchen,
I watch small movements
mimic each other, then recede,
trying to make sense.

Terri Muth



THE PROFESSION OF NURSING

Responding to Human Need

Whenever I think of nursing, I think of human need—not on the grand scale, although there's that, too. Rather, I think of the human needs people present on the far more manageable, every-day scale.

For example, I remember Christy. Christy was a three-year-old girl who was dying of lymphosarcoma. One day as I was entering Christy's room to administer some medications, I heard her say to her mother, "Mommy, what's it like to die?" I stopped, frozen in mid-step, as her mother responded, "Honey, do you remember when you were at home and you would fall asleep downstairs? Daddy would pick you up in his arms and carry you upstairs and everything would be all right. Well, dying is something like that, only this time God will pick you up in His arms and then everything will be all right." I entered the room, gave Christy her medications, said a few words to her mother, and then left.

Several days later, on the night shift, I entered Christy's room to find Christy sleeping, but her mother was sitting in the chair crying, the tears silently sliding down her cheeks. I stopped to sit with her for a few minutes. When Christy's dad arrived to take over the night vigil, I suggested that both parents go down to the automat for a cup of coffee and a few minutes alone together. I promised that I would not leave Christy alone.

Less than ten minutes after her parents left, Christy awoke. She was struggling to breathe and she was very frightened. The pediatric resident and the chaplain

were called and an aide was dispatched to the automat to get Christy's parents. I lifted her small head and shoulders in a futile effort to ease her breathing. Her fear was a naked, palpable thing. An enormous feeling of inadequacy swept over me—until I remembered what her mother had told her. I picked Christy up in my arms, rested her head against my shoulder, and held her close to me.

Christy didn't cry and she stopped struggling. She looked at me with her too-large blue eyes and the fear left them. Her breathing became more regular and she relaxed. Christy died like that, in my arms. I stood there holding Christy for what seemed like a very long time, but it couldn't have been more than a few minutes. Her parents arrived first and we gently tucked Christy into bed. She had never looked more beautiful. Her mother started to cry and I knew of only one thing to do. I held her in my arms and told her gently what had happened. Within moments, the resident and chaplain arrived. This entire episode occurred in less than half an hour almost twenty years ago, but you do not forget.

No, you do not forget. Then, there was Mary—a 62-year-old diabetic who had lost one leg to gangrene. As a visiting nurse, I was to teach her about her diabetes, how to test her urine and how to give herself insulin. But that wasn't enough for Mary. She looked me right in the eye and said, "Nurse, I want to walk up the stairs of church on my own two feet and stand there, praising God. Will you help me?"

It was a long struggle against what seemed at times overwhelming odds—Mary's other leg was in poor condition, she had no regular physician, there was no money to pay for an artificial limb, and there was pain, discouragement, and exhaustion to combat time and again—and we had to do all this in the home. However, a year and a half later, Mary, a devout Baptist, climbed the steps of her church on her husband's arm and stood there with the entire congregation singing "Praise God."

Then there was 82-year-old Mr. Brown who was

Leah Curtin, R.N., is Editor of the journal *Nursing Management and Adjunct Professor in Ethics at the School of Nursing of the University of Cincinnati*. She has written and spoken widely on the subject of nursing ethics. This essay was originally presented as an address last May at the first annual College of Nursing Convocation at Valparaiso University.

afraid for my safety during the riots in Cincinnati. He would wait by his window for me every day and—rain or shine—escort me to and from my car. And Mr. Wright, and Vincent Paul, and Maggie Smith—who thought I was the kindest person ever, merely because I held her hand while the physicians did a sternal tap on her.

The names, the memories, the incidents are not forgotten. There were failures, too. And heartbreaks. There always are when you are privileged to be involved in the lives of other people and to try with all the knowledge and skill and heart you have to try to serve their human needs. Strange, the things remembered most aren't the dramatic, the life-saving, the technological. They are the people and actions that make up the everyday fabric of your life.

There were and still are the issues, the conflicts, the changes, the adjustments. There was and still is more knowledge to be sought, more skills to be acquired—always more demand than there is time to fulfill it. But in the midst of it all, there are the people, the ordinary people whose lives you will touch—and in the touching their lives will be changed and so will yours.

Today you enter a *service* profession. The knowledge and skill you have acquired are more a public trust than a private acquisition. To engage in the practice of a profession is to choose to do more than to offer skilled activities for personal gain. It is to make a commitment—quite literally, to promise publicly—to help to meet some of the most significant and personal needs human beings have.

The profession of nursing has promised the public (1) to help the ill regain health, (2) to help the healthy maintain health, (3) to help those who cannot be cured to maximize their potentials, and (4) to help those who are dying to live as fully as possible until their deaths. There is no half-hearted way to fulfill such commitments. The greatest challenge for nurses isn't to save lives but to improve the quality of the lives entrusted to their care.

To sustain yourselves—to enable yourselves to fulfill the promises of your profession—you must nurture one another: counsel, guide, support, and correct one another.

As you enter this profession, you are committed to the work of the profession, to the disciplined task of evaluating and extending the bounds of its usefulness; to the equally disciplined work of self-regulation and peer review; and to the work of sustaining yourself and your colleagues as all struggle to learn, to improve, and to grow.

Intraprofessional relationships are not the focus of professional activities, but they are the foundations of a professional's life—of each practitioner's living ex-

perience of the profession. Professional relationships don't tell one how to act so much as they teach one how to be. That is, each of you will discover in the human totality of your colleagues, the outline of yourself. You will see yourself in others, and others in yourself. The effect of these relationships is so powerful that between your first experience of a professional relationship and your last, you actually will exchange characters with your colleagues. That is, professional relationships create what one is as a nurse as well as the ideal of what a nurse should be both in general and in particular.

There were failures, too. And heartbreaks. There always are when you are privileged to be involved in the lives of other people and to try with all the knowledge and skill and heart you have to try to serve their human needs.

The principles that guide such relationships are derived from three sources. The first is human rights. Nurses are human beings first and they deserve to be treated with respect by other human beings, including other nurses. The second source is nurses' mutual commitment to the promises of their profession. Shared goals give identity to the group and form a firm rationale for cooperative, interdependent action. The third source is the professional bond itself—that special kinship born of membership in the same profession.

The structure of professional relationships will be determined by patients' needs, the public's needs, and by the needs of individual nurses. No professional can survive for long without the support and guidance of colleagues. We need one another, not just to survive another day, but to help make the next day a better day.

Never let the issues or the problems assume more importance than the people you serve—or the people who serve with you. People and service: these words will accompany each of you as you seek your way in life—as you grow and develop and create your own personal practice of nursing. They will not always be comfortable companions, but, in nursing, they will always be faithful ones. They will teach you how to find fulfillment in your profession, no matter what experiences you have in life. Thank you very much—and, welcome, colleagues!





RELIGION AND COMMERCE IN JAPAN

Japanese Traditional Religions and Contemporary Values

It may seem strange to talk about Japanese traditional religions in the context of modern Japanese attitudes toward commerce and industry. What, one might ask, does the one subject have to do with the other? Indeed, modern Japanese do not seem to pay much attention to religion at all. In recent sociological surveys, when Japanese were asked if they had religious beliefs, only 25 per cent answered that they did; and only 18 per cent said they believed in life after death.

Such a response might lead one to conclude that religion is something that belongs to the past in Japan, that what makes the Japanese today so successful and efficient in business and commerce is the fact that they've been able to break the shackles of past tradition. In many underdeveloped countries of the world, it does seem that the inability to break with past traditions hinders modern development. In this light, it might seem that Japan's successful adaptation of western technology and commerce is directly related to the drastic secularization of that country in the post-World War II period.

While secularization is an important aspect of Japanese society today, it would be a mistake to dismiss Japan's religious traditions as having no bearing

on the country's modern industrial prowess. Part of the misunderstanding comes from asking the question in the wrong way. Winston Davis points out that questions such as "Do you have a religion?" or "Do you believe in life after death?" presuppose a western attitude toward religion, one which the Japanese, for the most part, do not share. When they were asked rather whether they think having a spiritual attitude is important, about 70 per cent answered positively, and the same percentage answered that revering one's ancestors and filial piety were "extremely important." Japanese people still go to Shinto shrines on New Year's Day and join in the neighborhood festivals of the local shrine. They have Buddhist funerals conducted for their dead family members and remember them periodically in Buddhist memorial rituals. And they still have the strong sense of group and family ties that has been cultivated by the Confucian tradition in Japan.

Thus there is in modern Japan a striking interaction of the old and the new. The Japanese philosopher Watsuji has pointed out this "multi-layeredness" of Japanese culture: the past is never thrown away but remains as an effective element even in the new configuration of ideas and practices. The influence of the old shapes the new into a distinctively Japanese style. It will be our purpose in this discussion to point out some of the main elements of the traditional religions—Shinto, Buddhism and Confucianism—which have gone into the formation of the modern Japanese attitudes about life and commerce.

It is important to point out that we should not think of these as institutionalized religions in the sense of religions like Islam, Judaism, or Christianity. In Japan there is a deeply ingrained idea of a religious path or way that follows a discipline and seeks spiritual depth in life. Shinto is the Path of the kami or Japanese gods; Buddhism or Butsido is the Path of the Buddhas; and Confucianism or Judo is the Path of the Gentlemen. All these paths provide ways to live life with spiritual meaning and depth. And the emphasis is

Theodore M. Ludwig is Professor of Theology at Valparaiso University. He holds advanced degrees from Concordia Theological Seminary, St. Louis, and from the University of Chicago, where he received a Ph.D. in the History of Religions. His most recent article in *The Cresset*, "Does God Have Many Names?" appeared in September, 1984. This essay was originally presented last spring as part of a lecture series organized by Professor Marcus Riedel on the topic, "Understanding Japan: The Cultural Background of Its Competitive Impact." The lectures were jointly sponsored by the League of Women Voters and Valparaiso University and were funded by the Indiana Committee for the Humanities and the University.

on feeling and practice, not on abstract philosophy or beliefs.

Further, these are not mutually exclusive or isolated religions. Rather, they often merge in real life, with the same person or group participating at different levels in Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism, so that the attitudes of Japanese are in fact shaped by all three traditions. It might be helpful to consider these religions as strands within a larger rope which we can call Nihondo, the Japanese Way. The rope extends from ancient times to the present, though it has perhaps become a bit frayed in the modern era.

Shinto is a nature-oriented way, a fertility religion which has little intellectual or theoretical interest but a great emphasis on feelings and practice. Shinto is strongly oriented to nature as the arena of human life.

It is not everywhere and always the same; the strands change and shift. At points the folk religion makes the Shinto strand large and strong; at other points the Buddhist strand becomes predominant—although even these strands are composed of many smaller fibers. And the strands mingle: Confucianism, for example, spills over into the other traditions all along the way. There are still other strands, such as Religious Taoism and even Christianity.

I want to do a simple cross-section on the Japanese Way, looking briefly at the strands of Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism, to understand how they have created the traditional Japanese perspective on human life and thus contributed a great deal to shaping the attitude toward modern life and commerce.

II

While Japanese religion is so complex in its living form that it is difficult to say what is original and what is added, historically speaking Shinto forms the fountainhead, in the sense of the indigenous folk beliefs and practices which were eventually loosely grouped under the term Shinto. These religious practices were in Japan long before Buddhism and Confucianism arrived, and they still continue as living forms for millions today—whether in age-old, rural farming rituals and festivals, national rituals for the war dead at Yasukuni Shrine, or the booming New Religions, many of which continue aspects of Shinto. For our purpose of understanding the formation of attitudes toward life

and commerce, we can see two areas in which Shinto set the stage for Japanese culture: in the human relationship to the natural world, and in the role of the individual within the social group.

Shinto is a nature-oriented way, a fertility religion which has little intellectual or theoretical interest but a great emphasis on feelings and practice. Shinto is very much oriented to nature as the arena of human life. Shrines, for example, are built as much as possible in woods, mountains, or near a lake or waterfall; and the rituals and festivals often have to do with planting and harvesting, with birth and marriage, with the forces of nature which are life-giving.

These life-giving forces are called kami, personified as spiritual powers or gods. The universe is full of kami, myriads and myriads of them. They created the world and they cause everything that happens for humans whether good or bad; we confront them on every hand. Nature is alive with spiritual, life-giving power. And this is good. This world of kami-power is good and beautiful and pure—even in the case of the destructive kami. Anything powerful, beautiful, or awe-inspiring in nature is kami; powerful or important

Before the Family Picnic

On the way to the picnic,
she stopped at the cemetery.

Sorrow had not yet given back
husband and young son.

She stared at white pansies
and red geraniums transferred

from her suburban garden. All
she remembered of lover and son

she gathered into herself to take
with her picnic basket and

familiar gifts to her children's
families. Her mourning

shaped her love; love itself
another kind of mourning.

Sister Maura

humans, such as our ancestors or the emperor, are also kami. In the Shinto view, this world of nature in which humans share is a vast community of kami, which is affirmed as good and beautiful.

The Shinto attitude toward human life is correspondingly affirmative and optimistic. Humans and nature are blood relatives, common offspring of the kami who brought this world into existence. Humans were originally clear and pure, and "evil" (*tsumi*) is a secondary accretion which can be removed by ritual purification which restores body and heart to the original purity. Humans relate to the kami through rituals of dedication, honoring them with prayers, food, dance, and music, showing gratitude for protection and blessing. As children of the kami, humans live the good life when they regain their original purity and live with reverence and gratitude toward the kami.

What does this have to do with life and commerce? According to the Shinto view, all of nature is made up of these spiritual entities; the idea that material objects might exist in and of themselves does not even arise. The kami that created this world still bless and sustain life in it, and so human participation in and advancement of this life constitute gratitude to the kami and fulfillment of the meaning and purpose of existence. Thus Shinto views the spiritual life as directly related to this-worldly benefits. An interest in tangible benefits that will promote life in the world is a perfectly natural consequence of our esteem for the kami that bestow and enhance existence.

In his study of art in Japan (*The Enduring Art of Japan*, 1952) Langdon Warner has pointed out that "Shinto has always been the artist's way of life." In traditional Japan all the craft and trade guilds had special religious rituals and formulas used in their commerce with the world of nature as they carried on their particular industry or commerce. Thus the craftsmen really had priestly functions in their vocations. Warner writes:

Thus Shinto taught succeeding generations of Japanese how such forces are controlled and these formulas have become embedded in Shinto liturgies. Dealing, as this body of beliefs does, with the essence of life and with the spirits inhabiting all natural and many artificial objects, it came about that no tree could be marked for felling, no bush tapped for lacquer juice, no oven built for smelting or for pottery, and no forge fire lit without appeal to the Kami resident in each. . . .

Building a house, forging a sword, or brewing liquor have all been imbued with a guarantee of success through their dependence on a divine patron or kami. Still today one can observe a farmer praying to the kami of the rice for an abundant harvest or a woodsman invoking a tree kami as he prepares to cut down the tree for use in building. It is not unusual to

see carpenters intone Shinto prayers as they raise the main roof-support timber of a building.

A most striking example of the way Shinto has shaped the modern Japanese feeling about business and commerce can be seen in downtown Tokyo with the dedication of a new commercial building. Before the building is used, a Shinto priest is called in to intone prayers to the kami and make offerings for the purification of the building and the success of its users. Ancient rituals, prayers, and symbols of purification are still used today to bring blessing on modern commerce conducted in tall buildings on the Ginza.

Shinto has thus provided a positive view of nature and of human interaction with nature, looking upon the human enterprise as cooperation with the kami in bringing benefits to human existence. An overall sense of goodness and beauty prevails, and the proper human attitude in approaching such commerce is purity and gratitude.

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Besides its focus on nature as the realm of kami power, Shinto has also from ancient times focused on the social nexus of the individual as the main context which gives meaning to a person's life. The community is the real meaningful entity, and an individual person has value and significance only as a part of that community. This is the second factor of great importance in understanding the Japanese view of life and commerce.

In ancient Japan, society was organized into clans or *uji*, extended families which felt a strong sense of cohesion. Such clans had a head or leader (*uji no kami*), the "father" of the clan who symbolized the social coherence of the group. And the clan's spiritual power was represented by the kami of the clan, the *ujigami*. All the people of the clan were bound together as *ujiko*, "children" of the clan. To ritualize this social grouping, still today new-born babies are presented at the clan shrine and there dedicated to the kami of the clan. This traditional social system emphasizes the sacred character of the family or clan, with all the *ujiko* or "children of the clan" bound together, working and living for the welfare of the clan.

After the imperial clan became dominant in ancient Japan, some of this sacredness was shifted to the nation as a whole, with the emperor seen as the father or head of the whole family, and all the Japanese people as the children of the sacred nation (*kokutai*). It is in this context that the ancient mythology about the imperial line being descended from the powerful Sun Kami Amaterasu became important; recognizing the emperor as kami was symbolic of the divine character of the whole nation.

This feeling of the centrality of the social group rather than the individual continues today in the Shinto context. Especially in rural areas people still consider themselves *ujiko* of a particular clan shrine, for example. And strong New Religions have arisen around the charismatic leadership of a powerful person who is recognized as an *ikigami* or "living kami" and who gathers followers into a tightly bound social group. It may be supposed that this strong sense of participation in a social group with a strong leader, on the model of the clan and the father of the clan, has been an influence in the shaping of the familial character of corporations in Japan today.

These two important tendencies found in Shinto—nature as the realm of human activity and commerce, and the importance of the social group—have been developed and elaborated under the strong influence of both Buddhism and Confucianism.

III

It must be admitted that Buddhism in Japan is a long way from Siddhartha Gautama, even though Japan is definitely a part of the world Buddhist community. Buddhism has developed in a unique way in Japan, responding to Japanese sensitivities. And therefore Buddhism has shaped the Japanese attitude toward life and commerce in a way different from, for example, Buddhism in Thailand or Sri Lanka.

Japanese Buddhism certainly shares the fundamental Buddhist view of human life in this world. Everything is impermanent in this wheel of existence called *samsara*, and attachment to all this because of our ignorance is the fundamental human problem. Our own karma or deeds in the past have put us where we are. The most basic human need therefore is to eliminate our illusions and attachments to our own self and our desire for this passing world, seeking instead the real, permanent state of nirvana.

But that kind of view seems to allow little involvement in life in this world, and little incentive for worldly activity and commerce. And certainly this view seems to clash sharply with the Shinto attitude toward nature and human life.

The kind of Buddhism which influenced Japan most deeply is Mahayana Buddhism, the "larger vehicle" coming from India to China. Mahayana Buddhism was deeply transformed by the practical and philosophical views of the Chinese, and it was further transformed by Japanese attitudes and practices. Japanese Buddhism adopted a more positive, world-affirming view of nature and human life, more in tune with the Shinto attitudes.

Philosophically speaking, the key teaching of Mahayana Buddhism is that of *sunyata* or Emptiness. It is true that this passing world of *samsara* is empty and void of things—but it is also true that the ultimate state of nirvana is likewise empty and void. Therefore in a deep sense this very passing world is the same thing as nirvana: *samsara* is nirvana. This means that nirvana is nothing else but awakening to the true way of seeing and experiencing this world and this existence.

Another, more practical way of explaining this dif-

Sudden Ice

Not like chartreuse
washed in overnight by
Spring's first storm, or
maple groves' flamed Autumn
metamorphosis.

Almost imperceptible
this change—like waking
between naps to Winter breath
'gainst yellow yesterdays.

This too surprises softly.

Her voice singsonging names
again, turned underground,
overgrown.

Her eyes scarred blue
from games near tunnel's end
with shadows.

Of motherarms.
Outstretched for sacrifice.
Trained to melt on contact—
sudden ice.

Lois Reiner

difficult philosophy of sunyata is the teaching of some of the Japanese Buddhist masters that it is possible to reach Buddhahood in this very existence, in this very body. Mahayana Buddhism teaches a monistic or unified view of reality, based on the notion that there is a divine, all-penetrating reality which is the essence of all that exists—the Dharmakaya or Buddha-essence.

In a profound sense, all reality is the Buddha-essence. This means the world of nature is Buddha. A famous saying, for example, holds that even plants and trees possess Buddhahood. And we human beings can realize our Buddhahood if we discipline ourselves to turn away from ignorance and from the illusion of our small, selfish egos and awaken to our true nature, the Buddha-essence.

Now the religious path of Buddhism is an attempt to achieve that Awakening or Enlightenment. What interests us here is the affirmation of the world and of human existence which this Buddhist perspective implies. Buddhism in Japan reinforces the Shinto affirmation of nature and human life. In Japanese Buddhism there is a this-worldly emphasis inviting people to a cultivation of human life with all its arts and

crafts, commerce and industry, in a path of discipline which has possibilities of awakening to the Buddha-essence inherent in all things.

It is true that some Buddhist schools in Japan continued to stress the passing and illusory nature of this world, in sharp contrast to the “other world” of happiness and paradise. Pure Land Buddhism, for example, saw this world caught in a cycle of degeneration and sin in this Age of the End of the Law. The only real hope was for help from the compassionate Buddha, Amida Buddha, to take us at death to a rebirth in his paradise, the Pure Land.

Yet even this seemingly pessimistic view of this present existence had elements of world affirmation. Shinran, the founder of the True Pure Land school, renounced the long-standing tradition of celibacy and world-renunciation followed by Buddhist monks; he took a wife and had a family, working at an ordinary occupation in worldly life. The grace and power of Amida Buddha can be experienced just as well in worldly life as in a monastery far withdrawn from this-worldly pursuits.

Among the Buddhist schools in Japan, Zen in particular advocates involvement in worldly commerce as the arena of awakening to the Buddha-essence. Zen has little use for doctrines or philosophical teachings, advocating rather practice: sitting in meditation to experience oneness with the Buddha-essence, and living a life of participation in the ordinary life of the world. A famous Zen master, I-hsuan, taught that the path of Buddhism was no different from the activities of everyday life:

Seekers of the Way: in Buddhism no effort is necessary. All one has to do is to do nothing except to move his bowels, urinate, put on his clothing, eat his meals, and lie down if he is tired. The stupid will laugh at him, but the wise will understand.

According to a traditional Zen saying: “In carrying water and chopping wood, therein lies the wonderful Path.”

One who has awakened to the true nature of everything sees the same things differently from one who is still ignorant and selfish. The Buddhist word “compassion” denotes something of this new quality. This refers to the sense of fellow-feeling, the sense of oneness with all beings in the ocean of life. And this feeling of compassion, in the Zen view, is best expressed in the common activities of life: in arts and activities such as composing poetry, painting, sharing in a tea ceremony, and gardening—activities in which the living of human life itself is made into a kind of aesthetic pursuit. This sense of expressing one’s true nature in common human activities also extends to the realms of

Lovely Dwelling Place

Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young,
at thy altars, O Lord of hosts.
(Psalm 84:3)

Nine starlings
gargoyling the campanile
of the Chapel of the Resurrection
start,
startled to wings,
when at high noon
brassy brass clappers
jubilate the winds with
“Arise, my soul, arise,
stretch forth to things eternal!”

At one o’clock
they come home to roost,
seek sanctuary in one pew
on the ridge pole of the Chapel.

Bernhard Hillila

industry and commerce.

A famous series of ten drawings, called the Ox-herding Pictures, symbolically depicts the Zen experience of life. Beginning with the scene of seeking the ox thought to have gone astray, the pictures lead through finding the tracks, glimpsing the ox, catching the ox, taming the ox, and riding home the ox, then forgetting the ox, forgetting one's self, and returning to the source of one's true nature. But the tenth and final picture is entitled, "Entering the marketplace with helping hands." The awakened one is not off to nirvana somewhere, or to some paradise in the sky—but to the marketplace with helping hands, that is, showing compassion and affirming normal human activity and commerce.

Buddhism teaches the practice of sacrifice to a master or to a larger group as a way of overcoming selfishness and ignorance. It is the image of the bodhisattva, the awakened one who has rooted out all sense of self and lives for others.

Not all Japanese are Zen Buddhists, of course, and not all take seriously this traditional talk about awakening to the Buddha-essence. Yet Buddhism has for centuries shaped and guided the way all Japanese think about life. It has reinforced and developed the indigenous Shinto affirmation of life and commerce with the world as good and beautiful, adding the sense of compassion or the feeling of oneness with all as an essential element in one's approach to life. Even the supposed secular pursuits—arranging flowers, building a house, presumably also making autos and microchips—can become expressions of one's sense of the true nature of the world and of human existence within it.

Buddhism in Japan adapted itself rapidly to the Shinto sense of the importance of the family and clan. While placing importance on each individual's awakening, Japanese Buddhism subordinates the individual person to the larger group. In fact, one of the main roles of Buddhism in Japan has been that of funerals and memorial services for the dead and the ancestors, reinforcing in this way the central importance of the family.

Buddhism also adapted itself to the notion that the whole nation of Japan is of paramount importance, united in the emperor, and that the individual exists for the well-being of the nation.

Of particular significance was the development of important Buddhist masters in Japan, like Kukai and Dogen, whose disciples showed absolute devotion to them. The rules, disciplines, and teachings of the master are strictly followed by the group of disciples, who in a sense sacrifice themselves for the service of the master.

In fact, Buddhism teaches the practice of sacrifice to a master or to a larger group as a way of overcoming selfishness and ignorance. It is the image of the bodhisattva, the awakened one who has rooted out all sense of self and lives only for others, that is the saint-model held up for all Japanese to follow. In terms of a social group, this would mean sacrificing oneself for the larger group, showing compassion, losing one's own identity for the common good.

To speculate how far this ideal bodhisattva figure of Japanese Buddhism has influenced modern Japanese corporation employees is of course a risky business. But at least it is clear that the ideal of sacrificing one's little self for the good of the larger group makes up a rich, strong strand in the rope of the Japanese Way.

IV

Confucianism entered Japan with Buddhism already in the sixth century, contributing to the notion that the emperor was the head of the nation as the representative of Heaven. But it was really Neo-Confucianism in the medieval period which brought in an activist social ethic to Japanese culture. Neo-Confucianism linked first with Zen Buddhism, then with Restoration Shinto, to further mold the Japanese perspective on life and society.

With respect to the human role in the world, Confucianism establishes the notion of a "path" or a "way" of self-transformation, not so much through religious means as through arts and culture and commerce. Taking as its motto, "Investigating principle, realizing nature, and fulfilling one's destiny," Confucianism established religious types of discipline in the secular sphere. Confucianism looks to the principle that underlies and governs all things, the "way" that indwells not only the world of nature in all its forms but also the world of human society with its customs and laws. Through rites and activities, it is possible to achieve the goal of union with "the way" in daily life.

This idea of following "the way" has exercised a great influence on Japanese culture, so that all the traditional arts, crafts, and martial sports can be called "ways." For example, there is shodo (the way of calligraphy), chado (the way of tea), kado (the way of flowers); and there is also kendo (the way of the sword), judo (the way of yielding), etc.

This notion of following a "way" of self-discipline and self-transformation within the arts and commerce of society is a lasting heritage transmitted from Shinto and Buddhism through Confucianism. Presumably such a "way" can also be cultivated through modern business and commercial activities. Still today the cultivation of these "ways" forms an important aspect of education and culture in Japan, even to the extent that many businesses and corporations make the pursuit of such ways available—even obligatory—for their employees.

One of the most important of these "ways" taught under Confucian influence was bushido, the way of the warrior. This is a way of discipline and self-transformation within the life and commerce of the warrior (samurai) class especially during the Tokugawa period.

But for our purposes, bushido also leads us to our second major area of interest, namely, the individual in relation to the larger social group. Confucianism transmitted to Japan the important ideas of filial piety and loyalty. Filial piety is based on the family model, expressing the reverence and complete obedience children show to their parents and ancestors. Loyalty expresses the obligations of the inferior to the superior, such as vassal to lord. In Japan, under Shinto influence, the family model became the paradigm for all social relations, and filial piety and loyalty were merged together into one all-encompassing ideal.

Thus total reverence and loyalty was demanded in all the relationships in feudal Japan, such as that of samurai to their daimyo—that is the code of bushido, apprentices to proprietors in mercantile houses, tenants to landowners in villages, and the like. In modern Japan, that same total reverence and loyalty was expected of all Japanese subjects to the emperor in the pre-World War II national ideology, which extended the model of the family to the whole nation and required total self-sacrifice for the emperor.

The expectation in all these "family" relationships is that there is a superior and a group of inferiors, with mutual obligations. The person in the superior position is obligated to see to the welfare of those under him and give concrete evidence of his care. Likewise, people in the subordinate position are expected to render sincere and faithful service to the master in token of their sense of gratitude.

This Confucian reshaping of Shinto and Buddhist versions of the social group and of the absolute position of the leader is most characteristic of the feudal period in Japan. But the basic attitude and some of the practices have continued into the modern period. In the view of some, this social arrangement typified by the daimyo and the samurai in bushido still has echoes in the Japanese corporate world of executives

and employees.

V

We can see in summary that the Japanese religions contributed greatly to the formation of the Japanese attitude toward life and commerce. First of all, they have shaped a path of self-transformation which involves an affirmation of the natural world and participation in the activities of human life in the world. Secondly, they have situated the individual person firmly within a larger, familial social nexus, demanding loyalty, gratitude, and self-sacrifice for the group. Both of these basic attitudes can be translated to some extent into the context of the modern Japanese business world.

Of course, the attitudes shaped by the Japanese religions do not account for everything in modern Japan. There is deep disruption of the tradition, widespread secularization, and strong impact from western culture. Yet there is a distinctive Japanese style of modernization which has produced a unique industrial and commercial climate. And the religious traditions have had a strong share in shaping this distinctive style.



THE CRESSET

The Question Of the Ordination Of Women



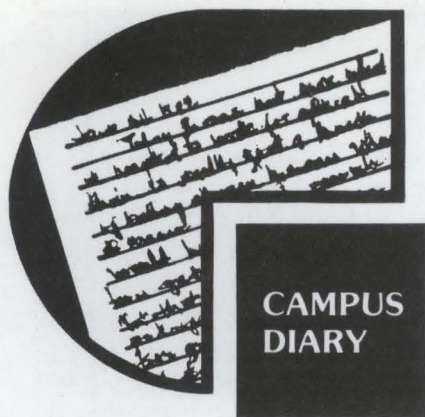
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The Proletariat Professoriate

Richard Lee

As most college teachers know too well, these are not bright college days for the American professoriate. There are fewer students to teach for the rest of the decade, and fewer of those fewer students are buying more than the most readily salable skills. These market forces are backing some teachers up against their blackboards, and each new day they have fresh wounds to show higher or lower on their backbones.

To open the book of lamentations, there is the decline in the purchasing power of the professoriate since 1970, when college teachers started suffering a greater decline in real incomes than any other occupational group in America—except the family farmer. Tighter budgets at home are matched by tighter budgets on campus where bricks still get made, but without straw.

Of course, sane people do not enter the professoriate for the money, and most teachers happily endure the privations of their long preparation for the profession in the hope of winning its privilege of investing their lives in their own freely chosen intellectual work. Here, too, market forces are beating the “salaried entrepreneurs” of the professoriate into proletarians. With the greater supply of teachers

for fewer positions, and tenurable positions as rare as wisdom, professorial labor strangely shifts toward publication even in colleges traditionally committed to good teaching. Assistant Professors in many disciplines feel under greater pressure to rush the most tenderable currency into print to buy their Associate Professorships, and perhaps good research gets done if God turns the wrath of men unto His praise. At the same time the same junior faculty arduously teach less well prepared students and face greater demands to recruit, retain, and flatter them.

Well, the way of junior faculty, like the way of transgressors, has always been hard. But all is not laurel and hearty for the senior faculty either. Considered the cholesterol in their departments by their leaner, careerist junior colleagues, and considered infinitely renewable resources by their administrators, senior faculty with little mobility and less protean malleability hunker down until retirement or an unexpected inheritance. Meanwhile, their deans and provosts suggest they may be even sicker than they feel by compulsively taking their pulse with ever new computerized inquiries of “What have you done for us lately?”

Perhaps most forlorn are the “visiting,” “adjunct,” and “part-time” faculty now holding the outer edges of the academy together. Nervous administrators necessarily incapable of commitment to human beings against uncertain market forces find these academic nomads the solution of Solomon for maintaining faculty flexibility against declining enrollments, then toss them off like styrofoam cups. Meanwhile, the students they served reward them with their decisions never to aspire to the throwaway disciplines they sacrificed to teach.

The lamentations could go on, with local variations, but it is not

quite time for celebrity rock concerts to benefit the American professoriate. Most college teachers in America never lived in ivory towers and knew well they were subject to market forces. Indeed, professors often took advantage of those forces when they were pleased to sell what the market was buying.

But the American professoriate probably thought the academy was one of those mediating institutions—like the family, the church, and sometimes the court—which mitigate the more severe predations of market forces in American life. Colleges and universities, they possibly hoped, were partly sanctuaries where what immediately sells is not necessarily what is produced, and what does not immediately sell is not left undone. Teachers are optimists, and perhaps they assumed that the American academy could always buy time against the more tyrannical enthusiasms of the market and eventually school them. I suspect fewer teachers now assume the academy has that much time, at least at some schools where market forces are subverting their traditional character for the remainder of their professional lives.

Which probably means, God help them, that the American professoriate must put their backs into another intellectual burden. Backbones, after all, are connected to headbones. Market forces cannot be out-thought, nor can customers be practically—or justly—denied what they want when they want it. But market forces can be understood better than the market knows in its blindness, and the intellectual burden for the American professoriate is to do what it has always done in a business society of entrepreneurs, namely give the customers more than they want until they discover they need more than they wanted all along. Back up to them basics, teach. ■



Breathless Out of Breath

Richard Maxwell

Since it first appeared, *Breathless*—*A bout de souffle*, 1959—has become an historical landmark. Never was there a work less suited to this monumental fate. As Godard remarked in 1962, he was just goofing around when he made the film—which was, after all, his first full-length project. Goofing around allowed him to see what he could do and what he couldn't. "I like *A bout de souffle* very much, but now I see where it belongs—along with *Alice in Wonderland*. I thought it was *Scarface*" (*Cahiers du cinéma*, February 1962). To put the point another way, Godard began with the intention of reinvigorating the genre of the gangster movie but ended by dwelling on the paradoxes and perils implicit in acts of imitation. What began as a homage to Hollywood melodrama ended as a kind of polemical and critical fantasia.

Godard's crossed intentions are manifest in the way he treats that obligatory sequence, the Death of the Gangster. Michel (Jean-Paul Belmondo) has come to the end of his rope. Having murdered a traf-

fic cop, he finds himself sought rather urgently all over Paris. His girlfriend—nice, middle-class, American Patricia (Jean Seberg)—gives the police his address, then informs him that she has done so. Michel does not appreciate her thoughtfulness. Each of the lovers engages in a lengthy, self-justifying monologue: appropriately, the camera tracks them in circles.

Following this curious interlude, Michel runs out into the street just as a friend drives by with the cash he has been awaiting. Evidently discouraged—*impossible* that Patricia should have squealed—Michel refuses to take either a ride or a gun from his friend. Now the cops arrive—from which direction is a little bit unclear, since the spatial coordinates of the sequence are starting to become obscure. The friend in the car throws the gun towards Michel, who picks it up. His pursuers fire after him, evidently wounding him in the chest. (Did the bullet go all the way through him?) Michel runs, and runs . . . and runs . . . and runs. Passersby don't pay much attention as he staggers down the street in what becomes a ludicrous Dance of Death. It's just an average day in Paris, with another gangster dying a movie death.

At last Michel reaches the intersection, where he falls, mutters some ambiguous words of abuse, and *closes his own eyelids*. Patricia and the cops look down at the corpse. "What did he say?" she asks. "He said you're a little bitch," comes the reply. She is appalled, sort of. "I don't understand": then she rubs her lower lip with her thumbnail, a gesture acquired from Michel, who got it in his turn from watching old Humphrey Bogart films. Patricia turns her back to the camera. *Breathless* is over.

Imitation begins as an act of homage. Michel—to take the outstanding example within the film—

imitates Bogart because Bogart is the sort of hero he would like to be. As Godard makes clear, however, Michel is a stupid, selfish, petty criminal who will sooner or later find a way to destroy himself. He is cute, but not quite cute enough to make up for his obvious drawbacks. (One suspects that no degree of cuteness could make up for them.)

**Since it first appeared,
Breathless has become
an historical landmark.**

Michel's attempt to imitate Bogart is therefore unavailing. He bears no resemblance to the stubborn outsider full of aggressive integrity, violent but living according to an admirable code. He's just a small-time loser who has seen too many movies and whose identity has been drained by his exposure to media-fantasy. James Monaco (*The New Wave*) remarks that we don't really see Michel pursued by the police—not until that absurd sequence at the end. What we do get to watch throughout the film are scenes of Michel reading in the newspapers about his supposed pursuit. Even to himself, Michel is an illusion created by (1) his Bogart imitation; (2) the imitation of that imitation in the newspaper reports; (3) Godard's own account of these (and many other) echoes or repetitions.

Of course, the other characters in *Breathless* are also subject to this leaking-out of reality. Patricia's disappearing act at film's end corresponds to Michel's. She in her way, as he in his, has been drained of substance. Well might he close his own lids (a fiction destroying itself); well might she rub her lip and turn her back.

Viewed in this context, Godard's move from homage to criticism be-

Richard Maxwell teaches English at Valparaiso University and writes regularly on Film for *The Cresset*.

comes quite understandable. Godard shares several traits with his hero. He's another Parisian punk who likes old movies, whose life might be said to consist of film and its lore. All the same, the director is not out to prove his own nonexistence, as he wants to prove Michel's. Godard is searching for a form of imitation that will reveal the modern world instead of becoming enslaved to it.

When he moves beyond excess—beyond, let us say, the desire to outdo everyone else's Dying Gangster—when he embraces parody and thus comes to recognize discrepancies or meaningless repetitions, he is on the verge of discovering a usable method. Adapting imitation to his own purposes, Godard defines an approach to modern life. Later this approach will allow him to study certain manifestations of modernity—advertising, traffic jams, prostitution, car washes—with greater acuity than anyone before or since.

None of my comments thus far will surprise people who have studied Godard's career. On the other hand, many of his early fans fell in love with *Breathless* for reasons that were, even then, beside the point. Among these fans were two Americans, L. M. Kit Carson and Jim McBride, who decided sometime around 1978 to remake their favorite French New Wave movie. Carson later wrote, "Godard and *A Bout de Souffle* had been a root movie experience for both of us—there was all the other movies we'd seen, and then there was Godard."

Carson's confession is from his diary on the making of *Breathless II* (*Film Comment*, May 1983), which also includes some funny anecdotes about executives misunderstanding the original version. At Paramount, Marty Erlichmann sleeps through "the big love scene" in Godard's *Breathless* and then declares, "Ya

know what I like? The basicness of the sensuosity." But funniest of all is Carson's own misunderstanding:

[After their own screening] we shake our heads. McBride: "It's got everything: sex, violence, philosophy, the works." I add: "It's got love, too."

Our job is to wrestle with this and try to make it come out new and real. Try.

This passage (written, Carson tells us in '78, just before five years of wandering in the wilderness) suggests that real disaster is on the way. Here are Carson and McBride trying to recapture their youth—trying to recapture what Carson aptly terms the Mantle of Hipness. What a movie to do it with! The whole point of *Breathless* is that it looks like an exercise in romanticism, existentialism, or whatever your favorite youthful indiscretion may be—and that looks can be deceiving. By the time Belmondo keels over we should know better. Carson and McBride have never figured that out. Boys will be boys, especially when they're not boys anymore.

Godard is searching for a form of imitation that will reveal the modern world instead of becoming enslaved to it.

The American *Breathless* was released, finally, in 1983. However self-serving Carson's diary may be, I end up admiring his effort and McBride's—somewhat in the way I admire Don Quixote's. The movie itself is another story. Though it got some appreciative reviews—the best one from Stanley Kauffmann of all people (*The New Republic*, 13 June 1983)—it is in every way an unworthy successor. Godard's blundering imitation of American

cinema helped him find an approach to modern life. The imitation attempted by Carson and McBride is interesting only as a symptom of modern life: most particularly of American culture after the 1960s.

In the role of Michel (here Jesse Lujack), Richard Gere has replaced Jean-Paul Belmondo. Gere's biggest box-office success has been *An Officer and a Gentleman*—a film still fresh for most Americans when *Breathless* at long last appeared. Friends have told me of Gere-struck women running in nausea from the theater. The reason is clear. McBride and Carson have tried to have it both ways: to present Gere as a Las Vegas party boy-punk, the appropriate 1980s version of Godard's Michel; and to present him as a potential family man (cf. *An Officer* or other popular films starring Gere).

This compromise is not pretty. At a crucial moment in Godard's *Breathless*, Patricia informs Michel that she is pregnant and he snaps out, "Why weren't you more careful?" At the equivalent moment in *Breathless II*, Jesse pauses, surprised—wondering, perhaps, about his sophisticated girlfriend's ignorance of modern birth control technologies—then relaxes, beatific: "We're going to have a little muchacho." A little *muchacho*? A little *muchacho*?

Later the muchacho line comes back. Carson and McBride don't want us to miss it, as if there were any likelihood of our doing so. Perhaps Gere demanded this sentimentalization—but I doubt it: the problem with Jesse Lujack's character parallels the problem with *Breathless II* as a whole. Godard conceived a figure who had been emptied of content because he assented fully and uncritically to the spectacle of modern life. McBride and Carson have conceived a figure more real than anyone else in the

modern world because he is natural, feeling, unthinking, spontaneous, and moreover likes Jerry Lee Lewis.

**It is understandable
that Carson and McBride
loved a memory of
Breathless rather than
Breathless itself.**

Jesse's authenticity is argued in many ways. Unlike Michel, he is sorry that he killed a cop. Unlike Michel, he does not just read about his pursuit: he lives it, especially during an exciting chase in what seems to be a Tijuana warehouse. He lives sex too. When Michel and Patricia wrestle on the bed in her little Parisian apartment, Godard treats the event wryly, with a shrug. Gere's relation to beautiful Valerie Kaprisky is something else again. During his big sex scene with her, solemn, almost liturgical music plays. Sex is a sacrament which redeems its most beautiful and adept celebrants (one suspects that fumlbers are damned).


However, it is in the Death of the Gangster that the conception of *Breathless II* is most fully acknowledged. The discrepancies that mark Godard's sequence are gone. Jesse moves within a space whose contradictions, if they exist, are concealed. And what of the long, staggering run? The *Film Comment* publication of Carson's diary includes a photograph of Jesse lying on the pavement of a street, with the moviemakers crouched around him. What we seem to have here is the filming of the gangster's death, immediately after his run down the street.

As released, however, *Breathless II* does not include this scene. The cops dare Jesse to pick up the gun which his fleeing henchman has

thrown to him. He starts to do a little rock-and-roll dance, addressed to his appalled girlfriend: a dance, yes, of love. Then, abruptly, he reaches down for the gun, points it at one of the cops, and the frame freezes. Our hero is left forever at his moment of glory. The Mantle of Hipness slowly descends, not so much upon the form of Jesse Lujack as upon his adoring creators.

It is understandable that Carson and McBride loved a memory of *Breathless* rather than *Breathless* itself. The film is not, when one studies it, an appropriate object of glowing nostalgia. Its vision of the world is made tolerable through improvised playfulness and wit, qualities which the Hollywood *Breathless* makes no attempt to duplicate. Perhaps Godard's analytical impulses simply do not speak to Americans or American culture. This would explain why we seem to have inherited the worst of the Six-

ties—the bias towards self-indulgence as a way of life, whether by “hippies,” “yuppies,” or romanticized members of the *lumpen-proletariat*—without keeping any of the useful parts: e.g., the ability to consider social institutions analytically, the capacity not to take them for granted.

A depressing speculation (for me, at least), but it leads to a question more depressing yet: is it possible, in our culture, for significant numbers of people to be happy and not stupid? I would like to believe that this combination is attainable on a mass scale. Nothing in *Breathless II* and little elsewhere encourages me to suppose that it is. The only way we can tolerate Jesse Lujack is by liking him—and the only way we can like him is by denying the disturbing implications of his character. There—for Carson and McBride—the matter ends. There—for the rest of us—the problem begins. 

White Is Intrinsic, Color Is for Show

Green waves break open
Spilling whiteness out—
Their inmost whiteness tossed upon the beach.
Far out, the swells looked swollen, decadent,
But they're fresh and foaming now.

When blue waves burst at last,
Their core is white.
And if the grey sky cracks, its surf is white:
Snowflakes, hailstones, sleet and fog pour out.
For coldness is collected in the sky
Waiting to fall upon us.

Where is the spirit at home?
With whiteness at the cold heart of things:
With fog and snow and foam.

Lucy Ryegate



More American Images

Gail McGrew Eifrig

The class in advanced composition was working, not for the first time, with analogy. We were completing sentences that began "Final exams are like . . ." or "Saying 'Have a nice day' to someone who lives in a dorm is like . . ." It didn't take long to realize, also not for the first time, that analogy is not only a way to express something you know; it is a way to discover something you didn't know when you started.

It is also true that people indicate attitudes in the choice of analogy more strongly than in discursive prose. Had I asked them to write a paragraph describing the nature of final examinations, I'd have known what their attitudes were, because they are articulate people who know how to write a paragraph of exposition. But I'd undoubtedly have missed the force of the feeling behind "Finals are like swallowing bleach and then sticking your finger down your throat to bring it all back up."

Which is to make the familiar point that our words not only give

expression to our ideas, but also help to give content to them. When an idea has been expressed, it is something more than it was lying around in the mind. It gathers weight. When the words in which that idea finds expression are strongly analogic words—pictures, images, concrete versions of the abstract—we are not only mirroring, but creating reality.

Before we left the exercise in analogy, I gave the class one more example: What is implied in the expression "America should stand tall"? This expression, and the whole cluster of images that go with it, appears to be gathering weight and substance in the American mind, and it bears some scrutiny. If we do indeed shape reality by the images we use to express our perceptions, then what are we doing with our "stand tall" exhortations?

First, the picture is of the nation as a person. The image created in my mind with that expression is a man, a Clint Eastwood hero daring the world to make his day by providing an opportunity for zealous violence and destruction. Perhaps that response is idiosyncratic; ignore the violence part of that image and concentrate on the man. He is above his opponents or adversaries; "tall" is for a man synonymous with superiority, dominance, pride, confidence, and success.

If we talk about America standing tall we mean that the nation should remember its past successes in order to repeat them in the future, since past success builds confidence and confidence produces future success. Parents know that's true for children, teachers know it's true for students, coaches know it's true for athletes; doesn't that mean it's true for nations as well? We won't stop to ask ourselves that question as long as we keep using the image of nation as man. That a

man should stand tall we're pretty sure about, so probably that's what America ought to do too.

Back to the Clint Eastwood part of the image. It perhaps isn't fair to label that actor with all the tags and mottoes of the western hero, but in a way he's asked for them. He's quintessentially tough, and he's also alone, which is the only way to be certain that your toughness will not be betrayed by someone else's weakness. To the extent that we think of America like that, we will do whatever we can to be tough and to appear tough. The word is beginning to bark and cough itself into every discussion on national policy—tough, tough, tough—like a high school team cheer. It even rhymes with all the right words—right stuff, gruff, cuff, bluff.

When an idea has been expressed, it is something more than it was lying around in the mind. It gathers weight.

And alone? We've always had a hankering to be alone, riding off like Shane with the little boy calling out that we should come back, we're loved. I can remember my grandfather, a gentle man with a fierce distaste for things foreign, everything from wars to spaghetti. "This is America," he'd grumble, in the only cross words I can recall him ever uttering, "why don't they leave us alone?"

America ought to be free of foreign entanglements, free of the weaknesses of old tired forms of government, old useless alliances, old worn-out traditions. Well, yes, every now and then we might have to ride into the valley and show the cattlemen what will happen if they push the settlers around, but then

Gail McGrew Eifrig teaches English at Valparaiso University and writes regularly for *The Cresset* on public affairs.

we're off again, out where a man can be a man. It's irresistible. It's great box office. But is it great foreign policy?

Our local Roman Catholic Bishop was quoted recently as saying that responsible people had to know when to criticize government and its leaders.

Our attachment to the image, and our insistence on thinking of the nation as though it were capable of acting like these great fantasy heroes, goes even further. The image implies that, like the hero, America faces the rest of the world as though it were a collection of villains and schoolmarms, black-hatted bad guys or cringing dependents. Unmoved and squinting into the sunset of nuclear destruction, America should "tough it out" in a Trampas walk that will blow away every settler from west of the Pecos to the back of beyond.

As I've commented before, the image of America as trigger-happy gunslinger is one with which the rest of the world seems well acquainted. Like the manic cowboy on a tear, we might do just anything, including plenty of spontaneous and generous good. But who knows? And who can tell what we intend to do in the future by anything we have done in the past?

It was described as "standing tall" when we forced the Egyptian airliner to ground as our part in the Achille Lauro hijacking. For the sake of an extremely dubious objective, we jeopardized our relations with the best ally we have in the Middle East. In that action we made it nearly impossible for Mubarak to withstand the pressures

in his own country regarding Egypt's alliance with us. But this aspect of the affair was diminished because the feeling in the air at the time was quite unmistakable; it was just like that in the movie theatre when the hero, having been pushed just far enough, responds by dealing the bad guy a tremendous whollop.

People said how great it felt to *do* something, to fight back, to stand tall once more. In the theatre I've experienced the feeling, and its exhilaration is powerfully attractive. But it seems to me that when we allow or even encourage our leaders to act like Alan Ladd and Van Heflin in the general store ("We're payin'—me and Shane!") we'd better look again at the relation between our images and the realities we are shaping by means of them.

Our local Roman Catholic bishop was quoted recently as saying that responsible people had to know when to criticize government and its leaders. He said that it was up to citizens to protest an attitude of inappropriate antagonism on the part of its leaders, and to let Reagan know that he shouldn't go around acting like he was at the OK Corral.

It so happened that I had just been in Tombstone, Arizona, site of the famous old gun battle. The town makes what living it has by tourism, showing off the many evidences of its roaring past, and touting the biographies of its most famous residents—Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday, and the bad guys, the Clantons, who fought it out with them at the corral. (Admission \$3.50, Children and Senior Citizens, \$2.00) You can stroll around the board sidewalks, into the Birdcage Theatre, and on to the town's most famous landmark, Boot Hill. There, hoked up for the tourists, but real enough in some ways, are the graves of the gunslingers, the sheriffs, the bad guys, the girls from the dance hall too. More than anything else, the graves are testimony to an enduring truth: nobody is fastest on the draw forever.

I suppose every nation fashions an image of itself over a period of time, and then is stuck trying to live with it and around it. But making analogies is tricky, because, while there may be truth in them, they never express the whole of the truth. A nation is not like a cowboy hero. We will only mislead ourselves if we believe that it is. ■

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The Musician's Advocate

Linda C. Ferguson

It is not commonly acknowledged, at least not in casual workaday talk, that musicians need philosophers. As musicians and musical academicians, we are more likely to express our dependence on music publishers and music shop proprietors, on press agents and editors, on the technicians who tune pianos and the maintenance crews who move them. This essay does not propose to diminish the contributions of such individuals; but it seeks to acknowledge an immense debt we in the musical professions have long owed the distinguished American philosopher and psychologist Susanne K. Langer, who died last summer. In this essay, by way of tribute, I will outline (in a necessarily simplified form) some tenets basic to Langer's philosophy of the arts, and I will suggest some reasons why musicians in particular can and do benefit from her contributions to the world of clear thinking.

Langer, who died in Connecticut on July 17, 1985, was born Susanne Katherina Knauth in New York

City on December 20, 1895. Her attorney father, a German immigrant, encouraged her precocious interests in music and in nature. As a child she learned to play both the cello and the piano; as a teenager she read Kant. She was educated at Radcliffe (Ph.D., 1926), where her thought was shaped by work with Alfred North Whitehead and Henry M. Scheffer. From 1927-42 she taught philosophy at Radcliffe, Harvard, Wellesley, and Smith, and she published *The Practice of Philosophy* (1930), *An Introduction to Symbolic Logic* (1937), and *Philosophy in a New Key* (1942). She lectured at Columbia from 1945-1950, and published *Feeling and Form*, the culmination of her work in aesthetics, in 1953.

From 1954 she taught at the Connecticut College for Women. Her *Problems of Art*, a sparkling collection of brief (and highly teachable) essays on the central issues of aesthetics, appeared in 1957. Her *Philosophical Sketches*, published in 1962, prefigured her last and most ambitious project: *Mind: An Essay on Human Feeling*, a massive three-volume treatise presenting a comprehensive philosophy of mind. The third of the three volumes was published in 1982.

From 1937 onward Langer was greatly influenced by the teachings of Ernst Cassirer, who held that religion, art, science, and myth were complementary manifestations of symbolic thought. In *Philosophy in a New Key*, subtitled "A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art," Langer brought Cassirer's general theory of symbolism into specific and concrete focus in her treatment of music. This work challenged the assumptions of traditional aesthetics, which held that language is the only means of logical articulation of thought and that everything which is not expressible in language is relegated to the realm of feeling.

In *Philosophy in a New Key* Langer established important distinctions between "sign" and "symbol" and between "discursive" symbols and "presentational" symbols. Briefly, a sign "indicates the existence—past, present, or future—of a thing, event, or condition" (PNK, p. 57). The sign, which may be manmade or may occur naturally, and the object signified stand in a simple one-to-one correlation, although it may well be subject to misinterpretation. For example, if the sidewalk in front of my house is wet, that may be a sign that it has rained, or it may be a sign that I have watered my lawn. The misinterpretation of a sign is a mistake; the correct interpretation is a simple form of knowledge.

By contrast, Langer defines a symbol as a vehicle for the conception of an object, but not a proxy for that object; nor does a symbol (necessarily) stimulate action appropriate to the presence of the object it indicates. Signs "announce their objects to the subject," while symbols "lead the subject to conceive of the object" (PNK, p. 61). For Langer the difference in signalization and symbolization is the difference between animal and human intellect: the sign is something to act on, or a means to command action ("Red means Stop!"); the symbol provokes thought rather than action, conveying a concept instead of merely pointing to its object. In Langer's system, any device that helps us to make an abstraction qualifies as a symbol.

Words, of course, are the most prevalent form of symbol (although words can also function as signs, as in "Sit!" "Fetch!" or "Eat your broccoli!"). Words, discursive symbols, are related through systems of grammar and logic to produce propositions. A sentence, or a proposition, is "a picture of a structure—the structure of a state of affairs" (PNK, p. 68); further, a

Linda C. Ferguson, who writes regularly on musical matters for *The Cresset*, teaches in the Department of Music at Valparaiso University.

proposition not only "fits" a fact because it contains the names for things and actions involved in that fact (or object), but because it combines and presents them in a pattern analogous to the pattern in which the named facets exist. Truth or falsity, then, depends on whether the relationships in the sentence reflect the relationships in the object to which it refers.

Words convey those parts of experience which can be ordered discursively. Following Cassirer, Langer argues that certain aspects of life defy discursive organization, and require an alternative method of symbolization. (Cassirer had held that knowledge is only one aspect of the mind's activity.)

Langer therefore proposes a new category of symbol, distinct from the discursive, which she calls "presentational." The presentational symbol expresses aspects of experience which defy a discursive organization. She argues that the inappropriateness of language to articulate a given aspect of life does not necessarily relegate that aspect to the irrational, the mystical, the imaginary, or the inexpressible. Such "ineffable" aspects of life may, in fact, be logical and rational, but they require an alternative to language for their utterance. Presentational symbols are not a substitute for language nor a decoration of it; they are a necessary complement if the whole of consciousness is to be shared. Works of non-verbal art are, for Langer, the highest form of the presentational symbol.

For Langer, music exhibited the clearest model for explaining the presentational symbol. The tentative theory of music which she developed in *Philosophy in a New Key* to support the "presentational symbol" idea eventually evolved into the all-encompassing theory of the arts expounded in *Feeling and Form* (1953). According to Langer, music

is the sonorous analogue of emotive life. The orderings of sounds and silences arranged in time are logical "propositions" which resemble the patterns of sentience. Like language, music has articulate form, with a kind of grammar and logic. But music has import without the fixed references of language. "The basic concept," she writes, "is the articulate but non-discursive form having import without conventional reference, and therefore presenting itself not as a symbol in the ordinary sense, but as a 'significant form,' in which the factor of significance is not logically discriminated, but is felt as a quality rather than recognized as a function" (*FF*, p. 32).

Between the writing of *Feeling and Form* and *Problems of Art*, Langer responded to criticism of her multi-faceted use of the word "symbol." To clarify that she wished to speak of both symbolism in the narrow and conventional sense (as in "a halo over the head of a figure in a painting symbolizes holiness") and also in the wider sense described above as any device which articulates an idea and allows for abstraction, she began, in *Problems in Art*, to replace the "art symbol" with the phrase "expressive form." The latter articulates and presents its emotive content, but does not signify in the simple direct way of conventional symbolism, which merely needs "de-coding" to be understood, and which is interesting only for what it refers to. The conventional symbol and the expressive form operate at different semantic levels.

Langer's mature philosophy of art is encapsulated in her definition of the art object as "an expressible form created for our perception through sense or imagination and what it expresses is human feeling" (*POA*, p. 15), and her explanation of its function: "A work of art expresses a conception of life, emo-

tion, inward reality. But it is neither a confessional nor a frozen tantrum; it is a developed metaphor, a non-discursive symbol that articulates what is verbally ineffable—the logic of consciousness itself" (*POA*, p. 26). To be an artist is "to make an outward image of [an] inward process, for oneself and others to see; that is, to give the subjective events an objective symbol" (*POA*, p. 9).

An account of Langer's aesthetics is actually a systematic treatment of each word in her definition of art. "Form" is an articulated whole, "resulting from the relation of mutually dependent factors, or more precisely, the way that whole is put together" (*POA*, p. 16). "Form" is modified by adjectives requiring additional definition: "logical form," "expressive form," "significant form." Forms can be dynamic as well as static, so a waterfall—or a balletic gesture—can exhibit form as surely as can a rock or a vase.

Art objects are distinguished by the presence of something "created," not merely "made." By "creation" Langer means the virtual image, or illusion, which transcends the actual physical matter the artist manipulated in the process of making. "Illusion in the arts," she explains, "is not pretense, make-believe, improvement on nature, or flight from reality; illusion is the 'stuff' of art, the 'stuff' out of which the semi-abstract yet unique and often sensuous expressive form is made. To call the art-image illusory is simply to say that it is not material; it is not cloth and paint-smooches, but space organized by balanced shapes with dynamic relations, tensions and resolutions, among them" (*POA*, p. 34).

Central to the systematic aesthetic theory laid out in *Feeling and Form* is Langer's organization of art forms according to the "primary illusion" each creates. For music, the primary illusion is an image of time

made audible: "Music unfolds in a virtual time created by sound, a dynamic flow given directly and, as a rule, purely to the ear. This virtual time, which is an image not of clock time, but of lived time, is the primary illusion of music" (POA, p. 41).

Her insistence upon understanding each art form as having special integrity, based upon the nature of its essential illusion, leads her to argue that beyond her basic definition of art (and the definitions of the terms in that definition) little can be claimed as true for "the arts." Instead of seeking analogies between, say, painting and music, she seeks to find their essential natures, in order that the terms of creation, the expressive possibilities, and the special values of each may be respected and appreciated. The arts are not interchangeable, no more than are discursive and presentational symbols.

And she cautions against mistaking a style or a tradition for a basic condition, such as assuming that painting by definition must be representational, when some *but not all* paintings are representational. To follow her is to understand that painting is an art form general enough to include both Rembrandt and Pollack and that the paintings of those two artists share more with each other than they share with objects that are not paintings.

Musicians, as I have proposed, are particular beneficiaries of Langer's thought. In the first place, she allows the object, the expressive form, to be dynamic if that is its nature (that is, if its primary illusion is time rather than space). Performance, then, is admitted as a class of expressive object in its own right, not merely an extension of composition. Secondly, her recognition of the "presentational symbol" as a necessary complement to the "discursive symbol" advances all the non-verbal arts as viable ar-

ticulators of experience.

Further, Langer aids musicians by admitting into her constructions the importance of feelings without resorting to simple relativism. Art's business, she claims, is to express human feelings, but she is emphatic that the feelings embodied in a work are not the feelings that the artist had at the time of the making, but rather feelings that the artist *knew*. In the mid-nineteenth century, Eduard Hanslick, the classic spokesman for the formalist theory of music (in *The Beautiful in Music*), argued that music does not represent feelings; he did not deny that music and feelings may resemble each other, but that part of his treatise is not usually recalled. Hanslick was interested to maintain the objective virtue of the musical work. He did not want its meaning to rest on the affective experience of any given listener. So he took the hard line that said "music is about music; feelings are about life."

Langer aids musicians by admitting the importance of feelings without resorting to simple relativism.

Langer, while still a formalist, makes the more subtle distinction between symbol and symptom. A musical work is not symptomatic, necessarily, of how the composer felt at the time of its writing, or of how a performer feels at the time of its playing. Still the richness (or poverty) of the artist's experience is admitted as affecting the expressive symbol which is the work. The performer, then, is not an "actor," dressing up in the costume of emotions presented by the score, but rather he allows *what he knows of feeling*, as opposed to *how he feels at the time* to resonate with the knowl-

edge of feelings already articulated by the composer.

I believe thinking of this kind is especially useful to the performing musician, whose task is sometimes confusing. Musicians, like actors, need not *be* sad to express sadness through a performance, but musical performance is not role-playing in the explicit manner of acting (except, of course, in situations involving portrayal of story and character, as in opera). Langer's writing on expression and creation can offer real direction to the musical performer in understanding his responsibility to the score, to the composer, and to his own experience. And finally, for musicians, composers, dancers, and indeed for any serious artist in the non-verbal endeavors, Langer offers a sense of pride in accomplishment, that what we do matters, is connected to life and to significant meaning.

In recent years, Langer's work has fallen out of favor. Criticism and aesthetics are as given to stylistic change as are the arts. "Post-modern" in literature, for example, seems to describe both a style of writing and a style of reading. These days Langer's esteem for the rationality we overlay on experience is treated as a little naive. Her clear and distinct approach to the relationship between the artist and the art object, and between the art object and the percipient, seems incompatible with the "post-modernist" urges to fluidity in definition and emphasis on experience rather than object, on ideological content rather than significant form. At the national meeting of the American Society for Aesthetics in Louisville last October, Langer was not mentioned in any of the three days of sessions I attended, although for years her writings and the writings of others who referred to her were prominent in the journal of that organization. (It did occur to me numerous times during the confer-

ence that if Langer had been recalled more often, many of the arguments would have been more lucid and the papers more orderly than they were.)

I don't recall anyone directing me to Langer. As a graduate student, I stumbled onto *Philosophy in a New Key* while shelf-reading in the library where I was employed; *Problems of Art* presented itself for fifty cents in a used bookshop after I had already begun teaching. In *Problems of Art*, I discovered, much of what I had been trying to take personal responsibility for, intellectually, was already accounted for. It proposed clear and reasonable answers for the questions that artists need to ask. What makes an art object distinct from non-art objects? What is art for? What, if anything, does art *mean*? *Problems of Art* is philosophical in method and intention, but its prose is sharp and its arguments tidy. It lacks the turgid style and the sense of remoteness from art that I have come to associate with writings in aesthetics.

Langer's attractiveness as a philosopher of art must be due at least in part to the strong and genuine sense that she is in touch with the processes of making and perceiving art objects; her attachment to these processes and objects is personal and lively. For Langer, art was not merely one more category of endeavor which could be subjected to philosophical manipulations; it was, in her view, vital to human experience, and inquiry into its workings could enliven the mind and the spirit.

As a teacher I eventually adopted *Feeling and Form* as a text for a senior tutorial in the arts, and consequently (I hope) generated a crop of Langer-ites. "Langer-ites," I believe, are people who value art objects not as mere ornament nor as mere exhibitions of skill; who accept an art work as a proposition about feeling but do not confuse it

with feeling itself; who accept the metaphysical notion that the virtual illusion, distinct from the actual physical material, is *real*. Langer-ites do not believe that art and philosophy are the same thing, but they recognize that one can ask philosophical questions about art and that a philosophical construction can be beautiful.

When studying Langer's writings, I never believe that I am learning

from a book, but that I am learning from her. Perhaps if I had studied her work in formal courses I might have a less strong sense of her presence, since for students texts often become associated with the personalities of the teachers who guide their exploration. As it is, to borrow a phrase from Garrison Keillor, I think of Susanne Langer as a close friend I never met.



Interiors

You know it has to do with interiors—
The sloped dark of an attic
Where the slightest movement
Rests in a small circle on your heart,
The strange spaciousness of a museum
Where each one of your steps emphasizes
Your separation from other people
And yet seems in common with the creatures
Whose bones stand in front of you, spiny and afraid.

At times, drinking your tea
And listening to the rain pebble the earth,
You feel all your rooms grow smaller
And a thin darkness like dust settle on the furniture.
As you walk around your house
You can't believe those books,
The watercolors, the little carving in jade
Could have meant anything to you.
And, even if you go outside and walk and walk
Until you see people in their umbrella worlds,
You feel how tightly each person is wrapped in his body,
How closed in he is.

Even in a crowd you feel as if someone has taken
A piece of black chalk and marked out your boundaries
To hold your self in.
And, although you keep looking for something else,
You keep hearing the footstep in the attic,
Seeing the museum creatures
In their several poses of white death.
All those dark umbrellas . . .

Kim Bridgford

The Hours of the Day

Matins

I see red clay,
a wooden joist against the well—

There before dawn
Juliet asked her lover to stay.
Here after noon, blessings
will fall to the faithful—

Now I hear the petals of fuchsia
watering the piazza below.

Lauds

The center of light
in the custody of the greenhouse—
white, green, and white.

Meticulously, a bulb rises
through the dark,
brighter in the lack of light
than in the morning's sun.

Prime

The monks' cats argue
over breakfast.

Outside the monastery
it is snowing.

The morning angel bell
is ringing.

Terse

My blanket is folded,
set atop the chest.

The congregation of masonry
under my knees.

Sext

I hold stars above the moon,
moons above the earth.

I hold the world in my hands,
in my eyes the sky, and
in the skies, a word.

None

A garnet wall in Padua
Green flagstones of Verona.

A poinsettia against the snow.
One cactus out of its desert.

Vespers

Sappho's daughter come home
through fields of hyacinths,

The sky, the color
of Aphrodite's sandals.

Compline

The River Jordan divides
as the Red Sea,

Dispersed over the bent
sleepy bodies of the Israelites.

Travis Du Priest

Hoops and Hopes

Dot Nuechterlein

Aha! Finally I have figured out the answer to something that has had me puzzled for a long time.

Question: Why are there so many skeptics, cynics, and pessimists in this world? *Answer:* not enough people grew up in Indiana.

Now, as my favorite TV hero Thomas Magnum always says, I know what you're thinking—you're thinking this is some kind of crazy midwestern chauvinism that doesn't make any sense at all.

But wait; just hear me out, and you will recognize absolutely irrefutable logic at work here.

First let me say that much to my chagrin I was not born in this state, and although I have resided here nearly half of my life, there have been great gaps when I lived in half a dozen other places. But second grade through college I spent in several different parts of Hoosierland, and it left its mark.

Much of it has to do with our most honored fact of life, otherwise known as Hoosier Hysteria, otherwise known as the great game of basketball. Now it is quite clear that a benevolent God inspired James Naismith back in 1891 to invent the sport so that we indoors types who live in wickedly winterish climes can survive dread February. I sincerely believe that. Whether God intended it to have character-building qualities as well is not so plain—obviously that has not happened everywhere, as corruption and scandal sometimes run rampant among the short-pants crowd.

But back home in Indiana, where we have preserved the purest form of participation by both players and

fans, the game changes lives. Honest.

I began thinking about this recently while reading of the filming of a movie to be released in 1986 entitled *Hoosiers*. This is a David and Goliath tale. In fact, I know of two other Indiana movies, and both of them had the same theme, which is why I started connecting the larger issues here. One was *Breaking Away*, a '70s film about bicycle riding; the other was *The Boy From Indiana*, a story of county fair sulky racing made back in the '50s. (I saw it six or seven times and fell madly in love with the David-type hero Lon McAllister, an actor I haven't heard of since, darn it.)

Our basic problem is that not enough people grew up in Indiana.

This one is about basketball, and it is based on the idea that in an open-class tournament system, even an underdog has a chance to win the championship. Indiana is the only state that lets each high school compete in the same play-offs as all the other schools in their region, no matter how their enrollments, facilities, or budgets may differ. Other states think that isn't fair to the smaller schools, but Hoosiers don't want it any other way. And three times in the history of Indiana basketball, the little guy has captured the crown.

One of those dream teams, on which *Hoosiers* is modeled, was Milan H.S. from Milan, Indiana, a town that even today has a population under 1,500. Back in 1954, when they won the state, the school was minuscule. I was in high school then—in fact, my boy friend was our team's star—and our enrollment of 400 made us feel huge compared to Milan.

Just last year a small school went

to the semi-state, what Hoosiers call the "Sweet Sixteen," carrying the fantasies and hopes of small town boosters everywhere. They lost the title, but just being there meant they had won.

How can a tiny school compete with the giants? Faith, baby. Sure, talent and determination and smart coaching have to be there, too, but none of that would matter without the belief that "maybe this year it will be our turn." So each year the "maybes" and the "what-ifs" take over in our minds, and the very possibility of the dream coming true becomes part of a philosophy of life.

I get so upset with people who constantly badmouth or put down their own teams. I know why they do it—winning is all that matters to them, and they wouldn't dare get caught backing a loser. So if they accurately predict defeat they look smart, and if they were wrong and the team wins anyway, they enjoy the surprise of victory. Indiana folks take a different approach: we assume that our team has a chance, and bask in the dream; if we were wrong, oh well, maybe next year. I tell you it is a much more pleasant, healthy way to live.

Optimism and faith are out of fashion in this world. Of course there are Hoosiers, tainted by the larger culture, who become negative and cynical. If I were a betting person, though, I would wager that the scoffers among us either went to big schools or didn't get caught up in playing or cheering about roundball. It could hardly be otherwise.

Go see *Hoosiers* when it comes to your nearby theatre. If you have no roots in these parts it may give you some insights into another way of thinking, but if you come from Indiana you well may recognize yourself up there on the screen, and it may renew your faith in, well, faith.

