

One never knows where Inspiration will come from next, or what it will provoke. Today's Question has been incubating for several weeks... so it's built up quite a head of steam, and usurped my reading/writing agenda.

19/VIII 18

I've given a lot of thought to Legacy in the last ^{few} couple of weeks, as a consequence of email exchanges with a PhD student in Rhetoric and Composition who was curious about my mother's influence upon one of the most prominent figures in the Rhetoric + Composition world. My mother and Ann Berthoff were colleagues in the early 1950's. Here's Ann's description:

Insofar as this book (Forming Thinking Writing: The Composing Imagination, 1978) reflects my teaching experience, it has been nurtured chiefly by the late Carolyn A. Blackman, who was mentor and guide ~~to~~ in the first years of my classroom career, nearly 30 years ago. She taught me how to read Whithead and Peirce and to trust the power of the human mind, despite a young teacher's inclination to believe that there was little evidence for its existence. Our daily trip home on the Boston and Maine (bringing back to North Station a carload each of lobsters and tired teachers) was a three-year seminar in forming, thinking, and writing. I like to think that she would have approved this attempt to encourage students to explore how it is that, as she used to say, form finds form and "to grow," as I.A. Richards has said "in capacity, practical and intelligent" as a result. This book is dedicated to her memory.

Ann is now 95, Carolyn has been gone 46 years... But along comes Paige Arrington asking about Carolyn, and hungry

for anything and everything I can tell her about Carolyn.

So I've been going through my mother's papers, physically about a foot or so of file folders that nobody has queried in ~~about~~ the last 40 years. The task is daunting because I'm trying to understand the complex of influences that my mother drew upon for the work she did over 40⁺ years. That work is her legacy, suddenly relevant and alive again because of Paige Arrington's query.

So what does this lengthy introduction have to do with tonight's Question? The last couple of ^{Questions} weeks have nudged us into what should/might/ought/could we ~~do~~ in reference to the crises and demands of the day, to respond to challenges of climate change and human effects upon other species? How should we even THINK about our responsibilities and possibilities?

My own response to those questions has emphasized the necessity to communicate with and educate younger generations to find some effective means to preserve and transmit what we've learned and observed. At least in hindsight that's what I think I was thinking and trying to say. Which all comes down to the question for each of us to consider: What is OUR legacy to the future, and how should/might/ought/could we marshal it into something to be passed on to the future? ^{Imagine, and aren't likely to be able to fundamentally affect?} A future we can only dimly imagine.

Sat Weedfactor

Leaving nothing behind him but his own posterity

Lincoln at Gettysburg:

"... the world will little note, nor long remember
what we say here..."

George Eliot: last sentence of Middlemarch:

But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.

think about the books and ideas that have influenced us, steered us along branching pathways, inspired our burgeoning understanding of the world.

Insofar as I have an answer myself, it resides with work I've done with words and images. These are marshalled in quasicohesent order in interlinked Web pages and the photoalbums I've been creating for the last few years. So they are available in a sense, but a very long way from complete or completely mapped.

Document it and pass it on.

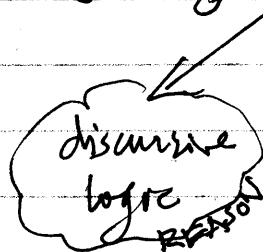
wherever we think significant

We can't know who ~~our~~ eventual audiences will be, or what those audiences will draw from whatever we think our legacy may be. For those of us who were teachers, we don't know much at all about the influences we had upon our students and our colleagues. But I'll bet that we all recognize/realize those who have influenced us, to whom we owe profound debts of gratitude. Namaste all around.

What Cass was most interested in was the Mind and what might be done with it

Language as symbolization of thought

symbolic expression



creative imagination

"the genesis of symbolic forms
- verbal, religious, artistic, mathematical
or whatever modes of expression
there be -

is the odyssey of the mind" (1946) Langer ix

? what does Swedenborg say of mind?

(and similarly Peirce and Whitehead and Cassirer and Langer...)

anima



animus

The Whitehead-Langer-Cassirer connection is clearer than I'd realized, and closely linked with Harvard (W-L) and L was a translator of G.

Just how Peirce figures in I'm not clear yet...

metaphysics

immediate/mediate

It seems that I need to begin again, to repair the omissions and compromises in my own knowledge

CAB of Swedenborg the Psychologist

If we accept his conception of the way the mind works, we can assure in ourselves a much enlarged capacity for the kind of logical thought and quickened perceptions that we need to read with profit & delight.

The basic philosophic positions about the nature of humans, on which psychological theories ultimately rest, remains as unresolved in our time as in the 18th c.

Es: ... explorations of the ways in which sensations could be transformed into apperceptions and then into imagery and ideas

... a set of principles ['doctrines'] that allowed him to isolate and form concepts about the structure and processes of the mind.
... the mind discovers causes or prior things from their effects...

certain guiding principles from his biological studies ... the logical substratum of his thought, and provide the necessary conditions for an open system of evolving concepts. They are forms, discrete & continuous degrees, series, influx, and modifications. Out of these heuristic devices he developed the concept of "correspondences" to explain how modifications of forms spring forth from one degree of life or state to another in serial order. By means of such a correspondential order, discrete degrees can be held in symbolic relationship.

if only I
could
understand
this...

a 'state of movement'

Peirce "retroductive inference" ← the first stage of inquiry
"the spontaneous conjectures of instinctive reason"

looking for continuities, consistencies, ^{influences} new threads incorporated,
basics of prose style and ⇒ mind ... across 50 years of deeply
committed engagement with ideas.

In terms of breadth of influence and being still remembered,
CAB's life wasn't a "success" ^{in that she} never became "known" beyond
a very small public, ^{and was essentially} one who "lived faithfully a hidden life".
The Blackamers are gone from the New Church, and
only vestiges remain with the Swedenborg Foundation.

CAB's Essays on Spiritual Psychology ("Journal of Dreams and The
Spiritual Diary" and "Swedenborg, Psychologist Extraordinaire") was
published by the Swedenborg Foundation in 1991, but I doubt
that its readership reached 100. Her "Reading Swedenborg"
may have reached more readers, but its important
extra-Swedenborgian annunciation on reading and learning
could scarcely escape the gravity well of ^{its} Foundations
imprint.

Consider the legions of scholars and artists who "rest in
unvisited tombs", whose work escapes the public it
might find if it could be made known and nestled
in enough context to attract the attention it merits.

The Web surely offers a distribution platform, accessible
to serendipitous discovery, but such materials
are pretty far out in the Long Tail, and unlikely to attract ^a broad

open to reconstructing their personal salience, let alone to working
toward hospitable reviews.

Energy. I doubt that I'll have gotten around to trying to begin them out
if I didn't lean for David Armstrong
have something from that period that is

CAB's writings. CAB's writings what consequences. with who knows what consequences. Still, more tombs can be visited, with who knows what consequences.

Erasmus Taylor in America's Alternative Religions

"popular 19th^c philosophy of self-realization"

ES "his personal quest was to use science in pursuit of ultimate questions, believing that the new objective methods could reveal the true nature of the soul" (77)

1744 Economy of the Animal Kingdom

1745 The Animal Kingdom

The Soul, or Rational Psychology

...developed a primitive but functional method of dream interpretation in which he sought to record the symbolic functions of the mind (78)

It may not be stretching the point too far to say that in their day Swedenborgian ideas ranked next to Transcendentalism as a cultural force and that, because he contributed a dynamic language of inner experience to public understanding of self-realization, Swedenborg may have played a role in 19th^c popular culture similar to that played by Freud in the 20th (80)

homospatially

∴ the Swedenborgian idea of correspondences, that every aspect of the material universe is reflected in the inner spiritual life of the soul or

... education will remain purely secular if it does not concern itself with the revelation that man lives in two interrelated worlds... (13)

quotes Langer:

For the balanced active intelligence, reality is historical fact and significant form, the all-inclusive realm of science, myth, art, and comfortable common sense

The sciences and humanities are usually taught as ends in themselves, static resting places, unrelated to each other and certainly unrelated, except in the hands of gifted teachers, to spiritual needs. (7)

The search for the nature and laws of the human mind for self-knowledge — through the sciences and humanities involves exploration of the will, the affections and sensibilities, and the subjective ways in which we 'know' reality. (12)

At this point my question is: what is this world of the spirit, of the spiritual? It seems to me to exist, if that's the word, entirely in the imagination, to have no physical presence. To be "who feels it knows it" and not to involve any higher beings or powers than those of the human mind, and surely man

does live in the physical world AND in the interior world of the imagination. The soul is of the imaginary which is not to deny or deny rate.

"Immense, individual ~~refined~~ in self-cultivation, intuition, imagination all become qualities of life designed to pierce the restricting shell of materiality and usher the initiate into direct contact with the Over-soul" (62)

John K Simmons "Christian Science and American culture" in America's Alternative Religions

30/VIII It occurred to me that I have no resistance to or difficulty with the Tao as ^{a cosmic force} something ~~imaginable~~, but God or the Lord is just too much a personification, created in man's image, imagined with human characteristics, an entity ^{to be importuned, bargained with, worshipped.} Somewhere recently I saw a characterization of "The Lord" as Truth, somewhat akin to the Love that Swedenborg and Hife offer as the essence, but even Truth seems too human-inflected. The Tao can be conceived as a sort of dynamic balance, a cosmic flywheel whose influence is omnipresent, in tiles and shards, in piss and dung. An Order that is outside and beyond human tinkering. Perhaps it's the worship and importuning that so puts me off of Christianity. The Tao just is, and one can perhaps choose to act in accord with or in opposition to, but the Tao doesn't care, isn't compassionate, has no human characteristics that might be bargained with. Ethics reside elsewhere, as Confucian ideals are on a different and entirely human plane.

the Tao simply doesn't care.

Meaning

~~Introduction~~ on Tao Te Ching:

The protean quality of ancient Chinese language and the slipperiness of its concepts combine to give us a semantic object that is at once opaque and endlessly evocative. There is scarcely a sentence of which one can feel, "I've got it."

Note (72)

of Chuang Tzu:

Almost any part of the book may be taken literally or metaphorically, and then at any of several levels of metaphor. (73)

Revealed truth makes me uncomfortable if it takes itself seriously, and especially if it believes in itself vociferously, to the exclusion of all alternative mappings of the landscape of Truth.

I'm pretty dedicated to the ideals of relativism, which at least entertain multiple renderings of truth, and are willing to explore how they came about and what their various advantages could be.

To imagine seems to me the distinctively human capacity, and the greatest accomplishment of the mind. Hence the stories, the reasoning, the explanations.

Evidence, logic, falsification, argument, proof, facts, opinions, The Truth.

open seem more
determinative than
they turn out to be
in the long run.

2/1x

Swedenborg put a great deal of effort into trying to locate the soul in physiology, and I guess I need to sort out what I think about this presumed human spiritual essence.

The first thought ~~is~~ is that it's a human invention, an effort to conceptualize that which somehow might live on when the body it is presumed to reside in ceases biological function. An intangible essence. A short step from animal biology to something transcendent. But there's no evidence for this creation of the imagination, just a line of reasoning that says it must in some sense exist, and somehow be connected to the divine essence that people imagine must somehow exist. And it's ^{culturally} wrapped up with Good and Evil and reward/punishment for how one has lived. People have imagined heavens and hells, and relied upon the images to try to steer human behavior via ethics.

what I see as

Where do People come from and where do they go? ← a universal question, as far as I can see — but no EVIDENCE for any of the wishful formulations ^{and myths} people have come up with. Just a sense that there must be answers, above and beyond the natural that the human body exemplifies. Something superorganic that animates.

The idea of Geist or 'spirit' is a bit less problematic, since it doesn't necessarily imply a Divinity or Higher Power, and is more a means to clarify the felt experience of being self-aware ← able to sit outside the body ^{mind} and contemplate its doings and consider past-present-future of the self. Spirit doesn't have a separate existence, lives in one's imagination.

so perhaps THAT's what needs exploration.

~~The Doctrine of Correspondences continues to baffle me.~~

Bergquist: "the idea of a harmony and concordance between body and soul, the material and the spiritual dimensions, where the latter is the propelling force" (305)

Van Dusen: "the idea of correspondences enabled Swedenborg to deal with different but corresponding levels of reality simultaneously. The dream images correspond to truths and qualities in the inner life..."

Scribe of Heaven: "a relationship of causality and therefore similarity between something spiritual and something physical" (612)

Continuing Vision:

- POWER OF NOTION
FORN
- ① angular, spiral, circular
 - ② spiral/perpetual
 - ③ spiral/spiral
 - ④ spiral/spiral
 - ⑤ spiral/spiral

concomitances
17th c: search for a visual language
of intuition with the precision of mathematics

 (and) have to imagine the microcosmic world
understood by Swedenborg

A. Lincoln:

The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here...

J. Barth:

In the last years of the Seventeenth Century there was to be found among the fops and fools of the London coffee-houses one rangy, gangling flitch called Ebenezer Cooke, more ambitious than talented, and yet more talented than prudent, who, like his friends-in-folly, all of whom were supposed to be educating at Oxford or Cambridge, had found the sound of Mother English more fun to game with than her sense to labor over, and so rather than applying himself to the pains of scholarship, had learned the knack of versifying, and ground out quires of couplets after the fashion of the day, afroth with Joves and Jupiters, aclang with jarring rhymes, and string-taut with similes stretched to the snapping-point.

As poet, this Ebenezer was not better nor worse than his fellows, none of whom left behind him anything nobler than his own posterity..

G.Eliot:

But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.

E. Swedenborg:

He is born to few things who thinks only of his own age. Many thousands of years and of people are yet to come. Look to these even though some cause has imposed silence on your contemporaries.

and take a look at <http://oook.info/CAB/> for Carolyn Blackmer's Legacy