Well, so it only took you Dialoguers until 5:36 a.m. to lay out your first issue... way to persevere, Saints!

dialogue
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### EDITORIAL
Taking full advantage of the implications of the editorial "we," the editor here interviews himself.

David: Mr. Editor, you've got Dialogue: what are you going to do with it?
Editor: What I can, Dave. The staff has labored mightily to get this first issue into print, but you know as well as I do that, without community support, we labor in vain.
David: Would you say that, like the reader, you have your hands full with Dialogue?
Editor: I wouldn't, but you might.
David: Gotcha. Still, I take it you "view with alarm..."—as the well worn editorial phrase goes.
Editor: Right. At the end of last year, you could have found no more confident editor-to-be than myself. I am not that same man today. Submissions just have not been forthcoming. Why, I ask myself, why?
David: Well, I think...
Editor: That's a rhetorical question, Dave. Thanks anyway. But I'm convinced that if given the opportunity, Dialogue's readers will transcend the sluggish passivity they've exhibited thus far, and metamorphose into Dialogue contributors. Whatever the reader has, we want to see: plays, photos, poems, prose pieces, prints. I'm most hopeful, though, about a new feature, a Letters-to-the-Editor column.
David: That's been done before and... 
Editor: ...it didn't work, right. Still, we mean to try. Often contributors tell me they want response, and they should have it. Thoughtful reactions further the dialectic of presentation/response by which artistry is increased and thought clarified. But, in all fairness, a contributor should be allowed to respond in turn. And whatever exchanges an issue has inspired, we'll print in the next. The deadline for response to this issue, by the way, is Oct. 17. Letters should be either dispatched to Dialogue via intra-campus mail or slipped under the office door. We're in the basement of Bolt.
David: Anything else new?
Editor: We'll make more use of the interview; it reads well and allows for the expression of opinions which probably would not go down on paper. And our interchange here proves, I think, that the editor will do anything for an interview. But, besides that—not much new, no. The critiques of Calvin's artists, Words and Works, appeared regularly last year, and we'll retain the feature with the title intact. Again, response is requested. Another feature I trust would promote a healthy exchange of views would be of the point-counterpoint type. But we'd need "combatants", and in the past we at Calvin haven't been much willing to contend, however amicably. Again, only with community participation can Dialogue be what it should be.
David: Which is?
Editor: Calvin's prime forum for public discussion on issues of continuing relevance to the community. Since this all seems obvious to me, perhaps we could pass on to...
David: Sure. What are your themes for this year?
Editor: Glad you asked. The reader will find them listed elsewhere, but here they are: Music, The Ethnic Experience at Calvin, Poetics (literary theory), Theatre, and Women. These themes frankly reflect the interests of the editor and staff. Much of at least one issue will be given over to each of these themes, but of course we won't turn away contributions on other topics. And any literary or visual art submitted needn't be thematically related either. I'm certain, though, that Calvin's writers will keep our topics in mind. If, after mulling them over, a student or professor believes that he has something to say, I trust he'll contact me at 247-7971, or at the Dialogue office, ex. 2679. Office hours will be on Fridays, nine a.m. to twelve noon.
David: One last question. Last year you were quoted in Chimes as saying that Dialogue should be the place "where Calvin talks to itself." Any thoughts on the matter since?
Editor: Quite a few. I would say now that no one and nothing should have to talk to itself—absolutely not!
David: How then do you explain this tête à tête?
Editor: Sheer necessity, I assure you. I'm locked in the Dialogue office; it's 3 a.m., and no one else is around. You were the best I could do.
David: Do you suppose Calvin's situation might be somehow analogous? I mean, the isolation...
Editor: No comment.
David: But let me try to answer for you. Calvin's unlike any other college you know. It's Reformed heritage and devotion to scholarly rigour—so uncharacteristic of most Christian universities—sets it apart from its sisters in the faith. Then, too, its essence, its Christianity isolates it from the secular schools. Calvin's neither fish nor fowl, but a strange piebald beast glimpsed nowhere else. No wonder it talks to itself; there's nothing else like it.
Editor: I couldn't have said it better myself.
Music moves mysteriously through our spirits, fingering at our emotions and lending us a certain internal rhythm. How much does our choice of listening mold our personalities? What does our Calvinist heritage have to say about music? Church music, rock music, the Calvin music department, de-da-de-da.

**Deadline: Oct. 17**

Although the majority of its students are still of Dutch descent, Calvin College has, in the last few years, increased its ethnic diversity. In this issue Dialogue will explore the role of ethnic minorities at the college. Such broader concerns as ethnic and cultural diversity within the C.R.C. and our Christian responsibility in this complex area will also be addressed.

**Deadline: Nov. 16**

Theatre has an unobtrusive but important role in society. Although interest in drama is far from extinct we feel it deserves renewed attention. Areas Dialogue hopes to explore include the role of theater in the Calvin community, the concept of a distinctly Christian theatre, and the comparison of Calvin's dramatic program with others.

**Deadline: Jan. 18**

Literary criticism is at present a discipline divided against itself. Ranging from unreconstructed formalists to quasi-scientific structuralists to the most avant-garde of deconstructionists, critical true believers of every stripe battle over the question: what is a valid literary hermeneutic? Dialogue intends to address the implications of this upheaval for Calvin. Some possible questions: Now that the verities of the New Criticism are everywhere repudiated, how do the Calvin scholars indoctrinated in that method stand? How do critical presuppositions affect teaching?

**Deadline: Feb. 15**

Whether or not women are discriminated against is still an open question at Calvin. In this issue we would like to discuss some of the controversial questions concerning women: in the church, in history, in their vocations. We will also strive to define woman through her emotions as well as by her historical or intellectual achievements.

**Deadline: Mar. 21**

The winning entries in the Fine Arts Competition will be published in our final issue.

**Deadline: to be announced**

**Dialogue 1979-1980**
Life on the Line

Len Diepeveen

Not uncommonly, a Calvin student spends his summer working as an unskilled laborer. I am such a student; but each summer I am overwhelmed by the contrast between the average laborer and his world and myself and my educated, Calvinist world. The realization of these differences brings with it a host of problems regarding the worth of both cultures: mine and theirs. There is, I sense, a tinge of impossibility and pretentiousness in attempting to adequately articulate what is or should be the relationship between the world of the educated Calvinist and the secular working class. But though the problem is large, it should not be ignored.

Of course, education, or the lack of it, or even intelligence, or the lack of it, has nothing to do with a person’s worth. In an abstract way this can be readily accepted; but to believe this while working with an uneducated person can be difficult. And of course this difficulty is increased where there occur the almost inevitable personality clashes. One is most prone to judge a person’s worth on those occasions when his lack of academic knowledge is most sharply delineated. For example, last summer I worked with a man who just had no idea what classical music was. He happened to hear a piece for piano by Revel, and said, “this guy doesn’t know how to play.” When I pointed out that this was the way the music was actually written, he replied, “then whoever wrote this is f—— stupid.” Now, it is not improper to laugh at such incidents (as I did). And one should, because such an obvious lack of knowledge is so obviously humorous. But to laugh at this person’s ignorance, meaning to denigrate him, is mere snobbery. Then, too, the principle works both ways: I saw nothing offensive in fellow workers laughing at my spilling five gallons of bright yellow paint on a newly paved parking lot. No one, because of these blunders, reconsidered the other’s worth as a human being. Unfortunately, this often does happen.

One difficulty I had in encountering the working class and seeing them as people arose from the fact that at Calvin most of us are upper middle class Americans. Our education and thus our values strongly differentiate us from the working class. Certainly we are Christians, but we are collegiate Christians, here to be indoctrinated in ideas. Though these ideas are helpful to us for our faith and worship, the Christian proletariat, despite our shared belief, rarely makes use of them. It seems to me, therefore, that we educated Calvinists must be very cautious in our witness. A shoot-from-the-hip (or mouth) evangelism will almost invariably alienate. Arguing ideas is useless when emotional appeals are needed. Further, our evangelism is imbued with upper middle class values; we are just not aware of those of the working class. My working experiences have impressed upon me how easily this “foreign” working class world evades our Calvinistic interpretations. Essentially, our view of work is that all labor is meaningful and can be done to the glory of God. This is true to
a degree. A man who lays underground power cable is benefitting society in some way, and, thus, glorifying God. But he is not doing anything to use his unique God-given gifts. Just about anyone can throw wire in a trench, even a skinny Calvin student. Like many similar jobs, laying cable is little more than meaningless.

Initially, it seems incomprehensible that people can be content in these jobs. Later, the reason for their satisfaction becomes evident. Some are content because they enjoy spending the money labor brings in. Others just cannot take on more intellectually demanding jobs; they are working to the limits of their abilities. But, although such jobs are largely meaningless, the working conditions often provide the real satisfaction the task itself lacks. True, sometimes hostilities break out into violence, but, on the whole, the worker experiences a camaraderie which can make almost any work endurable.

Now, inevitably, working class camaraderie is mostly obscene banter. Such jocularity allows for expression of intense but sublimated affection without risking suspicion of homosexuality. Workers' interchanges naturally include tales of sexual conquest and sprees of violence. Such things are antithetical to Christianity, so, understandably, working class camaraderie is hard for most Christians to enjoy. What usually upsets our educated Christian sensibilities, however, is not so much the immorality of these rarely authenticated tales, but their crudity. The average construction worker is probably no more lecherous than the average Yale graduate, but we are far less likely to be repulsed by the refined pagan. An immorality which is carried on safely within the bounds of upper middle class culture does not unsettle us, but working class sensuality rankles.

If the educated Calvinist goes to the construction site with his world and life view on his shoulder, determined to correct his working class comrades, he will be spectacularly unsuccessful, and more destructive than upbuilding. For many workers, camaraderie is the only satisfying aspect of their work. Talk of salvation and morality is naturally seen as an attack on supportive, cherished friendships. Our reaction to the working class world should not be passive resistance: that always has a perceptible self-righteous tinge to it. To remain aloof is to render a moral judgment in some ways more damaging than explicit condemnation. It implies an unwillingness to stoop to a "lower" level. To remain deliberately apart from one's fellow worker's, sitting in a corner reading T. S. Eliot, is almost to deserve the brick in your back that you will surely get.

What is needed to understand the working class is participation in their world. Certainly one risks compromising the essence of one's faith, but the attempt to understand must be made. Here, evangelism must put away upper middle class values and try to be truly Christian, not narrowly condescending. Surely, a grace centered theology does not permit snobbery.

Len Diepeveen is a junior English major from Edmonton, Alberta.
Specific experiences, sometimes perceptibly, often perceptibly, color our vision; they inevitably cause us to look at or understand our surroundings differently, to see things that earlier went unnoticed. Such, at least, has been true for me (and I suspect true for others also.) The experiences that I am referring to have occurred over a time span of several summers, beginning already in high school.

The geographical setting for these collected experiences has always been the same—a small town of five hundred, named Cary, in rural Mississippi. This community of Cary has become my home in the summer; I have lived there and worked there, but above all I have learned through living and working there. And, in very real ways, what I have learned from the Cary community now helps me to see things differently when I return to Grand Rapids, and to Calvin College.

Cary itself is like many other small towns in Mississippi or the Deep South. The population is predominantly black; the primary means of employment is seasonal farm work on a nearby plantation. The two main crops are cotton and soybeans. The land is monotonously flat and the soil very rich. In the late summer one can see the green fields begin to turn white and red as the cotton plants start to blossom.

In this Southern town the power structures, both political and economic, are controlled by whites. The economic dependence of blacks on whites has changed little in the past century; land for farming or building is unavailable, and houses must be rented from a plantation owner who may also provide some employment. A constant debt, owed to the local store, is almost unavoidable.

The public school system is deplorable; meaningful integration has been prevented through the establishment of numerous Christian academies. Compulsory education through only the second grade means that a large number of students drop out of school at an early age. The majority of these that do graduate from high school have often been simply pushed through the system; they actually are taught very little in the basic skills of reading and writing.

The church remains the most segregated institution in Cary and the surrounding Sharkey County. The black church and its form of worship has changed little, I should think, since its establishment as an aspect of plantation life. The white church is thriving as it emphasized the need for soulsaving and foreign missions; at the same time, it continues to ignore the pressing racial, economic, and political injustice of the social structure to which it belongs.

Hostility toward the North remains strong; the state's-rights tradition of the South and Mississippi's own sense of its separate identity contribute to a distrust and disdain toward the federal government and toward anyone who is not a native Southerner. Confederate flags are flown more frequently than American flags; I was often called a "Yankee" and told repeatedly that those of us from the North "just don't understand" life in the South. Mississippi can be quite aptly described as—to borrow from the title of a well-known book about this state—a closed society.

It is in this society, briefly described here, and exemplified in Cary, that I have lived and worked. My experiences in this town have been both frustrating and rewarding. Their end result has been a changed perspective on my part which is perhaps most evident with regards to the church.

The black Church is often maligned because of its supposed escapist theology, and for its emotionalism. True, its theology does at times exhibit escapist elements, but justifiably so. The black Church identifies itself, historically and at present with the exile, with Israel's period of slavery in Egypt. The result of such an identification is an emphasis on the transience and suffering of this earthly life, and the equation of heaven with the promised land. This life on earth is simply a waiting period prior to the journey home to heaven. Therefore, the black religious tradition emphasizes the future life. Eschatology is important. The result of this emphasis is the label of "escapist" and all the negative connotations attached to it.

However, it is my belief that, in fact, this emphasis is a good one and a strength of the black church; white
Christians would do well to learn from the black religious experience. After having worshipped at the Mount Buria Missionary Baptist Church, I cannot be anything but uncomfortable in a white Christian Reformed Church. We Dutch Calvinists in America tend to identify with Israel's arrival in the promised land—in Canaan—and thus we are very comfortable with this earthly life. We are at home here in America; this nation has been good to us. We have enjoyed the fruits of America's prosperity. That sense of transience and suffering—so prominent in the Black Church—has largely been lost. Our rhetoric about transforming culture has often resulted—quite ironically—in an easy acceptance of all aspects of American life; we feel too much at home here in America. My association with the Black Church, although limited, has made me realize that we must reject our this-worldliness and regain that sense of being pilgrims on this earth. We need a richer eschatology.

On a less theological level now, I have come to enjoy the richness of the actual black worship experience. At first I felt uneasy in the Mt. Buria M.B. Church. I experienced what it was like to be in the minority—I was the only white in the church. But, after several summers, I am at home in this church and now I recognize the inadequacies of the worshipping tradition in which I have grown up. We need to make room for the spontaneity of black worship experience in our Reformed tradition; we need to give expression—verbally and emotively—to our sense of dependence on God, an expression which is very evident in the music of the Black Church. Until we recognize the legitimacy and need to incorporate elements of other worshipping traditions into our own, the Christian Reformed Church will suffer and will fail in its efforts to achieve racial diversity.

Above all, however, I believe that my experiences in Mississippi have helped me to understand how difficult it must be for someone outside of the Christian Reformed Church. I am no longer wholly comfortable in one of our churches or even at this College because of the way in which living in Cary has influenced me. It has shaped my perceptions enough to make me realize that genuine racial reconciliation often does not occur at Calvin College because of an ignorance and insensitivity to the richness of other cultures. Upon returning to Calvin College this year, I realized, more than ever before, that both this college and the Christian Reformed Church are too "white." And, just as I don't want to be identified with the overt racism of the social structures of Southern white culture, I also don't want to be identified with the implicit, institutional and more subtle racism of Northern white social structures.

Through living and working in Cary, Mississippi, if only for a short time, and thereby coming to appreciate another culture, I can now see more sharply the lack of cultural diversity at Calvin College and within the Christian Reformed Church. True, positive efforts have been made in some of our city churches—this is encouraging. However, the need for cultural and racial diversity must not remain the concern of isolated individuals. The students, faculty, and administrators who make up the institution of Calvin College must realize that it is we who suffer if we do not encourage the exploration of means to promote racial reconciliation and seek new forms of cultural expressions.

Perhaps, if I had never been in Cary, Mississippi, I would not have seen the need for greater cultural diversity. Perhaps then I would be content with worship in the Christian Reformed Church. However, I have lived in Cary; my summers there have, in fact, caused me to view things differently—it has colored my vision. The recognition and encouragement of cultural diversity is now a priority for me. Racial reconciliation—through the incorporation of other cultural traditions—must be worked at arduously and innovatively. If it is not, Calvin College and the Christian Reformed Church may remain largely a closed society.

Michael A. Hakkenberg is a senior history and philosophy major. He is a fellow of the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship.
"I am like a slip of comet"

Hopkins

A slip of cloud lay back in the park
like his brother the low lying mist.

In the grass his legs felt the ting and the tight
bite of a bug, moon, or twig.

A shrub rubbed her branches over his chest.
He moistened her leaves, took her scent for his breath.

A dog barked up from a bottom of steps
approaching with pauses of sound.

The dog sniffed the shrub, looked the cloud in the eye
then walked to a street light lit house.

The cloud hugged the shrub
from trunk to high flower.

Shrub rested her head
on his rising mist chest.

The cloud caught a piece of star in his eye
and looked toward the amber red flame.

Once he had settled his vision revised,
he saw only his clear glasses frame.

A reflection, he reasoned, one angle alone
—a star never seen same again.

A streetlight or porchlight, a reading desk lamp,
a star over roofs in the west.

The shrub signed and shuddered
yawned over his chest.

The wind came strong up the long street behind
and sounded first high in a tree.

The white of the cloud went the way of the road
with pollen and full smells of spring.

At dawn the next day the petals still lay
on the damp grass back of the cloud's plaid shirt.

Bob Boomsma
On Being A Christian

Ron Feenstra

“All they do is sit out on their porches all day.”
“They just sit there blowing their [automobile] horns.”
“It scares me to drive through that part of town because I’m afraid they might hurt me.”
“They should get a job and work for a living like the rest of us.”

These comments, uttered by members of the Calvin community, express the prevailing opinion that many of us have toward “them.” “They” turn out to be an inferior lot, whose customs, values and life styles prove “their” lack of moral fiber. “We” don’t have much in common with “them,” since “they” are neither white, nor middle class, nor educated. “They” all fit our stereotype of “them,” so we’re sure that our opinions are correct. Never mind that many of “them” profess Jesus Christ to be their Lord and Savior.

As white people, we may go out to help all those poor black people or Hispanic people or Indochinese people. Help them to do what? To be white? To assimilate themselves to the values of our society’s white power structure? To join in our hypertension and heart attacks? To learn to depend on drugs for happiness? What hope can we, as white people, offer to those who happen to be American, Canadian, Korean, young, or smart, our citizenship rests in the Christian community, because that is our true home.

Therefore, comments that distinguish “us” from “them” on the basis of skin color are out of place in the Christian community. My brothers and sisters attend the True Light Baptist Church, Canaan Baptist Church and Abyssinian Baptist Church. We have been born into a common fellowship through Jesus Christ. Together, our ultimate loyalty resides with Jesus, our Lord.

This common loyalty across races and cultures comes to expression regularly in the Manhattan Christian Reformed Church in New York City. A reformed alcoholic joins with a school librarian to serve communion to a Columbia graduate student in physics, a retired subway motorman, a 40-year veteran of drug addiction and a medical student. Yet they all share a basic identity; they form part of the body of Christ.

As members of this body they join hands to bridge the huge chasms that would otherwise separate them. Such diversity within so small a part of the body of Christ does not come without problems, however. More than once members of the church have tolerated the bumbling actions of people both within and without the church. They know what it means to be misunderstood; they know what it means to be exploited by their own denomination. They also know how to forgive others for such insensitive actions.

This ability and willingness to forgive other people, based on a higher loyalty to Jesus Christ, impressed me one evening as I emerged from the Apollo Theatre, located on 125th Street in Manhattan. While my brother Jim and I walked to the theatre, a group of non-Christian religious devotees harassed us and accused us of having leprosy.

Inside the Theatre, we joined several members of the church to see an excellent play, “Miss Truth,” which depicted a part of the struggle for racial equality by black people in the United States. A major impediment to the struggle of the main character, Sojourner Truth, was her Dutch slaveowner. While leaving the theatre, I engaged one of the members of the church in a discussion.

“Dutch people certainly didn’t come out too well in that play,” said I.

To this she responded, “True, but in Christ there can be forgiveness.”

Ron Feenstra is a senior at Calvin Seminary. He graduated from Calvin with a triple major in Greek, history, and philosophy. He is now a fellow of the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship.
Timothy Van Laar is a teacher and an artist—but not one more than the other; the two roles are bound up together. "It is very important for me as an artist to teach because it effects my work in many positive ways. Although it takes a lot of time. Teaching's been a positive influence on my work; having a faculty, and college students around, you have to constantly respond to their work. Often it makes me articulate things I wouldn't have if I were just doing work on my own. I don't think I would be a good teacher at all if I slowly stopped doing my own work, it's vital to being a good teacher." In the past year, Van Laar has concentrated on drawing. His work has demonstrated a fascination with geometric structures and a commitment to the spontaneous gesture. He first organizes simple geometric lines, then "intuitively" juxtaposes slashed strokes. The unplanned lines balance and contrast with the "analytical" geometric designs.
But some planning is required, even if it's after the fact. So he often evaluates and changes a work in progress. Now the marks fit within, now they break out a design. "I like the things that play against each other, that interact. So I confront things with each other. On the one hand, the drawing is very carefully controlled and organized. It's very mathematical and precise, all nice geometric shapes. But if you look at it another way, it's filled with these very spontaneous scribbles. That's what I'm after, those two in juxtaposition... The colors are also very intuitively chosen. I have things all laid out in front of me, and I just grab different things. I don't pick and choose too much."
The abstract expressionists interest Van Laar: Kline, De Koning, Pollack. They too use the spontaneous, intuitive gesture. But just as Van Laar's art reconciles conflicting expressions, his taste includes contrasting styles. Mondrian's geometric structures attract him, and currently he is working on a drawing of that style. Carefully organized diagonal lines form triangular shapes, and make the background for "gesture marks". "I try to get lines working off from each other to create a tension within the work. Some places that tension gets resolved; other places it really draws itself to your attention."
1rly divided into stages. Some prints
aid over well defined block-shapes
rs are seldom used, perhaps so as
stead, the shades are of white and

Like much contemporary art, Van Laar's work contains no explicit, didactic "message"; it's
meant to be appreciated as pure form. The viewer contemplates and enjoys the color, the
shape, the texture. Some though, are put off by a message which consists of its medium.
“People have so many preconceptions about art: what it is and what it should be. And often
their own definition of what art is gets in the way of appreciating it in a purely visual way.
Something doesn't fit their definition and they won't look at it. You have to question their
definitions and get them a little bit unsettled.”
"Tôi My foi, tao mua manh dat, cai cy, cay ruong ma song."—When we get to the States, I'll get some land and a plough, and we'll live off the land. "Chim co to, ngu le co long; chung ta phai giu truyen-thong Viet-Nam."—birds have nests, men have roots; we must preserve the Vietnamese ways. "Hey man! Want a drag? It's Columbian gold, man!" "Who's the friendliest fellow in town? Who's the funniest hamburger in the States, I'll get some land and a plough, and we'll live off the land. "Chim co to, ngu le co long; chung ta phai giu truyen-thong Viet-Nam."—birds have nests, men have roots; we must preserve the Vietnamese ways.

Harmony in diversity, of course, extremely difficult to attain. However, those exposed to more than one culture must achieve this harmony to live meaningfully. To achieve such a goal, guidelines are needed—sets of values. Yet here stands a circular problem: seeking a suitable set of values, one is forced to make value judgments. Before one can put together the peculiar and unique puzzle God gave him, one must somehow find a pattern which is itself the purpose of the puzzle. No one is an outside observer of his own quest for identity. Even the preceding sentence, loaded with value judgments (such as belief in God and a purpose for human existence), indicates the subjectivity inevitable in treatments such as this. After recognizing this subjectivity, intense examination of one's value judgments seems essential.

Examination of value judgments necessitates an analysis of the circumstances under which they were made, of their environment—the total input of external elements. Although men throughout history have been fated to more dramatic experiences, environmental change was certainly the most important "input" received. Change supposedly reveals the true nature of the individual, testing him with fire. A change in social conditions can strip the superficial front and the petty prejudices from man by forcing him into self-examination. However, true self-knowledge is beyond man's grasp. No man possesses that knowledge during this life, no matter what drastic changes he goes through or what tremendous power of perception he has. Even Job, at the end of his trials, did not attain that knowledge, only a humility that brought him closer to an understanding of human existence.

It is sometimes also suggested that change dissolves class distinctions and unmasks man as a mere creature of circumstances. Little hottentots and little aristocrats, exposed to the same environment, will supposedly lose their distinctive traits. To prove this proposition, however, one would have to examine every hottentot and every aristocrat who had experienced social change while taking into consideration the complex set of contingencies preceding the change.

Religion, too, is challenged by change. Some men who have gone through social transition, physical danger, and emotional distress turn to a belief in higher powers, in fate, in God. They speak of oracles, of divine justice, and seem to have little faith in the effectiveness of their own actions. Others, who go through the same ordeal, rely on themselves and espouse the view that "might makes right." Life offers thousands of choices and more.

More than one authority has suggested that the assumption that descriptive laws govern human behavior in general, and response to change in particular is not valid. The task of a systematic examination of man seems colossal, outside the reach of man himself. Today it cannot be proven that man is a creature of circumstances, a product of his environment. And at this point, I cannot state more than my personal opinion on the matter: I know what I don't know. I don't know enough about the influences on the lives of others to formulate a theory of human nature or to offer a formula for living. Furthermore, I do not have absolute certainty about the solutions or perspectives I propose even for specific situations because human concepts crumble when pushed to their limits, when it is demanded that each of their elements be proven true.
Since a comprehensive theory of human nature is not at this time plausible, the next step is to examine some specific concepts outside the context of their original theories. From this perspective also, certain knowledge is scarce. For instance, it cannot be proven that anyone should have the right to live or any rights at all, for that matter. In practice, the right to live is determined to a large extent by the society in which the person is bound up. Society grants the individual the right to live on different "levels": legal, economic, intellectual, political. And recognition comes in different degrees, from being merely legally recognized to being accepted in one's full "human weight and complexity", as James Baldwin would put it. These degrees of recognition depend on established criteria: birth, race, creed, social status. They also depend on how much the person has to offer—his abilities. One need not go into detail to illustrate this point, but it should be noted that the above criteria favor those who "have", those who possess power by virtue of their position or their natural endowments.

The right to own property—land, means of production—although seemingly more "tangible" than the abstract right to live, is controversial and often challenged violently. Is property ultimately owned by those who keep it, or by those who have the power to protect or take it? The idea of property is itself debated. Property, of course, offers security. But, in view of the instability of ownership, is that security firm enough to base society upon?

Basic traditional values such as the right to live, to own, are shaken in a democratic society, tested by time, perhaps improved, it commands more respect than the product of an individual. But also because it is man-made, it is not infallible. There are many distinct cultures on earth and clashes occur. What should be done; what should be accepted and what rejected when one is torn between two cultures? Deciding to relativize culture requires a belief in the intrinsic value of the individual which gives one the self-assurance to rise above the dictates of society. But that belief is a value judgment itself arising from some set of values, some culture. The circularity of the problem of judgment is evident.

Should one choose to believe in some intrinsic qualities in man which allow him to override cultural veils, one faces further difficulties. Intrinsic values are often defined by social criteria: if one has high status or great ability, one finds it easier to believe in one's intrinsic quality. But in situations of violent change, social status becomes meaningless; human abilities appear insignificant. Pushing intrinsic human quality to its limit, therefore, emasculates it. It seems unlikely that ultimate security can be achieved through human means. If I must stand on my own righteousness, if I must build my private world according to the existentialist prescription, I cannot. What little human self-assurance I have must be based on a realization of my weakness.

Because no man has a monopoly on truth, and because a systematic way to arrive at truth is not likely to exist, we have to fall back on what we have—our values, our cultures, our rationality while remaining continually aware that what we have is not the ultimate answer. The realization that this is so, leads to inner conflict. But such conflict is not necessarily bad, and is to be preferred to blind acceptance of events. We must divorce ourselves from our preconceived solutions, our ideas of "having", because ultimate security cannot be achieved through human means. Until we do, our situation is like that of the five blind Indians who went bathing in the Ganges and came across an elephant. The first, bumping against its leg, describes the beast as cylindrical and upright. The second, touching its trunk, speaks of it as flexible and muscular. And the last, feeling its ear, claims it is very much like a fan.

As John Steinbeck pointed out, a person faces a thousand possible ways and more as long as he lives, but when he dies, he has but one path to go. There is a right path to tread, and in the end that is all that matters. The individual does not exist by himself but in society; it is among others that he finds himself. He must learn to develop mutual trust and concern. What has been said so far contains no indubitable propositions and few, if any, new ideas. If, reading this piece, you find it a garble of platitudes, you may be justified. But if this attempt at communication so much as draws a smile of understanding, then I welcome you to this world of ideas where old things are made new and moments of inspiration are achieved in spite of all the shortcomings of man.

Footnotes:


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Blue Collar Steel

Ron Pederson

Kipp Grapples With Medium
There's some funny stuff going on around this campus. A small group of students and a middle-aged blue-collar type have somehow commandeered the maintenance department's truck and have been periodically unloading, bolting together, erecting, and painting some rather strange things. In an effort to try to track down where the things are coming from, I followed the truck back out to the maintenance building and discovered the source: a pile of metal. Most of the pieces in it were either red, blue, or yellow, and seem to have been recently spot-sanded. I could see that the metal was mostly aluminum. The pieces looked like they may have come from a gigantic erector set: they were mostly flat and straight construction-type pieces. It didn't seem, though, like anyone with any sense would want to build anything with them, because I don't think aluminum is as good a construction material as steel would be, and besides, why would you go to all the trouble to build something so big and then paint it with all those different colors?

I tried to ask some of the maintenance people where the pile of metal came from, but most didn't know. I finally found someone who had seen its arrival. It seems the blue-collar type I mentioned before drove in a few days ago with a U-Haul truck from Texas, loaded down with all this metal. Ever since, he'd been causing a mild uproar around the maintenance building, because he not only got someone from maintenance to help him unload the stuff, he also had swarms of students (at least they said they were students) helping him with sanding and refinishing the pieces, and generally had been taking up too much room and using too much equipment. A person just couldn't make any sense out of all that activity. I mean, you can see a purpose in the big mess out by the Commons building, but...

Anyway, I finally got an answer to where the pile came from: Texas. That answers a lot of questions I had about it. Well, it doesn't really answer the questions, but it explains why I had the questions. They do weird things in Texas.

So I turned in this report to the editor, and he thought of some more questions, like why was the pile moved here from Texas, what were they doing with it down there, and what are those things they're making with the metal pieces? Nothing to do but go ask the blue-collar type who someone said was the one who brought the pile in a truck from Texas. I found him over in front of the Manor House bolting together one of the things, and before I got a chance to ask him why the pile moved here from Texas, he asked me to help him and a few others stand the thing up on its three legs. Well, I don't know if I'd call them legs, because they weren't all the same and they didn't look like any legs I'd ever seen before, except maybe on an erector set when I was a kid. But that was just playing around, and anyone putting together something this big couldn't have been just playing around. At least if it were me I'd be pretty serious about it. Anyway, when we stood it up, it seemed a little wobbly, so the blue-collar type bolted a rectangular piece of metal on to one of the legs, lengthwise along the ground, and that made it seem pretty sturdy. I suppose if you're going to make something that big you'd better make it sturdy. It seemed to have been well-planned, because all the bolt holes in the rectangular plane lined up perfectly with those on the leg, and it wasn't hard to connect them together. Before I got a chance to ask the blue-collar type if he was the one who had planned it out or what, all the students who were helping him started walking all around it,
I finally got an answer to where the pile came from: Texas. They do weird things in Texas.

viewing it from all angles, from close up and from a distance, and getting all excited about how its red color looked so nice against the green foliage, and about how its simple construction and clean geometric lines looked good against the more complex lines of the trees in the background.

I don't know... I guess the things they were saying were true enough, but I didn't understand why they were getting so excited. So what if it looks nice against the background? The real question is what is it supposed to be? If I knew what it was supposed to be I could accept it, maybe.

Before I had a chance to ask the blue-collar type (or any of them) what it was supposed to be, they were all walking over to another one, which was painted blue. Well, I looked at that one, and I looked at a couple other ones that they had put up, and it struck me that they all seemed to have been planned out pretty well to be sturdy and look sturdy. Some of them weren't as tall as the one I helped stand up, but they all seemed to be made kind of the same way: horizontal and diagonal and vertical pieces of metal bolted together in a way that made me feel like I didn't have to be afraid of them falling on me if I walked up close to them or even under them. I really didn't know if I was allowed to get that close, but I figured if they were walking under them while they were putting them together and standing them up it would probably be OK for me to do it too.

So I did, and it was. In fact, it was more than OK. They all seemed very happy that I was interested enough to take a close look at how the things were put together. (Mind you, I wasn't that much interested personally, but I felt it my duty as a reporter to try to figure out what they were supposed to be.) It did seem interesting, from a technical point of view, to see how all the parts seemed to fit together perfectly, and to see the precise patterns all the bolts made on
Ron Pederson is a professor of Art at Calvin College.

the surfaces they connected. It was almost as if these things had been figured out and put together by engineers. The students could have been engineering students, I guess, because even though they were dressed in work-clothes like the blue-collar type, they seemed to be pretty good at putting the things together, and at using the tools. But I doubted whether the blue-collar type was their teacher, mainly because I don't think teachers around here would dress that way. Besides, he was evidently from Texas, and I don't think anyone from Texas would be qualified to teach here.

Just to be sure, I asked him if he was from Texas, and he said no, he was from New York City, which threw off my whole theory. So I asked if he had brought the pile from New York City, and he said no, he had brought it from Texas. So I asked him why he had brought it from Texas and he said because he had been asked to bring it, and I asked him what it had been doing in Texas and he said it had been on exhibit there for the last three years, and that he had brought it there from New York. So I asked him where he got it in New York, and he said he made it, and that the "things" were sculptures. (I'm glad he told me that, because that was what I was going to ask him next anyway.) So the things are sculptures. Even though I don't exactly know what they are supposed to be sculptures of, it helps to at least have "they are sculptures" for an answer to the question. In a way, I suppose they make more sense now that I know they were made in New York City, because there is probably a lot more of the "giant erector set" construction going on there than in Texas. But these sculptures are more "fun" than the building construction you might see going on in a big city, probably because of the colors, but also because of the almost playful way, the easy way, the forms seem to fit together.

So I told him what some of my thoughts were (which I just reported to you) when I was trying to figure out what the "things" were supposed to be, and how I thought it looked like he must have had a good time when he was making the sculptures, and he said I was right, it was fun, and that he thought I had a pretty good idea what a sculpture is supposed to be.

So I hope my editor thinks I've done all right, and doesn't think up any more questions, because I don't know if I can think up any more answers, except that right at the end I found out that the blue-collar type's name is Lyman Kipp, and that he's a pretty regular fellow.
Van Laar: I'll start by asking when you started doing large outdoor sculpture.
Kipp: 1966, or in that area.
Kuiper: What was the impetus for that?
Kipp: The outdoor? To realize something on a large scale and to get involved with little things, playthings. But when you get into this scale you get all the problems. How sculptures relate to whatever situation they're in. Being able to put it here at Calvin and being able to move it to another campus, Clark or whatever, and having it be able to exist there also. I like the idea of making a piece for a site, but that's another thing.
Kuiper: It's prohibitive.
Kipp: It's not, yah, it's prohibitive. It's always after the fact. The building has been built, or the park has been designed; the situation has been created. The artist has nothing to say about it.
Van Laar: How did you go about choosing the sites here at Calvin?
Kipp: Jim and I walked around. We know these three for sure. The large one, "Musco", we weren't sure about. It had to have a situation which was paved or level. Because we would never have been able to manipulate that sculpture on the grass.
Kuiper: I checked all these sites on the architectural plans of the campus.
Kipp: And we are going out to... what do you call it... the mud puddle, no?
Kuiper: The Seminary pond.
Kipp: The reflecting pool?
Kuiper: We'll have one on the island in the pond, or the peninsula.
Kipp: I think the peninsula might be better, it is less used. And I wouldn't want it to roll into the pond, and have to see you have to dig it out.
Kuiper: It would float!
Kipp: Not since we cut those holes in it.
Van Laar: What are you after constructing these things, what are your goals?
Kipp: A situation... form comes first, second is the color and how the color plays in relationship with the light and the shadows. I think it's most apparent on a day when the shadows are all doing a number. Look what the shadows are doing on the one that Andy's painting now. On multi-colored or two colored pieces the colors change and interact. You have a yellow, you'll see it almost like its transparent or plastic. The image is read through it, you know what the other side is without walking around to the other side. There's a "follow through" in art. I think the sculptures that are two or more colors are more prone to have it. These two here, "Red Flag" and "Blue Smoke" are more apt to create the shadows on the ground. It is important also what sort of configuration and negative space is created.
Van Laar: You have a limited number of colors in these pieces. How do you go about making your color choices?
Kipp: As I said earlier, it's the form first and then the colors, but the color can change. They have on the large one.
Van Laar: You mean you had it painted in different colors before?
Kipp: Before? yah. That one was red, yellow, green, and blue. Musco, that is. After a show, I decided I was oversimplifying things; it was better to change it. The other one, Nitro, has been many colors. The bar across it has been red, yellow, orange and now it's back to yellow again. I feel I have that privilege to repaint.
Lyman Kipp, an internationally known artist, has been working with large outdoor sculpture for the last fourteen years. Two weeks ago Kipp visited Calvin to sand and repaint several sculptures, before installing them on campus. The sculptures are part of an exhibit on display in the Calvin Art Gallery, Oct. 15-Nov. 16. At Kipp’s request, Professors Van Laar and Kuiper interviewed him outdoors beside one of his pieces.

Van Laar: So you don’t feel it’s a totally different piece when it’s painted a different color?
Kipp: Not really, no. The form doesn’t change. What will change will be what happens with the color. And “Nitro” is such a simple piece. It’s just a bar and a box. When you think about the simplicity of him that’s when it becomes. I don’t think the color is essential to the piece. But if I sold you a piece and it was green and blue and yellow, I wouldn’t change it. Then I don’t think I have that privilege. You bought it because of the form, the colors: the whole work.

Kuiper: I wouldn’t have the privilege?
Kipp: You would not have the privilege. No!
Van Laar: These pieces are all bolted, not welded. Is that an important part of the form?
Kipp: The connections become an important part. But the other thing is, how could I have gotten the sculptures here from Amarillo, Texas or from New York to Amarillo? I have one now, and there’s nothing I can do with it. It’s 8’ high by 5’ by 4’, and it’s welded together and it’s impossible. And there’s no way of taking it apart. But the bolts become a pattern. Take the Calder: Jim and I were looking at it the other night. The bolts, the pattern, it’s erratic, but it’s absolutely organized. It’s structurally sensitive—it has to be. The bolts break the simplicity of it.

Van Laar: They create their own shadow.
Kipp: They create their own something that has nothing to do with the over-all form.
Van Laar: What do you want viewers to notice?
Kipp: The situation the piece is in. The forms that it has. And to realize that it’s an abstract work. The names are like names you would give a child. I mean they are children. But the name can mean something. I think everything has to have a name. I would like then to experience the color, the shadow. How is it going to change here at Calvin, in this environment? What’s going to happen when some of these (Manor House) trees are gone? And seasonal change, what the snow is going to do is going to be fantastic. You’re going to see a strange piece. The bottoms of some of these plates are going to be gone. You will have a different proportion and then spring will come and they reappear . . . rather than having the pieces in the gallery for one month. If the viewers are interested in what’s going to happen to the sculptures, they might watch the seasonal change. And you as faculty will, but I also hope the people from the outside will be coming in here. But I also want to have one down by the pond so it becomes an experience for the students walking over there.

Kuiper: As a surprise!
Kipp: As a surprise. One will be in an unused courtyard, but where it can be viewed by the office people. Another one beyond the picnic table by the College Center. “Plum” would be a nice piece; it will be black, black and yellow. The works here are not really the up-to-date works. They are pieces that are in the whole chain of my existence. Pieces that I have created and that I stand behind. I don’t throw them away and I don’t change them to become something else. I don’t reuse them, I don’t . . .
Van Laar: In the 60’s you were associated with minimalism weren’t you?
Kipp: It’s definitely minimal. But that’s the tag that the critic, art historian puts on the pieces. It’s called minimalism. But I don’t think it would have made a difference what it was; the tag was put on it that had nothing to do with the work.

Van Laar: Are you still dealing with minimal structures and shapes in your recent work?
Kipp: My sculptures are alike but different. Some can be-
We had been away since early January, but when the 747 broke through the clouds that Saturday in August and Detroit lay sprawling below us, I confess I didn't get a lump in my throat. What I got was irritated. We walked into the baggage hall to find that it cost two dollars just to rent a couple of carts to get our 14 pieces of luggage through customs and out of the terminal. Heathrow had been a jungle, but at least there, the trolleys were free. Customs took longer to negotiate in Detroit than in London, but we made it through, and it was great to greet our faithful friends who were waiting to transport us and our worldly goods back to Grand Rapids.

When the over-laden Plymouth turned off I-96 onto 28th street, I confess, my heart didn’t skip a beat. It’s hard to get sentimental about coming home when you have to do it coming down 28th street. I was struck by the relentless modernity of it all—a few new fast food places even since we left—and I couldn’t help thinking, snobbish as it was, about the drive a few weeks earlier along the Thames from The Tower to Westminster, and the stroll down Whitehall to St. James Park and Trafalgar Square and the Mall. Somehow Woodland Mall doesn’t compare well with the Pall Mall.

I didn’t even have to blink back tears when we pulled up in front of 905 Calvin, but it was heart-warming to see the welcome-home sign, our family, some friends and neighbors, not to mention our dog. I had said when we got up that morning in Cambridge, “It doesn’t seem possible that tonight we’ll go to bed at 905 Calvin.” That night as we finally began to drift off to sleep I muttered, “23 Thornton Road seems a million miles away.” When you live in one place for sixteen years you dig grooves that you can slip into all too easily after being away only seven and a half months. But we wanted to resist that adjustment; the sabbatical had been too precious to become so quickly just a hazy memory.

The next day was Sunday. Going to our church was familiar and comfortable, but we made the inevitable comparisons. How smart and stylish everyone looked compared to our drab fellow-worshippers of the week before. I decided that I preferred the various shades of brown and grey and the slightly unkempt bikers’ rainy weather look to what came dangerously close to a Sunday morning style show. The choir was good and the sermon excellent, but then we had had some marvelous worship experiences in Cambridge too, and we couldn’t help thinking about them: the good preaching we heard from a young Calvinistic Baptist, the magnificent Evensongs at Kings and St. Johns. After the service some good friends greeted us, and wondered aloud whether we hadn’t been away for a while this summer. We had a good laugh about that, but it was a bit deflating.

A few days after domestic settling-in, I went to Calvin, my first visit since December. Any anticipation I may have felt was quickly cut short by construction obstacles, not only on the East Beltline but smack in the middle of the campus. “What had Bud wrought,” I thought as I maneuvered past the snow fences guarding the cranes in the parking lot. I walked into the library and couldn’t suppress memories of the Cambridge University Library with its five million volumes and its incredible collection of rare books. I had had some of the old kid in the candy-store emotions there—so much to choose from and so little capacity to take it all in. Even the graffiti in the Cambridge toilets had had an intellectual tone, “No matter who you vote for, the government’s going to get in,” read one cynical pronouncement at about the time of Maggie Thatcher’s election. But here I was, back at Calvin. Hours were spent that first day greeting friends, catching up on college news, repeating over and over, “Yes, it was a good sabbatical; wouldn’t have minded staying away another semester; good to see you again.” It was obvious that a few colleagues I saw that first day didn’t know I was gone, but I had been warned that would happen. It keeps you in your place.

We’ve been back over a month now. After the initial culture shock, a few truths have come into focus.

(1) It’s so easy to romanticize. We did wait three hours for our luggage when we arrived at Heathrow last January. And London, for all its history and beauty, is also a big, crowded, grimy city. Being sardine-packed on a dirty train in the London underground is really quite de-humanizing. Living in a cold, damp house from January through March wasn’t all fun. Many of our tools, from the lawn mower to the can opener,
The home laundry system was a disaster. My car was a perpetual headache. Gas was two dollars a gallon; inflation was nearly 20%; and we've never lived through a seven-month period anywhere with so many industrial strikes. And, oh yes, Cambridge toilets had their share of obscenities too.

(2) Comparisons are odious. Maybe it's inevitable, but it's also stupid to compare London with Grand Rapids, Cambridge with Calvin. It just isn't fair. Over there was the idyllic life of the sabbatical where the phones never ring and the committees never meet. Here is the real world where I make my living; I can't think of a better place than Calvin to do that. Maybe I wouldn't want to take a sabbatical at Calvin, but then I doubt I would want to make my living in Cambridge. England has a rich, fascinating history, but you can't blame our nation and its institutions for being young. Cambridge University celebrated a centennial once too, even though that was 600 years ago.

(3) It's the people who count. The friends who picked us up, the family and neighbors who greeted us at home and church, my colleagues and students at Calvin College—they make a homecoming worthwhile. So it's good to be back, sort of. The people are the main reasons why.

Sure, we miss the slower pace and the simplicity of our lives over there. I miss the rare book room, evensong, the BBC, evening drives through the villages, and trips to London—but we will savour the memories and be thankful for the opportunity we had to collect them. And meanwhile, back at the office, the phone is ringing; it's ten minutes till the next class, and this afternoon I have a committee meeting.

John Primus, professor of theology and religion at Calvin, recently returned from a sabbatical in England.

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From the same branch

The sun had dropped.
You had white silk coins
in your hair big as dimes
from another tree and rhyme.

You were up close for a late scent
of the few weeks ride.
You pulled at a lilac
and filled your nostrils sweet blue

The petals, pressed,
clustered stain
in your fingertips purple
emptied to a pulp skin

Out from new leaves
the dried stem from an early flower
of my encrusted self scratched
your forehead red.

Rolled in your palms
the brittle flower dusted
darkened the oils of you hand
brushed against your jeans.

Back home you washed
and found your hands imperial for days.

Bob Boomsma
Summer Photographs

William L. Franson
In this issue we introduce the verse of Taliesin. The poet, a person of a retiring disposition, has chosen to adopt a pseudonym.
Against Mankind. This, frightening? It fails
To make me quake or tremble—not with fear.
How easy it must be to slay this beast,
Or else, to die and be its carrion feast:
This is simplicity itself! A spear,
Bright armour—fit rig for a chevalier,
A sword, a shield and Courage 'gainst the lizard
Answered all questions. Either you slit its gizzard,
Or it slit yours. What should be the fear?
Of course Man triumphed; either way he'd won:
He killed the enemy and saved the land,
Or died in glory, his mighty hero's hand
Striving against Fate—splendid as the sun.
No dragon could defeat a man like that!

But dragons always have been known as clever
And cunning, subtle. You should not think that ever
The creatures could be finished off so pat.
No, dragons, driven into some dark lair,
Took measures; to preserve their monstrous race
They sacrificed reality; no mace
Can split a skull which isn't really there.
They shed their scales, their bones, their blood, their fire,
Dissolved their bodies and became a mere
Shadow of the mind, elusive fear.
Objective substance changed into a dire
Subjective terror of the I-know-not-what.
Transmuted, strength of Sinew now became
An unseen, twisting, griping, thought-fed flame
Troubling the Heart. And then, no longer shut
Inside their cave, these dragon shades crept out
Into the soul of every shining knight
And dimpling lady, clouded their minds' sight
With blinding fear, and, slippery, would about
Their hearts in countless tight and tightening coils.

These worm shapes, spawning in the human mind,
Make all complex, nought simple. As they wind
Inside heart's caverns, their breath boils
The waters of innocence away. The whole
Heart's black, a lair, a greedy monster's hoard—
A dragon who, alas, laughs at a sword.

My heart's dark wound is like a gaping hole;
Oh, who can slay this worm within my soul!
BREAKFAST ON THE BEACH