THE GAME
Wise as Serpents

We think the game this month is positively the snake's ankles! Combining puzzle making, clue decoding and riddle answering, it ought to be a challenge to all of you out there who thought the first two games were too easy.

We sliced up a nest of snakes (we'll let you figure out how many) and sprinkled the pieces all over this page. Each snake has a runic code on it. The answers to each coded clue are to be found somewhere in Dialogue.

The first two people to show up before Friday, the thirteenth with a complete set of snakes properly assembled plus the correct answers to the runes will win the usual fabulous prize. A limited number of runners-up will receive a modest reward as well.

By the way, if you don't want to hack up your Dialogue cover, we'll accept photocopied snakes.
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Some questions have arisen about what the intent of our "What You Will" section may be. People are particularly curious, in light of the recent controversy, to know why pieces are unsigned.

The Calvin community is a small one, and it is easy to think you get to know everyone in it who writes, speaks, or is somehow prominent. Consequently, in approaching a piece, the tendency is to first glance down at the byline, mentally leaf through the file of "names of Calvin," identify the writer's supposed prejudices and predilections and then, with an unspoken murmur of "Oh, that one; I know where he's coming from," go back to the piece with a jaundiced eye and a reading tainted by preformed assumptions.

In "What You Will" I am trying the experiment of presenting pieces as themselves without author's name attached, so that readers may be forced to judge and consider the piece on its merits, not on what they know of the author. I want to establish a forum in which people can speak without being discounted or acclaimed before they open their mouths.

I already have had some intimations that it may be working a bit; one faculty member asked me, when the first issue of Dialogue came out, to tell who had written one of the pieces so that she could know how to read it. But my point was and is that I want to give the piece an opportunity to speak on its own—but not to belabor the point.

Of course, the section is not intended to be a dark corner from which unknown figures can with impunity stab out at the Calvin community. The authorship need not be secret. Cathy Bouwsma's recent "Open letter to the community" proved that she (and by extension, Dialogue) has nothing to hide. Merely, we want to force on a too-closed community, a more open way of reading.

As I said in my first issue, "What You Will" is devoted to incidentals. All are encouraged to send us what ruminations, meditations or observations they think may be valuable. In general, pieces without some kind of introductory remarks can be assumed to be by editors of the magazine; if the contribution was sent to us, we usually give at least a general identification. Also, if a contributor wants his name on a piece we have no objections either.

In conclusion, I would like to direct all Dialogue readers to the editorial at the back of this issue; it contains our own explanation of the events which sparked the recent controversy.

—Paul Baker
Dialogue editor

Down the Hallowed Halls.

Dialogue received these ruminations on an old proverb from a French major whose father is a musicologist:

"A little knowledge is a dangerous thing," the apothegm goes. In other words, a person totally ignorant of a subject knows to keep quiet, whereas a person with a smattering of knowledge about it overextends himself beyond his limited scope. Yet in my observations of myself and others, I am inclined to assert the contrary: it is unadulterated ignorance which fosters brazenness, while a little knowledge can bring humility.

Examples are not hard to find. As a boy growing up on a farm, my grandfather was an avid reader. One night he and a group of relatives from the farm were gathered outside, sipping lemonade and gazing at the full moon. My grandfather was asked how far away the moon was from the earth. At his reply that it was more than 200,000 miles away, his relatives erupted into boisterous laughter. To them it was clear that all his learning had obliterated any vestiges of common sense. "C'mon, I can just see that's not true," said one of his uncles. "Why it's so close that if you just build me a road, I could get there in my old Ford in an hour-and-a-half!"

And of course I recognize the effects of total ignorance most acutely in myself. While still in junior high school, I remember admiring a piano piece a friend played for me. On being told that it was Chopin, I, unfamiliar with the vulgaries of French pronunciation, mentally spelled it Shopann, similar, I thought, to Schuurmann. I then proceeded to complain bitterly that my teacher only gave me wretched pieces by a composer whose name I rendered as Choppin', as in wood. My blunder was quickly, if painfully, rectified.

In my last year of college, I still fall prey to the same folly, though perhaps my fumbling is on more erudite matters. Yet, what I have discovered at college is that even a little knowledge hints at the richness and complexity beyond it and restrains my tendency to brash...
assertions. It is like the difference between stomping over what appears to be a plain of snow and treading lightly over it, knowing that there is a frozen lake beneath.

During my years of college I sometimes felt as though I were being hurriedly led down a long corridor with closed doors on either side; somehow the object of the particular course was at the end of the hall. We had no time to open each door on the way and explore the room behind it. But once in a while we would tarry long enough to take a peek. This glimpse could be a professor's incidental remark in class, a special lecture, a magazine article chosen at random in the library, the book on the shelf next to the one I needed for my paper. Only superficial knowledge, certainly, but enough to open a whole new sphere of thought that had never before intruded into my comfortable existence. That is what is so bothersome about those tantalizing bits of knowledge—they rouse me out of my complacency! Once it dawns on me that things are not as pat and predictable as they seemed, the real seeking after knowledge can begin.

Rarely during college was there time to remedy this ignorance. My main achievement has been to realize that there was something behind those closed doors. But knowing one's ignorance can be a valuable thing. As Socrates said of the slave boy in the Meno:

He does not know now...but then he thought that he knew and answered confidently as if he knew, and had no difficulty; now he has a difficulty, and neither knows nor fancies he knows.

And this is not as lowly a goal for a college education as I once thought. College should provide an initial exposure, a launching pad for my odysseys, not a terminus. College teachers should be able to say with Socrates:

But do you suppose that he would ever have enquired into or learned what he fancied that he knew, though he was really ignorant of it, until he had fallen into perplexity under the idea that he did not know and had no idea to know...We have certainly, as would seem, assisted him in some degree to the discovery of the truth; [for] now he will wish to remedy his ignorance...
"What do you do?"

"I'm a Middle East archeologist." In almost every instance the followup question is: "Have you read The Source?" Everyone likes archeology and almost everyone bases his image of what it is on a reading of Michener's popular work bolstered by a steady stream of glossy coffee table publication and regular media reports of famous discoveries involving mummies, caches of gold, lost cities and the like. Over a century of spectacular discoveries ranging from Babylon to Pyramids to Dead Sea Scrolls have made archeology a subject of popular lore and phantasy in the face of which the real role of the archeologist has been lost in a host of misconceptions.

\[View from an upper floor doorway.\]

In what follows I propose to "excavate" the layers of popular misconceptions to unearth the real archeologists. This will include brief analyses of various misconceptions followed by a summary of what happens on an actual archeological excavation.

I. A list of stereotypes

The archeologist as adventurer.

Archeologists travel to strange and exotic places where they become embroiled in all manner of past and present intrigues and adventures. Often the past literally comes to life as in the famous curse on King Tut's tomb. A number of Agatha Christie's mysteries (They Came to Baghdad, Death on the Nile) involve Middle Eastern excavations and antiquities.

It is of course true that work on a dig in the Syrian Desert is far different from the daily routine in Michigan, and that this work involves a sense of suspense in anticipation of what lies below. Typically, however, the daily routine is repetitious with nothing more exciting than the sorting of hundreds of potsherds. Still the most readable and informative account of what actually happens on an excavation is Agatha Christie's Come, Tell Me How You Live, a diary of her husband's (Max Mallowan) 1939 excavations in Northern Syria.

The archeologist as miracle worker.

In the topsoil of James Michener's fictitious Palestinian tell the excavators discovered a spent bullet. Analysis of this one object led miraculously to the reconstruction of a good share of the Middle Eastern phase of World War I. How was it done? It was done only in the author's imagination. Actually, the archeologist can do no more than describe the bullet, figure out who made it, the bore of the gun barrel and other physical details. He cannot supply the names of the marksman or the victim. I'm afraid that artists' reconstructions of entire cities on the basis of foundation rubble or entire creatures on the basis of the fragment of a jawbone are too often presented as fact and accepted as such by an admiring public.

The archeologist as treasure hunter.

In the region of Syria-Palestinian popular lore has it that when the Turks withdrew before Allenby in World War I they buried their gold and silver. Almost every town and village has its own version of the story, sometimes complete with treasure maps. What do you suppose I could be doing when working with transit and staff, carefully plotting and recording points on my map? Why, looking for the Turkish Gold, of course! When back from an excavation the most common question asked me is: "Well, what did you find?" The question usually leaves me stammering, because I know the asker is thinking of Schliemann's "Treasury of Atreus" or Howard Carter's tomb of Tutankhamen. In that light answers like, "three-hundred-fifty seven potsherds" or "eleven soil layers" appear mundane and inappropriate.

Actually, "treasure" tends to get in the way of the real archeological work. The "treasure hunter" tends to shove aside or treat shoddily the mundane artifacts that have no glitter. Ironically, it is these mundane artifacts—the cookpots, water jugs, slingstones and spearpoints—that have the greatest value to the archeologist, because they are typical of the life of a civilization.

How do you tell people that archeological heroes like Schliemann and Carter were really bull-in-the-china-shop excavators?

The archeologist as collector.

One day last year on a jog in New York's Central Park, I stopped to pay homage to the great obelisk, one of "Cleopatra's Needles," a monolithic pillar that began its career in front of Queen Hatshepsut's temple in upper Egypt. Transported from there to Alexandria by Queen Cleopatra, it finally ended its
long and perilous journey in New York early in this century. And there it was amid the trees of the park, its hieroglyphs nearly erased by decades of urban smog, terribly out of place!

It is an ironic fact that in order to see the greatest monuments and artifacts from the Middle East, one has to travel not to the Middle East itself, but to Paris, London, Berlin, Leningrad, New York, Chicago, to great museum collections made when Europe was in firm imperial control of the region. Since World War II most countries have enforced antiquities laws that forbid the export of artifacts entirely or limit it to the distribution of duplicates for the purpose of building study collections.

Nevertheless, there is an ongoing black market in antiquities in which historical value becomes hopelessly confused with monetary worth. In this game the archeologist is often mistakenly thought of as a financial appraiser. The question “Is it authentic?” is usually followed with “How much is it worth?”

The archeologist as dropout.

When I tell people of plans to go on an excavation, they often react with: “Oh, you don’t have to work this summer?” I talk about fifteen-hour days, the rigorous physical demands, the copious record keeping, the accumulated exhaustion after two months, but it doesn’t help. Somehow, archeology is seen as more akin to sitting on the beach than to doing something productive.

Perhaps this is because there is no monetary profit. I once told an excavator of basements that I paid for the privilege of excavation. He thought I was a total fool to do that when he could charge thirty dollars an hour for doing essentially the same thing! It may also be that it is perceived as an unproductive activity that meets no immediate human need. How can you go off on a dig when there is hunger and poverty and suffering? The question need be answered no differently, of course, than it does for the historian engaged in library research or for the artist at his easel.

The archeologist as propagandist.

In the course of working on the excavation of Tell Hesban in Jordan, a silly, but very real argument developed between the excavation directors and Jordanian archeologists. The American directors tended to call the place Heshbon, which is its Biblical, Hebrew name, while the Jordanians wanted to call it Hesban, which is its current Arabic name. Why quibble over cognate spellings? The Hebrew name with its ancient association of the Jewish occupation of the Transjordan was connected by the Jordanian citizens with the current confrontation with the modern Jews of Israel. Preoccupation with the ancient Jewish occupation of their soil was thought of as a display of disloyalty to the modern nation.

For most Middle Eastern nations, especially Israel, Turkey and Egypt, archeology has become a means of develop-
ing national loyalty. Identification with the age of Pharaohs gives the modern Egyptian a sense of distinction from other Arabs, and emphasis on their Old Testament past gives Israeli citizens a sense of heritage that replaces the recent unpleasant experiences in the hostile environment of Europe from which they have migrated. The danger of deliberate distortion of archeological data for nationalistic purposes should be obvious, and instances of such distortion are common.

The archeologist as epigraphist.

My graduate school teacher, Cyrus Gordon, was fond of repeating the slogan: "One word is worth a thousand potsherds." There is, of course, truth in that. An ostracon (an inscribed potsherd) immediately gives one linguistic and ethnic identification, a writing style which can be dated and located and a name or conceptual message. All of this yields information that goes far beyond what can be learned from a blank potsherd.

The discovery and deciphering of cuneiform literature, Ugaritic literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls have added immensely to our knowledge of the Ancient Middle East. The recent discovery of a library of fifteen to twenty thousand cuneiform tablets at Elba in North Syria promises to open up new vistas of our understanding of the Third Millennium B.C.

Yet, there is a danger of distortion due to the overemphasis. I was struck by this in a recent reading of Elba: A Revelation in Archeology written by Chaim Bermant and Michael Weitzmann. While this popular account is interesting and easy to read, it distorts the presentation of numerous seasons of excavation by treating everything else as virtually preliminary to the discovery of the royal archive of tablets. If one realizes that this archive represents only one "instance" in the centuries-long accumulation of otherwise non-inscribed, manmade debris and that ninety percent of archeological sites yield almost no written material at all, the potential distortion from overemphasis on epigraphy becomes apparent. Written remains constitute only one form of artifact that has to be treated fully in the context of much more common remains: potsherds, walls, floor and soil layers.

The archeologist as Bible defender.

In August of 1977 a group of neophyte archeologists, among them former astronaut James Irwin (reverently carrying a replica of a moonrock), arrived in Jordan with the goal of finding the Ark of the Covenant. They were certain of its location in a cave on Mount Nebo because a Hebrew inscription pointing to the Ark behind a cement wall had been reported earlier this century. The mission turned into a dismal failure: the Hebrew letters proved to be trowel marks in the waterproofing of a Byzantine cistern!

Such efforts to prove the Bible or to have archeology testify to its authenticity is a form of religious treasure hunting best exemplified by the repeated attempts to find Noah's Ark in Eastern Turkey. See, for example, John Warwick Montgomery's The Quest for Noah's Ark. Two sorts of assumptions are involved in such quests: either the object sought will prove the Bible right against its critics, or it will serve as a visual testimony that will bring people to conversion.

It should be obvious that physical objects (the Shroud of Turin is another example) are not essential to maintain the authenticity of the Bible or to witness to the resurrected Christ. No such "magical" role is possible for archeology. What archeology in the geographic area of Biblical history has done, however, is supply a fantastic amount of historical and cultural information by means of which the text of the Bible may be better understood and interpreted.
II. The Excavation of Umm el-Jimal

Since 1972 I have been involved in archeological research at Umm el-Jimal, a Roman town in the Jordanian Desert. The site was not chosen because there was anything to be discovered or found there in the popular sense described above. Everything spectacular is clearly visible above ground and has been since the nineteenth century. Its one-hundred and fifty buildings stand one to three stories high, in a remarkable state of preservation. The initial phase of the work was a painstaking process of mapping that took over a year: a process of measurement and plotting that was both monotonous and tedious.

Preliminary excavation in the summer of 1974 proved that the site was occupied continuously from the first century B.C. to the eighth century A.D. However, it also showed that, except for numerous potsherds, the site was object poor: it was typical of a relatively poor local economy on the frontier of the Roman Byzantine empires. Herein, however, also lay its significance! So much excavation has concentrated on royal tombs, palaces, temples and imperial cities. Here was a chance to study the life of ordinary people, the houses in which they lived, their means of livelihood, the way in which they defended themselves.

In 1977 the first major season of excavation involving a team of twenty-five professionals and students was carried out. We concentrated on both the defensive system and domestic architecture. The results were satisfying, but not spectacular. We learned a great deal about the role played by local Arabic population in the East Roman frontier system. We also learned that the city made a peaceful transition from the Byzantine to the Islamic periods. From this information we can begin to generalize about what happened in a whole chain of similar military and domestic settlements stretching along the edge of the desert from the Euphrates River in Syria to the Gulf of Aqaba in Saudi Arabia.

In the summer of 1981 the project will resume with another season of excavation involving a staff of professionals and specialists, as well as Calvin students who will participate for course credit. In addition to continuing on some of the buildings begun in 1977, the staff will investigate two of the fifteen churches and the elaborate aqueduct and water storage system.

The Umm el-Jimal Project will be completed in a future season with a survey of the region around the town. This will include the neighboring communities, roads and forts with which Umm el-Jimal formed a defensive chain and the more hostile desert from which nomadic tribes threatened the Roman order.

Unless the unforeseen happens, the end-product will not be spectacular enough to be reported in the New York Times. The work, in fact, will fit none of the misconceptions listed above. It will, however, be a significant addition to the history of life on the Roman-Byzantine frontier of Arabia.

When you see us back on campus next fall, please ask: “What did you find this summer?” Did I really read The Source, you ask. Well, not really, but I scanned the Reader’s Digest abridgment!
Frances Moore Lappe spoke on November 4 before the annual meeting of the Institute for Global Education. Lappe is the author of *Diet for a Small Planet* (1971) *Aid as Obstacle* (1980), and co-author of *Food First* (1977). She is presently co-director of the Institute for Food and Development Policy, and one of the leading spokeswomen for new policies toward the Third World. Mark Kane, director of the Institute for Global Education, and an interview for the Three Rivers city newspaper joined Dialogue in the following interview.

**DIALOGUE:** What is the purpose of the Institute for Food and Development Policy?

**LAPPE:** There is an important distinction between family relief and chronic food aid. Chronic food aid is another form of budgeting support. The bulk of our food aid is what we call chronic, that is year in, year out, support to countries like Bangladesh. The government then resells the food. The majority of the food is consumed by urban dwellers, not the poor people who live in the countryside. In Bangladesh thirty percent of it is consumed by civil servants and the military. Chronic food aid is a way to support the regimes the United States sees as its allies, and very little of it alleviates hunger.

Under Carter the rhetoric of foreign aid has greatly improved, and we are sure there are some good aid projects—although we have never heard about any. The thesis of our book *Aid as Obstacle* is that, by its very nature, government aid goes from a simple concept of guilt and burden into a vehicle of personal liberation. Personal liberation is the capacity to take responsibility for economic decisions. The Institute's books are very hopeful books, whereas so many books are filled with pictures of starving children that just leave people puzzled.

A lot of our work involves showing through concrete examples, what people are capable of achieving without falling into the trap of showing an idealized model. If you set up a model you are going to end up creating despair because the model is flawed.

We spend a lot of time developing a network with people who are working at the village level all over the world and have documentation of their experiences. Our job is not primarily research. We do not go out and do the sociological, anthropological, or economical studies on the fate of peasants in Brazil. There is already so much information, and yet there are so few groups trying to put it into a framework that Americans can understand.

**DIALOGUE:** In *Food First*, you criticize food aid, but now I get the impression you would go even further and end all food aid.

**LAPPE:** There is an important distinction between family relief and chronic food aid. Chronic food aid is another form of budgeting support. The bulk of our food aid is what we call chronic, that is year in, year out, support to countries like Bangladesh. The government then resells the food. The majority of the food is consumed by urban dwellers, not the poor people who live in the countryside. In Bangladesh thirty percent of it is consumed by civil servants and the military. Chronic food aid is a way to support the regimes the United States sees as its allies, and very little of it alleviates hunger.

Under Carter the rhetoric of foreign aid has greatly improved, and we are sure there are some good aid projects—although we have never heard about any. The thesis of our book *Aid as Obstacle* is that, by its very nature, government aid goes through the power structure in the foreign country. If that power structure is dominated by a few, then those people monopolize benefits. It is a fallacy to suppose that you can go through the powerful to reach the powerless.

Then we also went on to examine the actual programs and realized that if you look at what is under the food and nutrition category of the Agency for Economic Development programs, you find that the major expenditure in Asia is for rural electrification. According to studies which asked peasants what they wanted, rural electrification is not a priority need. Health care and seeds are needed. When we ask people in the agency what the effect of rural electrification will be, they admit that one of the major impacts will be the mechanization of rice milling which will destroy the jobs of rural women.

All the rural roads going into Bangladesh primarily benefit the producer who can get his produce to city markets or exported. Government to government aid cannot transform power relationships between people; it just reinforces what is there. In other words, if there is something positive going on, say, in Nicaragua, then perhaps aid, if it doesn't have a lot of strings attached, can be a positive thing. If something very
negative is happening, foreign aid is going to bolster that repression.

DIALOGUE: What is the difference in focus between Bread for the World and the Institute of Food and Development Policy?

LAPPE: The main difference is that they have put a lot of energy into trying to increase and improve foreign aid. Our position is different. We have shed our illusions and realize that U.S. foreign aid is an arm of U.S. foreign policy. We are living in a dream world if we think that government as now constituted can give aid that will be a positive liberation influence. We encourage people to go through voluntary agencies because they are much less tied to the native governments. Obviously, if you are doing any real good in an oppressed country, you are going to get kicked out. We would advise Bread for the World, if they are interested in U.S. foreign policy lobbying, to lobby against military aid as opposed to lobbying for increased "development aid." Military aid is used to intimidate people who are working for change. And this makes it impossible to implement constructive national developmental programs. Bread for the World is against military aid, but that is not where they put their energy.

DIALOGUE: Does the American family farm have the same problems?

LAPPE: A lot of the farm critics and generally city people have the impression in the United States agriculture has been taken over by giant agri-business operations and that these are pushing the small farmer out. What is happening though, is that all of the public policies, including credit and tax policies, commodity programs, and export push programs, all of these economic forces determine that farmers who are now of medium size either have to get bigger or get out.

It is the government programs which effect the farmer, not agri-business. Too often the public does not realize this. What has happened is that we are moving to a very concentrated control of economic decision-making. In my home state of California, there are forty-five corporations that control over one-third of the prime farm land and, because of the economic power, they have influence in the political sphere. In other words, they can prevent the enforcement of the law. For instance, there has been a debate going on for a decade at least on the 1902 Reclamation Act, which required that the federal, subsidized irrigation waters be limited to the small family farmer. That has not been enforced. This lack of enforcement has benefitted those large corporate operations which farm around 100,000 acres.

I guess, in general, people who are not farmers romanticize farm life; they idealize it and these values aren't real. It doesn't really matter if farm life is really like that or not. Since that ideal of farm life can become a vision of something that we would like in our lives. That, to me, has enormous value. So it's just stupid for me to debate if it really was like that or not.

Another value associated with the farm life that is being lost is the idea that each person's work has redeeming social value. You know, that farmers are really fulfilling a basic human need; people envy and admire them. If farming gets more industrialized, it's harder to feel that connection.

"Liquid pesticides are being distributed in Coke bottles.... a priest gave communion using this pesticide...."

Farmers are being forced into a position where they really have to discard their knowledge of conservation; they have to override their good sense about conserving resources in order to survive economically. They're losing too much topsoil; they're overusing pesticides. I've talked to people in Nebraska. They cannot drink the water, and they really resent not being able to be good stewards, and yet they know they have to do what they are doing in order to survive. I don't agree that the reason things have gone that way is because people want to get bigger and bigger.

Any tax law that appears to treat all farms the same is selectively benefitting the large producer. Ten percent of the farmers across the United States reap fifty percent of the benefits from any kind of income support programs. To change this, to insure the survival of the family farm, would take conscious planning. We have been brainwashed in America to associate planning with totalitarianism. But what we don't realize is that all the programs which we accept involve planning. They are all for bigger farms. We need democratic planning. Farmers should cooperate locally and nationally. Farmers have to come together and decide that one farmer does not have the right to own 100,000 acres of land. Again, there is a tremendous value conflict. Most Americans associate democracy with an individual's right to own unlimited amounts of land, and yet that absolutely contradicts another idea of democracy: dispersed ownership.

Nothing is possible in the short term; everything is possible in the long term. What is being pushed on farmers today is a policy of short-term solutions to everything. Export agriculture is a
short-term solution. Every short-term solution increases the problem. What you see today is that the per capita income for farmers is the same as it was in 1962. This is after doubling production of our exports.

DIALOGUE: What surprised me in *Food First* was the assertion that the United States is the third largest food importer. Is it good for us to be importing goods from the third world?

"We have been brainwashed in America to associate planning with totalitarianism."

LAPPE: Imports again are a short term solution and reflects a profound problem. A lot of consumer groups say, "Great, let's get cheaper tomatoes!..." What is overlooked is that the United States' producers are being put out of business by the competition. We are also hurt in areas that are ripe for urban development. This makes us dependent on food supplies which will not be available to us in the future. Soon the Third World people are going to demand that their land goes to feed them and not us. For example, in Mexico about eight percent of the children under the age of five are extremely malnourished. Another problem with food imports is that a number of hazardous chemicals now banned in the U.S. are exported to the third world and then reimported into the United States through contaminated foods.

DIALOGUE: You mentioned that you are coming out with a new book on pesticides.

LAPPE: Our institute is; it's called *Poison*. It's about the proliferation of hazardous chemicals worldwide. As there have been more restrictions on pesticides in industrial countries, particularly in the U.S., the corporations have expanded marketing strategies in the Third World. For example, liquid pesticides are being distributed in Coke bottles. One report tells how a priest gave communion using this pesticide and killed about five of his parishioners. What this example illustrates is how inappropriate distribution of incredibly dangerous poison is occurring in cultures which have no understanding of man-made poisons. Most of the people cannot read the warnings, and in fact most of these don't have warnings. People bottle and drink the water that has run off from the pesticide laden fields and a corporation can legally produce any banned pesticide for export in the United States.

DIALOGUE: The popular press compares Tanzania to Kenya.

LAPPE: Kenya is an African-Taiwanese kind of development. It is all export dominated. It is very open to the free market. Most of the infrastructure is British or U.S. owned. On gross national product alone, it is more successful, if that is how you measure development. It is a very different kind of development. That is why the conservative press likes it. They measure development with different criteria in mind. You can have growth in the gross national product and greatly increase people's suffering. In countries like Chile, Brazil, and the Philippines, you have tremendous growth in the exports. The Philippines is exporting rice and yet their people are the worst fed people in all of Asia. At the institute we are trying to change the traditional way of evaluating Third World countries. We are trying to change people's values.

DIALOGUE: You have published a study comparing Tanzania with Mozambique. Is Tanzania developing as well as some reports have suggested?

LAPPE: If you went to Guatemala, Brazil, Chile, or the Philippines, and then you went to Tanzania, you would think you were in paradise because at least the government has a genuine concern for the people. You don't see the same degree of degradation. There's poverty—underdevelopment is poverty—but, going to Mozambique, I realized that Tanzanian development strategies and the attitudes of the leaders there can only be characterized as a kind of managerial or paternalistic approach to the people which is deadening. The officials were groomed by the British and they have colonial attitudes. So much of development is a self-fulfilling prophesy; human beings will produce what you believe they will.

—Jack Smalligan
"Just tell me. What's the point?"
was the response of one of my colleagues when I stepped into his office to give him a typed copy of a motion that would be discussed at a departmental meeting in a few minutes. A week later, after a five-minute discussion on a similar point, another colleague said:

"Write them down; then we can see if it's complete."

Each wanted to learn something. Each, unconsciously perhaps, but from the vantage point of long experience, was arranging his environment to make the learning more efficient.

Which response is most like the one you would make? If it is the first, you are probably an auditory learner; if the second, more likely is visual.

The answer to the question
Which response is most like yours?
and the whole broad idea of learning environment and learning style is the focus of a good bit of current educational research. Dunn and Dunn1 have done some of the major research and writing in this area. In this article—at the risk of producing a How-to-do-it manual in the genre of Installing Your Own Shock Absorbers—let's look at learning styles and environmental arrangements that make learning easier.

But first a small disclaimer. This is not an article on what to learn. We spend a good deal of time and energy at Calvin—and, indeed, space in Dialogue—discussing the topic; and rightly so. Neither is it a discussion of how the disciplines should be organized for learning, although this too is a very important matter.

Rather it is the:

When
Where
How
to learn—in short

Learning as a Matter of Style

WHEN

My own experiences have helped me understand this factor; perhaps they will clarify it for you too.

When I came to Calvin as an eager freshman, I had a bit of misguided Puritan work ethic which translated into "learning ought to hurt quite a bit." So each semester I would sign up for eight o'clock classes "to get the day off to a good start." I did indeed "hurt quite a bit," as I don't really get in gear until about ten o'clock. As an interesting point, a good number of my instructors and fellow classmates weren't playing with a full deck at that hour either; consequently, my early morning classes were often less than optimum learning situations.

This is not true for all persons. Some fairly effervesce in the early hours. Is choosing the time to learn more than just a matter of personal comfort? Yes, indeed; for example, in one public school the students' preferred time of study was assigned to math classes, and the result was a whole grade rise in the school average for math students.

In other words, the point is that we should schedule our most demanding work at the time when we're most alert. You can easily determine this best time for yourself by thinking of the day in five parts—early and late morning, early and late afternoon, and evening—and then just from experience, label those times when you are most alert and when you tend to be groggy. Or, to be more precise, you can chart your body temperature every hour for a day or two. When your temperature is highest and your engine is running hot, you're most alert and you learn effectively.

WHERE

The research on where and under what conditions an individual learns best includes a variety of elements, most of which are self-evident. To enhance his own learning environment a person need only introspect and then make conscious efforts to arrange his personal environment to match the preferences he discovers he has. These elements include the physical factors of light, sound, and temperature. This means, for instance, that if light level is a factor for you, a conscious choice to sit near a window or under a ceiling fixture or in a dark corner for listening (in class) or studying (at home or in the library) will make a difference in your attention span. The critical point here, as in all the elements, is consciously to examine your own style and use that information when arranging your environment.

Much of what we've examined above is under control of the learner. Research indicates that the cumulative effect of changing the environment to match the learner's preference can be significant for learning efficiency.

Teachers rarely discuss these environmental factors with students because when study and learning are one's vocation a person usually has well-developed habits that fit his learning experiences. Thus, without much thought, it is easy for faculty members to project their preferences on to the students they teach. Some are surprised and even offended when students ask that the room be warmer or cooler, or suggest that the lights are too bright or the area is too noisy. Their irritation may be sharpened by the fact, not generally known, that in addition to

Philip Lucasse is an education professor at Calvin and has been working in the area of learning styles.
individual differences, preferences for increased light and warmth and tolerance for noise increase with age.

HOW

The how of learning refers to the way in which information is presented. From the learner's point of view, it is his perceptual style. The two faculty members quoted at the beginning of this article were, by their comments, giving evidence of their preferred method of perceiving new information.

The perception elements are:
- Auditory: Learning new information by hearing it. Lecture discussions are the usual college forms.
- Visual: Learning by seeing. Examples are films, printed text, and pictures.
- Tactile-Kinesthetic: Learning by manipulations, motion, and feeling. Science labs, studio art courses, and sorting language vocabulary cards belong in this group.

One way to get an indication of your personal perceptual preferences is to think about the ways in which you approach a new learning situation. For example, when you get a new record player or other piece of equipment, do you read the manual first or start to assemble it and only turn to the manual when you get stuck? If the manual is only a problem-solver, you're probably T-K, rather than visual. If you read the manual first, you're probably visual. If your choice is to talk with a friend about it, your style is probably auditory. When you are given a handout in class—and then your instructor reads most of it—and your feeling is that you wish he'd be quiet and let you read it, you indicate a preference of visual over auditory. Some persons prefer to just follow along but spend most of their energy listening—a sign of auditory preference. From a college student's point of view, the how of learning is both more important and more difficult than the when and where. It is more important because whether or not the presentation matches the person's learning style can make a great difference in the amount learned. It is more difficult because the learner has little control over the way in which the material is presented.

Nonetheless, a person with an understanding of his perceptual preferences can make adjustments to facilitate his learning. Again, let's use some examples to make the point clear.

You've decided your primary perceptual preference is auditory. Your class is Western Civilization, and the primary method of information presentation is lecture and discussion. Great, this fits your style perfectly. However, when later that day you drag out the books and notes to review the material presented earlier, it's all wrong. This is the time to make use of your best friend or make a cassette player into a best friend. Some of the possibilities are study by discussion with a friend, record the lecture and discussion and listen to it again, read the notes into the recorder and record a verbal summary of the required reading section by section and listen to it. Listen, listen, listen—that's your style, so make provision for it.

Or let's look at the same class, but this time as experienced by a person with primarily a visual preference. For him, the class is a hard part of the day. Minor difficulties give him reason to skip ("I can get it from the book"), and the professor, unless he does a "Bozo the Clown" for visual interest, rarely moves out of the boring category. The remedy—get something to look at (related to the material of course!). Notetaking is an absolute necessity for the visual. Leave margins to sketch in quick, simple drawings representing objects or ideas talked about. Take the text-
book to class and underline important ideas as they are discussed. Study at night by reading the text and reviewing notes, using a study method like SQ3R (survey, question, read, recite, review). Finally, get some newsprint from the bookstore and make felt tip posters with main points to hang in your room. The cue for the person with visual preference is to look, read, visualize.

The T-K person has many of the same feelings about the lecture discussion class as the visual. Making posters is a good exercise for the T-K. Putting main points on index cards so they can be shuffled in and out of sequence is another good one. A one-man dramatization of a situation or idea helps the T-K to remember as well.

One more illustration. You have a lab at three o'clock and know you are all thumbs—definitely not a T-K preference. At two o'clock, read over the manual, make notes on what you'll do (visual) or discuss with a friend what you'll do in lab that day (auditory); then, with part of the learning taken care of, you can concentrate on the more difficult manipulation skills.

Again the point is that knowing one's preference is important information to use in arranging the learning situation to your benefit.

The current research on learning style indicates that perceptual skills are gained in sequence as one matures. Persons develop T-K skills first, visual next and auditory last ("Junior, I've told you three times—why don't you listen?"). This means that at college level and beyond, in all likelihood, we can handle information in all three ways. However, most adults prefer T-K or visual perception over auditory and learn more efficiently in their preferred styles.

As a test, give some learning style advice for these situations presented by students:
1. I have trouble staying awake in my two-thirty class.
2. I can't seem to concentrate on my studying after dinner.
3. I can't remember what I read when I study for tests.

(Some suggested answers are printed upside down at the end of the article.)

Finally, it is important to note that in addition to personal learning style, such things as using a system like SQ3R for reading, spaced review, and effective note-taking all enhance learning. Note too, that using knowledge of one's own learning style can make learning more efficient for good students as well as students in academic difficulty.

Footnote:
1. Rita and Kenneth Dunn have written a number of books, articles, and research reports. Two articles that provide a general overview are:
   "How to Diagnose Learning Styles." Instructor, September, 1977, pp. 122-144.
Words and Works:

Peter Dijkhuis graduated from Calvin in 1978 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. He then moved to Toronto and took on a part-time position with the Art Gallery of Ontario. He is currently working full-time for the AGO, travelling through Ontario installing art shows.

In my last semester at Calvin, I ran out of money and could no longer afford to buy paints and canvas. Thanks to insightful teachers, who encouraged me to pursue different techniques, I began working with house paints and wax crayons on found scraps of wood. I gouged the surfaces with wood-cut tools and fried the paint with a torch flame. My fascination with methods of image-making kept me preoccupied for the entire semester. But an odd thing happened. Personal interest in process and technique outranked my attention to the images produced. This method-oriented enterprise was destined to land me in dead end since there was a limit to the amount of specific process exploration that I could do. Sooner or later, because of lack of attention to images, these would become redundant and trivial. It was in Toronto, a few months after graduation, that I began to realize this.

Over a period of time, I came to recognize the importance, not of process-oriented image-making, but of object-making. Found objects and materials gleaned from Queen St. back alleys, Spadina sidewalks, Kensington shops and dusty, Jewish hardware stores, whether placed behind plexiglas, coated with tar or left raw, were wonderful forms and surface, powerful enough to become deserving building blocks and components of larger works of art. The production of new surface became the emphasis in the painting process. This collection of objects and surfaces formed the new object, one complete with its own history and internal world of tones, textures and components. After leaving Calvin, to adapt to my new environment and set of circumstances while attempting to expand my visual language required stamina and a certain amount of discipline.

Most of the works are based on the scale, vertical pieces are slightly higher than a horizontal works are slightly longer than this scale, the works tend to be more in inspection.
The need for studio space was a pressing problem during my first few months in Toronto. During the initial summer, I worked in my bedroom and in back alleys and garages. The works stayed small because of my constant mobile state. Upon renting my first studio, the scale changed immediately because of the availability of a larger, more permanent space. This first studio had no windows but had wonderful decrepit walls. I know that the textural and tonal richness of this space heightened my sensitiveness towards my pieces.
Three things which I had taken for granted during my college career were painfully absent when I started just working alone: one, a studio space to work in; two, tools and machines to work with; three, a community of artists to visually and verbally interact with. Coping with these circumstances inevitably affected my art work in one way or another.

At first, while working alone, I had no sense of support or criticism from an artist community, and no one to answer to but myself. Consequently, my personal standards for quality skyrocketed. Finished pieces had to be completely satisfying or else be discarded or cut-up to be recycled into new works.

Working at a full-time job is a mixed blessing. I can only work on art projects after 5 o'clock and on weekends and holidays. But it does provide money to rent studio space and to purchase the necessary tools, equipment and supplies. Fortunately, by working in art galleries, my nine to five jobs have kept me involved with art communities and have introduced me to an expanding network of Toronto artists and gallery directors. For the past year and a half, I have been working for the Art Gallery of Ontario as an Installation Officer in Extension Services. In this position, I travel throughout the province and across the nation when necessary, designing and Installing the circulating exhibitions that are produced for display in host galleries. Because of the vastness of topics covered in conversations with fellow employees and gallery directors, I am constantly challenged to keep thinking.

The delicately painted or time-seasoned surfaces of the pieces create a textural and tonal statement which is then contrasted or complimented with compartments containing plexiglass sprayed random materials, roofing tar, wrapped rope or tar-coated objects. These elements, together with their formal juxtapositions, become a new object; one which respects and focuses on the origins of its physical materials. Much of the objects' resolve lies in the balance of crude elegance between all manipulated surfaces and materials, both painted and raw. The inferences and paradoxes created by this balance become many.
The initial surface of many of my pieces is in found boards dragged from back alleys into my studio. These then have 1"x2" wood borders and compartments built on. Selected board surfaces are left untouched—wood splits, nail holes and old paint layers remain intact in their new glory. All paint applications are done with house enamel, which, with thin coats, enhances the topography of the wood surface. Subtle colors are produced with colour crayon marks layered between coats of white paint. Scratch-drawing into the wood, paint and tar serves to activate the space within the planes of tonal and textural surfaces.

My new studio at King and Spadina has two exterior walls with windows. The view of the city centre through its east window is spectacular. I know that this view will subtly affect my work in the near future.

I dare say that visual experience of the city itself has a subconscious influence on my art work. The objects produced have an aura of "urban-ness" about them. Indeed, the wood surfaces and material collections come from back alleys and dusty shops. The city is also rich with weird visual juxtapositions—the glass and girder bank towers, and the old warehouse walls rich with layers of plaster repairs and old soot, the 40's style streetcars and the high-tech parking lot signs with the time of day flashing in white digital display.

I have been in a few group shows around town, but there are many young artists in Toronto all hustling their wares, trying to get the coveted one-person shows in the slick uptown commercial galleries as well as in the artist-run parallel spaces. Because of fairly stiff competition, it may take time as well as intense and progressive work on my part before I have the honour of exhibiting new objects in Toronto. Exhibiting work is a wonderful bonus and is the social completion of one's energies. Yet, the ultimate pursuit will always be in the production of new and progressive pieces.
Mirage

to M.G.

Now the sparkle is in the sand
where earlier we wished out at the dark water,
   between the sailboats, glistening.
Here too among the sailboats, the lake slips away,
this time in our wake
much as its clear edge slipped back off the beach.
And still, there is a glistening of dark water
though it is farther out than we first imagined,
   much farther.

Faith Van Alten

Clematis
the trellis
against the side
of the garage
is overflowing
with purple flowers
and it is on my mind
to count them
in case
after putting on
all those petals
the blossoms
facing the wall
leave
unnoticed
somehow
each deserves
at least
a number.

Faith Van Alten
The high-minded radicals of the sixties have capitulated to society and now form a solid part of today’s establishment; older politicians, once young men of hope and zeal, seem unbathed by the countless compromises they must daily make; the romantic adolescent, after discovering that paradise has indeed been lost, becomes cynical and despairs of love; a seminary student, accepting her first call to a church, has visions of bringing her congregation to live in but not of the world, yet by mid-life she is as firmly rooted in the middle-class value system as anyone she had hoped to pull out of it.

The falling away of ideals: we blithely accept it as an inevitable consequence of human experience. Without alarm, we watch ourselves and our society resign idealism and opt for the pragmatism of the “do whatever works” school. We watched the hopes of the sixties become obscure the erosion of those values tending to forgive their lapses too easily or praising their own “hard-headed serving actions. Survival almost always freezing winds.

Still, some ideals do survive. Some idealists, particularly those who base their vision on some pre-existing religious structure, do achieve eminence and lasting esteem. What is it that allows one ideal to survive while another perishes? Is it something inherent in the ideal itself, or is it some quality of the idealist which confers longevity on his brain-child? To discover this we should carefully examine the idealist himself.

To begin, we ought to understand just what an idealist is, how one works, and what he does when acting out his role. The stars on this stage also go by the name of “visionaries,” a name particularly revealing of their activity. A visionary, is, not surprisingly, someone who has visions. But he is not just anyone who sees things that are not real—madmen, too, have visions. One needs more than mere hallucinations to be counted among authentic visionaries. Visionaries, or idealists, are people who imagine, who see in their mind’s eye, a different and unrealized world in which things are better morally, aesthetically, materially, and so on, than they are on planet earth. The people I mentioned in the introduction of this essay, are, on a small scale, types of the visionary or idealist. The romantic refuses to be content with anything less than the platonic paradigm for ideal love; the newly ordained minister will not readily lower her sights just because a seasoned dominie kindly tells her that real pastoring will not conform to her mental model.

She would abandon her ideal no more readily than a sculptor would abandon his plan for a piece of stone merely because someone told him that his idea could not be executed in granite. The idealist, like a pioneering artist, is not dissuaded from what his imagination has revealed to him. Tenacious, single-minded, and inspired, idealists and visionaries mentally construct things and worlds much as artists do.

Upon reflection, it would seem that the artist and the idealist are engaged in exactly the same activity. The artist conceives an aesthetic ideal, then tries to realize it in the studio. The idealist, similarly, imagines an harmonious arrangement of the elements of reality, then proceeds to implement that design. To borrow some terms of Nicholas Wolterstorff’s Art in Action, both perform the action of “world projection” or “envisagement.” A person projects a world when he imagines a state of affairs, a way that things could or could not be.

Envisagement, in contrast, is the human capacity for imagining a state of affairs as actual. For the artist, this amounts to viewing an image, with his mind’s eye, as if it were already painted on canvas or carved out of rock. For the idealist, envisagement may entail anything from a full-blow utopian dream to a modest vision of an end to hunger, poverty or political repression. In both cases, however, the world projector has altered no reality except his own mental panorama.

The artist is, more often, free to actualize what he has envisaged, without demanding that the rest of reality conform to what he has done with one small part of it. By drooping clocks over tree limbs on canvas, Salvador Dali does nothing to real clocks except, perhaps, to change slightly our attitude toward them. The idealist, on the other hand, does not have that easy option because the material he must transform—a ready-made world of billions of people and their exponentially greater number of problems—is far less malleable, less pliable by exertion of the will, than are clay, paint, stone, or the combination of tones available to the musician.

Furthermore, the artist’s materials are far more expendable than the idealist’s. If a sculptor inadvertently splits a rock in half, he simply goes to the quarry and finds a replacement. Idealist are not afforded this luxury. When they miscalculate or craft their medium poorly, there are no replacements. Mistakes are final and irreversible, and no amount of repair can undo the loss of life or the increase of human misery. Deft precision and penetrating foresight must be the guides for anyone who would try to work with the human medium. Envisage what you will, we might tell the sculptors of mankind, but actualize only what the medium can bear.

Nonetheless, the artists and idealists who deserve their titles will do whatever they can to bring the ideal visions of their imagination to fruition. Working in their respective media, they do what they must to give their creations the forms and characteristics they originally had in mind. If traditional methods of handling the medium do not give the creator the effect he desires, he may invent new ones.
or, still failing to gain satisfaction, become frustrated and attempt a tour de force (here, tour de force is used to denote the forcing of a medium beyond known limits in an extreme effort to achieve hitherto impossible results). Intractable materials—whether paints, stones, or millions of human beings—present the most formidable difficulty to the creator. The ideal or the image he begins with may be flawless and lovely in every way, but the recalcitrance of reality can defeat even the best-laid plans. Exasperation ensues, the pragmatic urge to do something—anything—takes over, and a tour de force is born.

A tour de force in art too often proves to be more an object of curiosity than an object of aesthetic contemplation. Consider those collections of wartime photographs which have been compiled for the public’s gawking eye. Some of them it is true, are clearly documentaries which, with every image, cry out an idealist’s lament for the horror of war. But, following his ideal with debased motives, others turn to exploitation of the pitiable, their photographs becoming little more than the byproduct of rudely acquisitive aggression. And when this photographic encroachment on privacy and dignity reaches the dying man on the battlefield, it records a parallel tour de force in the political realm. Here, in this odd encounter where the expanding sphere of art an the continually bloated sphere of political ideology finally meet, we are shocked by a graphic illustration of war becomes a necessity in the logic of Marxism. With these as given, peace presupposes violence.

But, surely, violent action, though a common enough occurrence, seems a particularly unsuitable way to manipulate the human medium. The idealist who counsels war as a path to peace has failed to consider the inherent limitations of his medium. He is like the engineer who fails to calculate the stress that bridge components can withstand. Under the pressure of war, people fall apart. They simply cannot be forced to that extreme without permanent deformation. Severed torsos, missing limbs, crushed skulls exuding bloody gray matter—these, as engendered by an idealistically yet poorly conceived intellectual tour de force, represent an overextension of humanity—trying to force it into a mold it cannot fill without irreparable damage being done in the process.

This aberration is the result of a frustrated attempt to actualize ideals in the wrong way. Pragmatism lurks behind the shining Marxist ideal of global fraternity. If nothing else works, or so the reasoning goes, then we must violate violence. True to his cause and diligent in applying scripture to his own life, there is a telos (a goal) to all of his actions. That telos is the implementation of the shalom that God intends for mankind. It is not the world in which people stupidly build bombs. Non-pragmatists do not resort to such destructive means to accomplish constructive goals. As artist, the real idealist does not bludgeon the rock, but gently sculpts it, allowing nature’s form to take shape. According to this discussion or idealism?

Of course, it would be a tidy matter if the good remained while the bad was swept out to sea with other cultural sewage, but things don’t work that way. Certainly, some vaguely discernable cultural selection process does discard a great deal of the obviously bad in art and the patently absurd in ideals: only a fool takes seriously the dreamer whose visions have no more practicability than Icarus’ wings. Even so, the selection process is plainly fallible. And if it were not, one would still have to account for the outside forces which override the deliberate judgments of the genteel. Sleep with the right gallery owner, and your works stand a chance of gaining recognition; take on people of power as bedfellows, and sell your ideals to a nation.

These are the chicane means by which an unscrupled ideal may survive. How do they survive when they are authentic? The effective idealist cannot have a short-lived flirtation with one cause and then another, but must instead demonstrate through his perseverance that he is convinced of the beauty and truth of his vision. Persistence is truly crucial. Humans tend to ascribe any number of hallowed qualities to things which last. From the primitive ascription of deity to stone monuments to the modern reverence for the presumably eternal validity of scientific theories, we respect stability. With persistence, the idealist proves that he can be as unyielding as the objective reality that would put an end to his plans.
He demonstrates that he is a capable opponent of worldly ills. But perseverance and constancy alone are not enough to confer immortality on an ideal. Flexibility is also necessary for an ideal's survival. Ideals exist in large measure as concepts, and not even the concept of God—the only immutable being—would remain a part of our belief systems if it were not allowed to change to meet changing needs. Certainly, then, the common mundane ideals which most people hold must be subject to modification if they are to have any permanence whatsoever. If something does not work as it should, we rightly throw it away.

But that observation brings us back to the very problem I lamented at the outset, namely, the inexorable concession of idealism to pragmatism. How is it that our paradigmatic pacifist escapes this fate?

Certainly, pacifism is not in vogue these days, and for empirically good reasons. Any nation that made unqualified pacifism its foreign policy would soon cease to be an independent nation. Warmongers are ubiquitous, and no amount of pacific or conciliatory diplomacy can halt the advance of cruise missiles and tanks. But neither can the construction of still more instruments of war. Our pragmatic leaders insist that the only realistic solution to the threat of war is to increase nuclear armament, and the all-too-possible conclusion of this policy is a blatantly non-pragmatic annihilation of humanity. It seems that neither idealistic pacifism nor hard-headed pragmatism can offer any solution for world peace.

Still, the pacifists and the pragmatic advocates of military strength continue their harangues against one another. And with the allure that pragmatism has for our society, one is inclined to ask how anyone can maintain a consistently pacifist attitude in this world. How, in other words, can the idealist persevere when his program—his vision—stands no chance of becoming actual?

Some would say that the idealist can survive only if he does not face up to the world of realities that militate against his dream: only if, that is, he blinds himself to the real world in an escapist attempt to maintain the world he projects. Some would characterize our idealist as suffering from an incurable naivete. None-theless, there are visionaries who persist in their vision while fully aware of the seemingly insurmountable difficulties they face in any attempt to act on that vision. Those visionaries can be excellent models for those of us who are all too content to make ready concessions to pragmatism when the available materials will not conform to our visions.

But, once again, pragmatism forces us to ask, what is it that makes our visions appear so difficult to realize that we no longer believe that life can be better? If there is a common enemy of all ideals, it is the encounter with unyielding reality, which is analogous to the impasse an artist reaches in the dialogue with his medium when that medium definitely asserts that it will not conform to his design. That stance, if the visionary is at all self-aware, inevitably brings about a recognition of human limitations, a realization of his own impotence. This encounter also brings an acquaintance with objectivity.

From that acquaintance the idealist gains the knowledge to confer upon his ideals the longevity they deserve. Idealists need not shy away from all pragmatic concerns. Rather, the ideal idealism embraces pragmatism. In sharp contrast, most pragmatists either eschew ideals as superfluities or else adorn themselves with the trappings of idealism, but only for its emotional appeal. They sow their own confusion. When the practically-minded “realist” chooses not to take guidance from ideals, his pragmatism self-destructs; he cannot work without respect for his medium, or without concern for its intangible but profoundly real limitations.

Ignoring man’s limitations, as well as being blind to the obscured potentials of man has resulted, in our day, in an unnecessary malaise. It is next to impossible to dream again the dreams of the nineteenth century idealists. Our social experiments, rendered invalid by the capitalistic milieu in which they were performed, have gone awry and instilled in us an ambiguous cynicism.

On the one hand, we despair of improvement, but on the other we exhibit the appearance of solid optimism and something that one might call idealism; politicians, bankers, and consumers are presently sharing a public dream, a vision of a state of affairs that was once actual but can never be so again. In some minimal sense, these folks are visionaries, but theirs is not an idealism which has come to terms with the true limitations and needs of its medium. A capitalistic envisagement of the continued shape of human society in which a man can work for his own good and unintentionally benefit his community, can remain popular as an ideal. But it tarnishes other ideals by association. It is selfish, crass, like its commercial art; both are deceptive, superficial, and attempt to sell us something that is not good for us in the first place. Slick advertising caters to our vanity and thereby inculcates a warped and— it pains me to say it—totally depraved set of values. We cannot withstand their unremitting flattery. Extrapolate from that phenomenon and imagine— or just go out and look— what can happen to a nation when it has been brought up in the whore-in-a-nun’s habit; the ideal of capitalism. So unwittingly convinced and conditioned are we by the clothing industry’s insistence that apparel makes the person that we easily believe the same with respect to ideals; demagogery in fancy dress takes us in. The deforming effects of this capitalist “ideal” are no less serious than those of the Marxist vision I used earlier. In addition to breeding war through its incomplete, self-defeating pragmatism, it deeply cuts our spiritual ties to one another and to God. We cannot surrender to pragmatism at the expense of ideals.

If the dialectic of pragmatism and idealism is to achieve resolution, it must be reached through the recognition that no pragmatic scheme can work while deviating from its proclaimed goals. Neither Marxism nor Capitalism can give us the world they promise if they are willing to run roughshod over noble ideals in the name of those very same ideals. Resolution requires that we do not destroy either the vision or the materials as we attempt to make them coincide. We must not only envisage mankind burning with that “hard, gemlike flame” but also make our one and only cut on the real gem a perfect facet to capture and reflect that same light.
Modern art for many on this bewildering array of contemporary cultural artifacts seems impenetrable, alienating, and, worst of all, elitist. And in Calvinistic circles this attitude is particularly pervasive. Indeed, art and religion are often placed in opposition, forced into adversary roles, or at least thought of as independent and for the most part exclusive modes.

Yet, for decades now Christian artists and their patrons have decried this woefully simplistic approach to art and religion, insisting that the community develop a uniquely Christian aesthetic to combat the received secular approach, which may be described as the aesthetic of meaninglessness. In addition, the Christian layperson needs guidance in evaluating, appreciating, and gaining insight from the arts.

With these requisites in mind, two Christian aestheticians have recently published their respective theories on what a Christian aesthetic might be. Nicholas Wolterstorff in *Art in Action* and Calvin Seerveld in *Rainbows for the Fallen World* have attempted from strikingly different vantage points to provide direction for the artist and viewer. What follows is an impressionistic survey of their works from a layperson’s perspective.

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*Rainbows for a Fallen World*

by Calvin Seerveld

Directed toward the Calvinist community, Calvin Seerveld’s *Rainbows for the Fallen World* attempts to increase the artistic maturity of the Christian community. But, in attempting the re-education a tradition which has repeatedly rejected the arts, any aesthetician has a tremendous amount of catching up to do in developing and selling his aesthetic theory. Seerveld’s express purpose is to remove the suspicions of the uninstructed toward art, to spur Christians on to a greater involvement in and appreciation of the arts, and to rescue aesthetic theory from the grasp of esoterics. In short, *Rainbows* is a breathless attempt to catch up.

Many of us approach the arts, whether they be Lyman Kipp sculptures, Bela Bartok string quartets, or T.S. Eliot poems, with the defensive attitude of “I know what I like” (usually followed by “and it sure isn’t this!”). Against this attitude, Seerveld proposes an informed, communion-of-the-saints approach, claiming that alongside personal choice must stand a certain tastefulness, a sense of the aesthetic which extends beyond visceral reaction to a studied, reasoned evaluation of the arts.

Writing for those who traditionally choose their art on the basis of gut reactions, Seerveld slaughters (or at least maims) several sacred cows of the layperson’s sense of aesthetic quality. Seerveld carefully refutes the notion that beauty is the capstone of aesthetic value, citing as reasons for beauty’s demise the appearance of the sublime as “a vehement emotion filled with terror and obscurity before immeasurable and overpowering natural phenomena” and Hegel’s description of art as inherently beautiful, logically implying that ugliness is contained within beauty. Seerveld also laudably (but gently) criticizes kitsch, the realm of knick-knacks and cuteness, of Holly-Hobbie bed sheets and garish lawn ornaments. Realizing that that ours is a community obsessed with baubles, Professor Seerveld urges the Christian community to leave their contentment with utter superficiality and work toward an outgoing, informed aesthetic appreciation.

On reading *Rainbows for the Fallen World*, one realizes that it is the unleashing of a torrent of energy, devoutness, and sincerity on the part of Calvin Seerveld. His primary concern is to inspire Christians to rejoice in the goodness of God’s creation and respond by participating in the arts. Seerveld’s strength lies in this childlike delight in the world in which he finds himself: “the world we inhabit is more than humans and a subhuman nature; this world is the stunning theatre, workshop, playground of our Father in heaven.” It is this refreshing vision which enables Seerveld to see innumerable possibilities for obedient aesthetic life, and, in his devotion to his obedience, he aptly criticizes those who identify aesthetic appreciation with artificial intellectual sophistication. *Rainbows* is a fervent plea to shift our focus from belabored aesthetic theories to the joy of aesthetic life—Seerveld’s aesthetic is one of exuberant delight in God’s world.

Unfortunately, however, Seerveld’s exuberance creates a style which is full of “ubiquitous obliquity,” to use the author's
phrase. The very words Seerveld employs are disruptive; while such constructions as painterly and the use of hallelu as a verb may stretch the language to greater expressiveness, words such as structurations, viewy, and democratically merely get in the way. More baffling yet are neologisms never defined; what is a ludic moment, anyway? Seerveld also presupposes that the reader is well-versed in Dooyeweerdian jargon and casually throws in such compounded terminology as object-functions and generative truth-relatedness. But instead of leading the reader to a firm grasp of a Christian aesthetic, such devices alienate the reader and leave gaping holes of uncertainty in his comprehension of the proper stance of the Christian toward the arts.

But more disturbing than Seerveld’s rather free hand with the English lexicon is the unsettling suspicion that, behind the emotive force of Seerveld’s devoutness and his agonizing over Christian aesthetic immaturity, lies a theory of little discernable substance. Though Wolterstorff’s book occasionally obscures the delight inherent in obedient aesthetic life in the interest of forming a crisp and cogent theory, Seerveld errs in the opposite direction, sacrificing theoretical substance for devotional excitement over the glorious gifts of the Creator. Seerveld opens his book with these words:

Before you is an argument. It is not a logical one, but a “spiritual argument” that would appeal to your hearts to catch a vision from the Scripture: art is a battlefield and playground, a bona fide calling for Christian activity.

Insofar as Rainbow is an exuberant, spiritual appeal to Christian hearts, it enjoys a moderate degree of success. But in his chapter entitled “Modal Aesthetic Theory: Preliminary Questions with an Opening Hypothesis” Seerveld defeats himself by attempting to develop a philosophical rationale for his preceding observations of aesthetic life. Given the propensity of jargon in Seerveld’s writing, any content is either obscured behind fences of towering words or forgotten completely.

Unlike Wolterstorff who focuses on the fine arts in developing his aesthetic theory, Seerveld considers the whole range of experience in forming his aesthetic in Rainbows. The key to Seerveld’s aesthetic theory is the notion of allusiveness as the qualifying function of art; but, although Seerveld gives numerous examples of what he means, the precise meaning of allusiveness eludes the reader for want of a proper definition. If is allusiveness, as Seerveld uses it, synonymous with the usual colloquial definition (as Wolterstorff assumes in a recent review of Seerveld’s work in Vanguard), or does Seerveld intend something different by his derivative form? If the qualifying function of art is to be taken as allusiveness, this central term must be carefully defined in proposing a philosophical rationale for a Christian aesthetic theory. Seerveld’s elaboration on this notion fails to delineate his meaning: “Art-as-such, like any cultural artefact...is founded in achieved control or organized means of some sort, super-intended now in the case of art by allusiveness. So without a techno-formative nodal foundation, art-as-such is only a bird in the bush.”

Seerveld by his own admission, avoids definition, fearing that verbal constructs will wall out other aestheticians or create logical distinctions where none really exist. Of his reluctance to define concretely what constitutes art, Seerveld explains:

An advantage to the methodology I have proposed and exercised is that the court of appeal is an ongoing return to examine painting, sculpture, theatre, music and poetry, looking for what defines that kind of cultural artefact. You avoid pulling a definitive quality out of some tall, black, speculatively theoretical or etymological hat. But I do take a stand in the push and pull of historical-systematic analysis, and I am curious whether...designating “allusiveness” and the nuclear moment of how art is qualified will ring true as a starter...:

But in his hesitancy to form binding definitions, Seerveld’s model aesthetic theory dissolves like cotton candy.

So we return to Seerveld’s purpose. If Rainbows is meant to open the eyes of Christians to the wonder and delight of the world, it serves its purpose well. But, if Seerveld is laying the foundations for a uniquely Christian aesthetic, if his notion of allusiveness is meant to be the capstone of a desperately needed aesthetic theory, more care and precision is demanded. Seerveld’s book varies in tone and effectiveness; the anomalous chapter on modal aesthetic theory is never reconciled with the exuberance of his Old Testament translations and conversational tone in the rest of the work. Rainbows has the capacity to inspire Christians to scrutinize the arts and develop a studied, mature response to them, but it fails to provide a solid basis from which one could do so. Perhaps it is enough (for the time being) for Christians to share in Seerveld’s delight in God’s glory and his dedication to developing a praise-filled response to God’s goodness; certainly it is a necessary first step.

★★★★
Art in Action
by
Nicholas Wolterstorff

A good number of us, when faced with an installation of contemporary art, are baffled by works that appear self-indulgent and hopelessly obscure. A more patient viewer would enter the gallery with the assumption that artists are basically intelligent people, and that the art, ever more wild and confusing has significance. Curiosity, aside from some initial amusement and diversion would be the most desirable response, but many of us are not intrepid enough to approach the artist or energetic enough to research his philosophy.

Some Christians face added problems when, as participants in this rather rotten world of ours, they find something compelling ans worthwhile in the cultural artefacts of man— and don't feel comfortable limiting their appreciation to ostensibly Christian works. Questions about the validity and worth of art born out of empty, existentialist anxiety or humanistic self-assertion become burning issues to artists and patrons of the arts who feel the weight of a tradition that apparently directs them to deny the physical world and all of its attributes.

Admirably answering some of these questions and casting a long, searching gaze at the whole endeavor of art in present society is Nicholas Wolterstorff's introduction to aesthetic theory in Art in Action. Meticulous, careful, detailed to the point of exhaustion, it is nonetheless an excellent starting-point for those interested in grappling with the enormously complicated and elusive problems of what art is, its role for the artist, the viewer, and society, and how it can be approached from that notoriously difficult to pin down Christian perspective.

An aesthetic theory is meant to illuminate art in all of its guises and to give guidelines—from a rational perspective—to the artist and public in their respective attitudes toward art and the world it evokes. This is no easy task. As interest in aesthetics has increased in this century, a host of philosophers—cum—art critics have clamoured for attention insisting that they have distilled what is essential to art from all the dross. Wolterstorff, too, must count himself as working within the tradition of contemporary philosophy (more so than Calvin Seerveld who works from an indelibly Dooyeweerdian perspective). But he manages for the most part to raise himself above the definition-mongering mainstream of Anglo-American philosophy. Formulating the definition of art is ludicrous and Wolterstorff recognizes that fact. Art plays such a multiplicity of roles and affects us in such diverse ways that art-in-twenty-words-or-less definition is simply silly.

Still, at first glance, Wolterstorff seems to have done just that: "Works of art are instruments and objects of action" is the pithy guiding premise of his books. This, however, is a definition not of art but of its role and purpose. Art, per se, is defined in numerous ways (Wolterstorff concentrates on four, and aestheticians, artists, or the public may legitimately use any of them singly or in bunches.) So Wolterstorff takes as a crucial, fundamental given that art has a profound, persuasive task. Art alters us, turns us inside ourselves or forces us to look out, lifts us up, smashes us down, builds empires, sells for a lot of money; art is contemplated, loved, hated, used for wallpaper or litter box liner. Art has all these uses and more. Understanding this, Wolterstorff works tenaciously to break the spell of previous aesthetics which have insisted that the purpose of art exists exclusively in disinterested contemplation, and that its sole role is to fill our intellectual free time in an environment divorced from life and reality.

Combatting this, the received view of aesthetics, Wolterstorff marshals a wealth of examples in support of his thesis. The artist is beyond our ken—a notion popularized by Gauguin among others—is just not a viable model, particularity for Christians. As Wolterstorff puts it, "Where the Christian sees the artist as a responsible agent before God, showing in our human vocation, Western man in the Gauguin-image sees him as freed from all responsibility, struggling simply to explore himself." The artist has duties, responsibilities and a call to point out the breathtaking diversity of what we see around and within us.

A good idea of the present misunderstanding about the role of art in our lives is a result of the workings of what Wolterstorff calls, the institution of High Art. It is because art has been produced expressly for disinterested aesthetic contemplation in a highly specialized environment (museums, concert halls, theatres) that many feel alienated, cut off from something that requires too much energy to comprehend. Traditionally, artists have aimed at the carefully manipulated patrons who actively participate in the institution of high art. As a result the artist, together with his critic, can assume a basic understanding and sympathy among his followers, while the common man is left to his own devices. In reaction, he, more often than not, throws up his arms in disgust preferring not to waste his time with framed blobs of colour or someone's bed hanging from a museum wall.

Yet surely there must be something to the claims of artists and art critics, and Wolterstorff, in his methodical chipping away at the elitist wall around High Art, proves enlightening in his exposition of how art works. His aesthetic not only comes down against the cloistered notion of art but also supplies valuable insight into the mechanism of why art acts as it does.

To explain his system with sufficient clarity, however, Wolterstorff must detour to a long study of the psychology behind art (developed to the logical extreme in this more rigorous, more philosophical, more expensive treatise Works and Worlds of Art) that will leave some stranded or fatigued. This foray into the jungle of psychology is necessary, however, for Wolterstorff to present the linchpin of his aesthetic theory: fittingness. Interestingly enough though, in reading his outline of what fittingness is—the Os goodo antonym scales, the cross-modal similarities, envisagement, the worlds behind a work and all that entails—one begins to sense a barely suppressed glee. It is as if Wolterstorff has finally discovered in psychology what he has suspected to be the case all along. Here is empirical confirmation, based on recent research examining how the mind responds to a very specific range of stimuli, that seems to be a key to an understanding of how art functions. A contemporary philosopher couldn't be happier. Nevertheless, Wolterstorff restrains himself, keeping his exuberance to a minimum and maintaining a somewhat aloof reserve.
A point about style. As already alluded to, Wolterstorff is exhaustive and exhausting. He feels it is necessary, in the interest of completeness, to examine the ramifications of his ideas in the minutest detail. So interested is he in not being faulted for his logic, that he belabors his delivery with point after point of detail. This is particularly evident in his presentation of fittingness. Though he mercifully avoids philosophical jargon, one cannot escape the feeling that he is overly concerned with making sure that he has left no ground uncovered. Most find this laudatory, but some readers complain of being bludgeoned into acceptance of a theory that leaves them uncomfortable, yet unable to articulate their objections.

Perhaps this is why artists often feel uneasy about Wolterstorff's thought. Many respond with an is-that-all-there-is shrug, or they insist that they have dealt intuitively with these issues for as long as they have been artists and resent the systematization, or they simply resist the push to demystify their magic kingdom. But, quite possibly Wolterstorff's approach is not such a bad thing. Though artists are part of his intended audience, they make up only a small portion. His job is to explain what they are doing, and how what they are doing has become such an important endeavor to us and to our society. Wolterstorff gives the artist all the deference that is his due, but demonstrates a praiseworthy impatience with those, like Gauguin, who insist that the artist is self-contained and not affected by the imperatives of his culture.

So is Art in Action successful in its stated task? As a coherent, amazingly consistent theory of the arts it works beautifully; few could fault Wolterstorff for shoddy scholarship. His book is also an excellent starting point for anybody interested in aesthetics. Art in Action is directed primarily to the Christian and tries to rectify aesthetics from this standpoint; but to the general aesthetician, as well, many of Wolterstorff's contributions will be helpful and quite possibly influential. Still, the premises of Wolterstorff's work, the conclusions he draws, and the whole matrix of his aesthetics are profoundly Christian in tone. The responsibilities he lays with the artist and the public, and the role he gives art combine to form a tight, internally complete, successful reply to Dorothy Sayer's claim that there is no Christian aesthetic.

At this point, it might be fair to ask how Rainbows for the Fallen World and Art in Action compare. We must first note that these two works are written with substantially different intents. Whereas Wolterstorff intends to construct a plausible, consistent, Christian aesthetic, Seerveld has no such intent. Rather, his focus is on the development of Christian aesthetic response to creation and the arts, and therein lies the strength of Rainbows. But he fails in his attempt to give structure and a philosophical basis for his aesthetic theory.

In all this talk about Christian aesthetics, however, it should be noted that neither man writes what Christian art might be. Seerveld, after proposing some general guidelines, admits that virtually anything would be suitable as an artistic subject. Wolterstorff also recognizes the futility of pinning down what Christian art is, except to say that it is a category with greater scope than any of us probably realize. (In this context, the Calvin community might be wise to consult his chapter "Concerning Works Aesthetically Good and Morally Bad.")

* * *

It might come as a relief to some readers that both authors defuse the notion of the artist as creating "like unto the gods." Wolterstorff minimizes the importance of spontaneous creation, describing the generation of a new work as involving a whole complex of procedures. Seerveld denies the artist's "supernatural genius" altogether. For him, the artist is engaged in a vocation; his is a "task like building bridges and fixing meals."

However, comparing Rainbows for the Fallen World and Art in Action too closely is not a constructive activity. Writing from different perspectives within the Calvinist community with vastly disparate styles and divergent purposes, Professors Seerveld and Wolterstorff nonetheless each make contributions in the movement toward a Christian aesthetic.
In 1920 seven aspiring Canadian artists collaborated in an effort to develop bold, national statements in art that transcended the dominant trend of colonialism of that time. Lawren Harris was the driving force of this group. His restless curiosity, combined with his salient interest in theosophy, gave birth to paintings that realistically explore the mystical link between man and nature. Imbuing his national landscapes with luminescence and deep pools of color, Harris’s canvases have an intriguing spiritual force.

—Fran De Jong
The obvious first thing to do is to acknowledge our own shortcomings and errors. No one ought to shrink from such an avowal; indeed, to deny that I act as fallibly as anyone would simply make anything else I might say ring hollow. Therefore, I openly regret that our manner of presenting "In New York" was such as to cause unnecessary offense and misunderstanding; I am sorry if anyone was angered or misled by the piece.

Having said this, I want to stress that I cannot apologize for the piece or my decision to print it. My mistakes, as I see them, were "sins of omission" not commission. There was no malice in our decision to print, no desire to conflict. Merely, I underestimated the violence of the reaction and so did not take certain precautions. Further, I do not take responsibility for precipitating the confiscation of Dialogue's issues and the freezing of funds. These actions—extremely inappropriate and ill-advised, in my judgment—were overreactions and must be considered apart from our actions (one in the same way, I think, the offensiveness of the December Dialogue need not necessarily be judged from Senate's shoot-first-ask-questions-later response.). Still, it seems that I did not accurately predict the shape of that response and could, perhaps, have taken steps to avert it. That I did not is unfortunate.

Having said that, it remains for me to explain exactly why I did what I did (after "apology" must come "apologia"). Probably the best place to begin with the question of literary merit is "In New York" good enough to print and, if so, why?

"Why?" said the Caterpillar. There is a great deal of explaining to be done. After the publishing of "In New York" in the "What You Will" feature of Dialogue's December issue and the ensuing blow up, everyone on both sides seemed chiefly engaged in venting angry frustration at the inexplicable actions of "the other side." Of course, initially, everything seemed clearcut, and, as usual, only a second—and third, and fourth—glance revealed the complexities of the problem. It seems clear now that everyone involved has a few things to explain.

The White Rabbit put on his spectacles. "Where shall I begin, please your Majesty?" he asked.

"Begin at the beginning," the King said, very gravely, "and go on till you come to the end: then stop."

"In New York" is a good piece. Certainly, as someone pointed out, it isn't up to Joyce of Faulkner, but for a college community, particularly the Calvin community, it is quite impressive. Ms. Bouwsma's command of the conventions of what I would call (for want of knowing another term) Wasteland-Stream-of-Consciousness is not to be sneered at. Of course, the piece is not perfect, but in general, the prose is fluid, representing quite skillfully the illusion of spontaneous and unexpurgated thought. The transitions, sometimes smooth, sometimes jarringly abrupt, lend a rhythm to the piece which highlights the relationships and the contrasts in themes and topics treated. It may be that some of the connections leading to the conclusion are obscure (either because of the author's or the reader's inexperience with the genre), but the development is there and is complete. Images, descriptions are vivid and effective—viscerally, if no other way. In short, the piece coheres into a complete aesthetic whole which is, by no means, contemptible.

True, if a reader feels himself sophisticated he may choose to look down his nose at a "naive sensibility" that actually has the childishness to record an experience of ubiquitous human hypocrisy, but no one can deny that humanity almost is hypocrisy. A literary piece exposing hollowness and hypocrisy is not naive as such, any more than it is naive to demand of people "be ye perfect" and be disappointed when they are not. The quality of the presentation is the real issue. Furthermore, in my judgment, a community like Calvin is in no danger of hearing too often about our double standards.
I do not think "In New York" presented this material in a chic/ged fashion. Ms. Bouwsma's piece was a surprising and refreshing combination of the disillusionment often associated with her literary genre and the apprehension of divine providence. The disgust and the growing sense of the guidance of God are synthesized in a way which trivializes neither: the squalor is still real but it is, at the end, revealed merely to shadow the transcendent "Reality!" behind it. Again, we can elect to despise such a "naive" formulation, but acknowledgement of Divine goodness working in and through a fallen world is a basic Christian confession that Ms. Bouwsma treats with a fresh and contemporary touch.

Nor has she fallen into the trap of self-righteousness so easy to the Christian writer who "has the answers." The genre she chose plays a vital role, through it she reveals the sordidness of the author persona (the "I" figure). The persona's thought is not just pretty, clean, judgmental fluff; Ms. Bouwsma makes it clear that the narrator too shares in the complacency, selfishness, hostility and indifference around her. The sudden impingement of "Providence" at the end, which suddenly reshapes all that has gone before, shocks the narrator herself out of a mood of snarling pettiness.

True, the treatment of the fly as agent of God's providence (recalling her to herdishwashing duties) may seem to some to be a trifle overdrawn. The piece has its rough spots, it is just surprisingly competent.

All right, suppose we grant all that. Is there any reason why it had to have the "offensive words" in it? Obviously, my decision on that was, "yes"—that is, after we first assume acceptance of the genre. Any genre can be used well or poorly, legitimately or illegitimately. As I have said, I judged Ms. Bouwsma's use to be both good and legitimate. But what of the "words"?

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."

The conventions of the genre used are that the narrator's thoughts are written unexpurgated as they appear spontaneously through word and concept association, little joggings of memory and all the quirks of actual thought. Of course, as with all literature, this appearance is merely conventional; creative writing is actually a discipline in which, ideally, nothing is left to chance. However, it is important that the illusion of unstructured thought be maintained; otherwise the writing seems artificial and implausible. Given that, and given the situation and personality of the persona, it is unlikely that such "words" not appear in her thoughts. Of course, circumlocutions are possible to avoid them, but I consider such dodges both unnecessary and inadmissible. To begin with, I disdain the ploy of writing "f---" as though the writer could then look up in surprise as if to say "But I never said that," when the reader inevitably forms the word in his own mind. Furthermore, roundabout ways of saying the "same thing" without "offensive words" could rob the piece of some of its immediacy and punch. Finally, use of these words in appropriate contexts need not cause offense.

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be the master—that's all. . . . They've got a temper, some of them—particularly verbs: they're the proudest—adjectives you can do anything with, but not verbs—however, I can manage the whole lot of them!"

In last year's "Theatre Issue" of Dialogue, Professor James Korf argued "All words are legitimate and all words should be acceptable on stage at Calvin College. Any word may be used provided it helps to establish an important and worthwhile meaning. Words should not be used in a gratuitous manner...or provide any other purely special effect....But when the need exists, no word should be banned from the stage at Calvin College." Extending this assertion to apply to literature, I insist that words are sanctified or profaned in their use; no word has absolute value outside of a context. In "In New York" the profane and obscene language is a powerful tool to evoke graphically the miasma of filth, degradation and blasphemous God-rejection that is the fallen mind and the fallen society. Furthermore, the emotional violence latent in these words is effectively directed at the essential pro-faneness of men. These explosions from the narrator concretely delineate the complex paradox of a sinful human being responding with revulsion to a sinful world, but responding sinfully—finding in herself the very thing she despises. Couldn't this have been done another way? Perhaps; but every one of the "words" is embedded in the context of a Christian vision, bringing it to life with uncomfortable immediacy: no one likes to be reminded he is a worm. It is strange that the cry of "Immoral! Unchristian!" should be flung at this explicitly Christian and almost didactic piece.

But even were it not so, the writer still has the right to use the entire lexicon of words. Suppose an author chooses to characterize a non-Christian who swears, or even chooses to make such a character the first person narrator of a piece; such a use of words is not immoral. If the writer is trying to sketch accurately the reality of human experience, it may be that to use such words is to be more true or more accurate to his vision of that reality than to avoid them. These "words" have their uses; they are used. They have a power which must be controlled if the artist is to do good art—let alone "moral" art—but we cannot merely shy away from them because they can be misused. The person who damns another out of hatred sins; the person who casually "goddamns" everything from people to peanut butter jars because he has forgotten of Whom he speaks, probably ought to be reminded; but the writer who uses "goddamn" to evoke the image of such characters (or to illustrate a point in an editorial) is not taking God's name in vain; he is using it to a purpose, to fulfill his writer's responsibility as he sees it. And when the narrator of "In New York" shouts, "Reality! Why is it so goddamn hard for people to see?" she is speaking literally. The narrow pinched vision of life that fails to take in the stark truth of sin and the shining reality of Providence is damned of God. She is speaking of us who have eyes but see not, and have ears but hear not, and who do not understand with their hearts.

These words were followed by a very long silence, broken only by an occasional exclamation of "Hicketyhicketyhicketyhicketyhickety!" from the Gryphon and the constant heavy sobbing of the Mock Turtle.

Of course, at this point, I could say—legitimately, I think—that the literary merit of the piece is enough to warrant my printing of the piece. But I think too, that "In New York" is especially apropos for Calvin, a self-contained community that rarely has to work in a secular or profane world and rarely has to defend its received truth. Such a community runs the risk of dangerous insularity and complacent ignorance of other people and their beliefs. It may be, for instance, that in a community like Calvin, certain of its members will wind up believing what their view about the immorality of obscenity is the only possible Christian view. Or they might lose sight of the real difference between themselves and the world, forgetting that Christianity must...
be, not just a few minor differences in behavior amid a mass of conformity, but a radical orientation of the whole man towards God's perfection and away from the self-serving comfortable values of our world. When the community stays too far from other human beings it cannot reach them to communicate its truth, but it can insidiously absorb the world's opposite values (capitalism, blind patriotism, consumerism, selfishness—snowmobiles, designer jeans and electric hair dryers) to the detriment of the community's truth. These are Calvin's dangers, to which it too often succumbs. "In New York" is just one small countermeasure. It presents a small part of that foreign world out there; it presents the Christian's struggle with that world in a new idiom; it challenges its readers to the

whole vision that sees our hollowness and God's goodness, our hypocrisy and God's insistence on honesty. The automatic negative response to the piece proved it does have relevance here; a community of insistence on honesty. The automatic values (capitalism, blind patriotism, consumerism, selfishness—snowmobiles, designer jeans and electric hair dryers) to the detriment of the community's truth. These are Calvin's dangers, to which it too often succumbs. "In New York" is just one small countermeasure. It presents a small part of that foreign world out there; it presents the Christian's struggle with that world in a new idiom; it challenges its readers to the world and of mammon that those committed to comfort must be offended—or converted. The Dormouse shook its head impatiently, and said, without opening its eyes, "Of course, of course: just what I was going to remark myself."

At any rate, such thoughts, moral and aesthetic, are what led to my publication of "In New York." The rest of the story, you probably know. Dialogue disappeared from the campus, thanks to the independent actions of a Director of Physical Plant, and...

...a cry of "The trial's beginning!" was heard in the distance.

...Student Senate hurriedly convened to consider a motion to cut off Dialogue funds. Without asking for explanation from me or anyone of my staff (we scarcely heard of the meeting before it had begun), or pausing to assess the possibility of less drastic action, they passed their motion, demanding an apology in return for the hostage, our budget.

"Off with her head!" the Queen shouted at the top of her voice.

Since then, tempers have cooled, things have, to some degree, been worked out. Dialogue (obviously) has its money back and what apology I feel I can make, I have made.

Next time, perhaps, I will not so easily overestimate my audience's tolerance. Should the recovered remainder of the December Dialogue ever be re-released, we plan to enclose excerpts from this editorial explaining our intent and its merit. Our intent is not to bait the Calvin community, but to engage it in significant discussion, contributing to the education here. If there is need to explain why we think a piece is good, we are happy to do so. Of course, rather than encumber the magazine with reams of literary criticism, I would prefer that those who do not understand or who disagree with an editorial decision, should write us a letter asking for explanation or clarification. Dialogue is, after all, named after "dialogue," a constructive exchange of views.

Probably I will not upset people so again without explaining why I think such a disturbance necessary or desirable. And certainly, my mentor will be asked to comment on more things that I do not consider questionable, but others might.

And should I make a similar mistake again, the Communications Board and the administration is fully capable of fulfilling their express function to arbitrate these disputes.

Some questions remain: if Student Senate or Mr. Timmer or anyone else (besides Communications Board) decides a Dialogue action is unacceptable, what will they do? Will they jump into the fray, fists swinging, or will they ask to confer with me or my mentor or the Communications Board. Will they again decide to attempt independent censorship, destroying even the possibility of response from us? Or will they let me carry out my responsibility to the best of my ability?

And concerning the past controversy: if Student Senate decided that they were competent to judge what was evil and what was good, why didn't they choose to inquire into my opinions on these often ambiguous topics? And why, when they were so incensed, did they not convey their anger to the body properly constituted to deal with these "offenses" rather than arrogating to themselves the position of moral arbiter and censor?

I do not ask for apology; doubtless, Senators, you had your reasons for what you did. But your actions have interfered with my duties as editor, have called into question my legitimate editorial judgment, and have infringed on the rights of the Calvin Community to a Dialogue under the jurisdiction of Communications Board, its constitution, and the editor it appoints. I would like to know your reasons—and I think the Calvin Community should know them too.

"Explain all that," said the Mock Turtle.

—Paul Baker