



TONY AUTH (PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER)

ROGER HAYES

In these few fallow weeks following the catastrophic loss of lives I appreciate the interlude of space devoted to discussing from whence this has arrived and the resultant approaches which may be forecast. Let's presume that this silence could continue to spread: what in fact would be your response after one week more, two, three, and so on...?

Are we to yet again evoke the clandestine and dark word "covert" in order to effectively describe an operation which shall historically come to be called "Living Room Operation The Nth?"

Speaking entirely on an abstract and conceptual plane, the "wisest" thing to do would be nothing: however, we have just entered an historic juncture where we are determined by our actions, as subtle or gross as they may be.

You may feverishly leaf back through all of the text books of culture and war, still without grasping any tangible evidence of how to implement a stop to the present machinery of preordained foreign policy and the smothering confluences of media inundation.

I suggest that the overall effect may be to make a personal choice, preferably of as radical a nature as you may feel comfortable striving toward...

In a particularly american fashion you may clutch a flag or activate a personal odyssey; or finally become swallowed in a blitz of media brain-terrorism. Leave it to your imagination.

DEBBIE TWOMBLY

I think there's a lot we don't know and that scares me. The whole thing made me feel very insecure. I am a teacher (of 1st and 2nd grade at Olney School) and I have to do a lot of reassuring of my students and yet be realistic enough to make them aware the world is not always a safe place.

I think it is also really important to instill a sense in kids --- and to all people --- that there is a lot of energy that needs to be put into doing good and that by doing good more good comes back.

I know a man who was on the hijacked plane that crashed in Pennsylvania on September 11. It was awesome to know someone who had been in Brownsmead. He was a game

reserve manager and he had spent time at my house. You look at someone who had so much to offer and did good --- you just have to realize some things don't make sense and never will. You just have to go on with your own life, but not be so preoccupied with your life only.

That's why I admire the people out in God's Valley who are protesting the logging of old trees.

I really believe that all the small things people can do make a difference --- by doing good.

DEBRA SEYMOUR

It's overwhelming. There's nothing I can say in only a few words. I'm so distraught. It's so dispiriting.

I feel like a mother whose children have done something really bad: you feel anger but you also feel compassion and a desire to provide them with wisdom and clarity.

I feel as a woman and a mother that we must have the wisdom to go beyond war.

John Rippi from Arch Cape designs a banner for the Astoria Community Store every month. The one he brought for this month (by Che Kawa Yeshe Dorje from the 'Root Text of the Seven Points of Training the Mind') says:

When the world is filled with evil, transform all mishaps into the path of enlightenment.

COUNTER BABEL

The original Tower of Babel was built by people who spoke one language until God struck at them for their hubris and they suddenly found their tongues to be incomprehensible to one another. The World Trade Center was populated by people who spoke a great number of native languages but who had settled on a common language, English, in order to advance the cause of globalization more efficiently. The parallels between Babel and the World Trade Center are so blatant that I wonder if the attackers consciously chose their target for that reason. If so, were they not saying, Slow down --- we do *not* all understand one another, and we certainly do not agree on the project you have underway.

The language spoken in common by all is a dream, not a reality; trade was never meant to be more than a practical aspect of life, but globalization has been treated as a Crusade in itself; and those wishing not to participate in this notion of progress have been refused a voice in the matter. Religious fundamentalism is a loud and clear, if thoroughly disturbing, way for those whose thoughts are not in sync with the flow of 'progress' to declare that they do not trust themselves to create a human future by acts of will and cannot possibly trust those humans who have taken it upon themselves to do so.

I don't see fundamentalism as being about religion at all; it seems to me that no one of genuine spiritual insight would defer to the literal written word in lieu of their own conscience no matter the situation facing them, but insofar as fundamentalism is a compelling force to millions of people around the world, the nature of that force has to be examined in good faith and the fears it represents treated with respect.

We have heedlessly rushed into a process that we cannot reverse, and we do not really know what will be the fallout of the changes that take place. We do know that a great deal that has been of proven value for centuries, even millennia, will probably be lost --- language culture and the genuine spiritual as well as human understanding it has served to convey, the unbroken memory of generations past that is still a focus of reverence in intact old societies, and the future that would have grown out of such societies if their ways had prevailed. Do we really want to sweep all of this away with little more than a backward glance?

The terrorists who attacked on September 11 may not have been consciously aware of such motives, but these are implicit in their actions, and I wish to see the victims honored by our treating the entire incident as rife with understanding to be gained with little further effort. If the terrorists intended nothing but mindless destruction, we can deprive their actions of nihilism by wresting something of good from them in spite of their intent.

We may seem destined to achieve a common language and reverse the momentum of the original fall of Babel at any cost; if we can do so at less cost to ourselves --- all of ourselves, globally --- are we not obligated to do so?

~JUDITH GRIFFIS

MARGARET FRIMOTH

I'm watching myself go through grief and I think about the people in the midst of it who lost loved ones. I think the grief process is important.

An old memory came back to me that I've thought about a lot. When I was 16 years old my family was fortunate enough to visit Hong Kong. We went into a store that made custom-made shoes. My dad wanted a pair. While we were there another American couple came in and the store went into chaos. There were about seven to twelve attendants scurrying anxiously; the tension was huge. The American couple was obviously demanding things. They must have carried on for about twenty minutes.

My dad kept saying, "It's okay, we can wait." After the other Americans left and the attendants came to us they were very apologetic. My dad offered the explanation, "Some Americans are ugly Americans." When he said that the attendant who waited on us immediately started pouring out the story of how often Americans came into the store and would demand the finest quality for the cheapest price. That has stuck with me, and I have thought it about it a lot since September 11.

I sincerely hope we have a sense of accountability for the actions that took place on September 11. I want us to be accountable for how we as a nation handle our wealth and power as well.

RICHARD JOHNSON

I've thought a great deal about it and I think the bottom line is that we must do what is principled and measured in regard to our security in the short term and long term --- and whatever that is, is what we must do, nothing less.

We also need to examine what it is we might have done or policies we might have supported that would in any way precipitate the kind of deep hatred this event symbolizes.

R. McCARTIN

I want us to pay attention to those crazy people and their idea that Bush is a dog. They condemned the man as "dog Bush" and burned him in effigy in their hate.

That is an example of "man's inhumanity to man" and the destructiveness that can happen when people hate each other as dogs.

Khadafy called Reagan an "Israeli dog." Communists call us "capitalist dogs" and "son of a bitch" is common in the U.S. The Jews were called "Jewish dogs" and "swinehund" is common in Germany. Mexicans hate us as "gringo dogs."

Da Vinci called war "the beastly madness," and Hitler was called "the mad dog of Europe."

No one sees the dog as the cause of the problem.

JUDITH NILAND

I think the main problem is how we deal with the issue without destroying people who had nothing to do with it. Both issues must be addressed: you've got these people in the world who think it is their sacred duty to destroy who or what they perceive are against their religious beliefs; yet these same people are surrounded by other people who don't share their viewpoints. How do you sort them out?

JACK SCHARBACH

I have to admit from the outset that the understanding of such an act of terror and destruction as the attack in New York is beyond me, but this is what comes to mind: We spent the first half of the last century in two world wars to see who would run the world. Those wars ended in great hope for the future. That hope dwindled in the second half as the richer, more powerful countries adopted foreign policies that, whether by intent or default, sharpened the disparity between the haves and have-nots, until this situation in the 21st century in which whole continents have sunk into poverty while a small minority amass wealth. I have to wonder how long that can go on.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4