

Why Not Reverends?

My Dear Rev. J-C Bergeron,
In one year, we kill innumerable more children than we bring into the world. How do 'we' do this? There are many methods. Among these are hideous wars, barbarically shoddy political systems, and last but not least, 'education'. "Society highly values its normal man. It educates children to lose themselves and to become absurd, and thus to be normal."

It is necessary here to point out that 'systems' do not actually exist except as reifications of occasionally valid conceptual schemata. Educational, political, and social systems are in actuality constituted by persons in relation. These relational networks have at times been described by a variety of able thinkers as predominantly comprised or reciprocal acts of violence. In this context, the word refers not to immediately apparent injury, but to what may be termed moral violence, -- just as above I am not referring to biological death, but to murder or suicide with regard to the authentic self, of the spirit. (Whatever that may be).

As you may be aware, it is sometimes the case that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Perhaps you envision yourself as a legitimate defender of the rights of the great unwashed and unwanted unborn. A striking image indeed: Reverend Jean-Claude Bergeron, wreathed with a crown of imaginary afterbirths, standing at the head of a great host of mute fetuses that stretches far forward into the remote and silent regions of unfilled space and time.

The egg exists. I suppose it can also be said that the corpse exists. Mr dear fellow, would you propose then that attempts be made to revive these unfortunate hunks of meat? I suggest that you consult the short story "Herbert West -- Reanimator" for a glimpse of the possibly unfortunate consequences of this sort of endeavor.

If you think this semi-comic type of reasoning just a bit foolish, I can only agree. But the point is that this example was intentional, whereas the pseudo-logic that permeates your article of faith seems to be rather involuntary.

If I've got my religious facts straight, permit me to recount to you some essential aspects of the situation around which your so-called spiritual life is based. Jesus of Nazareth, called Christ, did live. He then died, in a metaphorical but also existentially real sense. He was reborn (before the crucifixion), and at this juncture performed the trick of simultaneously descending into 'Heaven' and ascending into the Hell on Earth. Not bad for an amateur.

And what is the position of the Catholic Church now? In the words of a well known dramatist of the last century:

"The priests are adept at practising fraud with Hogstedt's Piccardon Burgundy at 65 ore the bottle, and Lettstroms maize at one krone a pound, which they declare to be the flesh and blood of the popular agitator Jesus of Nazareth who was executed over 1800 years ago."

An oversimplification no doubt. (But at any rate, it all has a bit too abstract

"Of all the five hospitals in Edmonton, only two, the University and the Royal Alex, have boards for abortion review.

The rest of the hospitals refuse owing to their Catholic administration. In 1964, the famous Catholic Cardinal Cushing of Boston said, in reference to the pending liberalization of the Abortion Laws: "Catholics do not need the support of civil law to be faithful to their religious convictions, and they do not seek to impose by law their moral views on other members of society."

"For those of you who are fast to condemn, pass judgement and are overly concerned with the not-yet born, let me remind you that talk is cheap. For those adoptionists who fear a slack in the baby-market might I remind you that some human being must bear that child usually after dropping out of society for several months at the expense of her education and future let alone her mental well-being."

If I may add a brief comment to this, I want to ask you dear reverend, how it is that you, as a man, can begin to comprehend the often excruciating despair of any child/woman who finds herself carrying an unwanted fetus?

Why did I make reference to an "unwanted ('human') fetus"? Parents who have suffered an unwanted miscarriage do not mourn the death of the embryo: they mourn for the aborted possibility of a new gift in their oftentime barren lives.

Perhaps the following section of a discussion by Ron Leonard (Gateway, Jan. 13) will serve to enlighten you further on this matter:

"The first International Conference on Abortion was misconceived at the outset. To ask, "How long after conception does it take to become a human being?" We would not convene the world's foremost brain-surgeons to answer the latter question, and it is just as pointless to expect any but misleading answers to the former question from natural science. Indeed, the scientists in question talk about the stages of development from conception to adulthood as they would stages of development of a butterfly. From this the Brysons conclude: "Thus at the moment of conception, the human being exists in its entirety. Nothing is added between this time and his death as an old man except time, nutrition, and oxygen."

"Nothing . What of acquired skills, habits, interests, hobbies, education, emotional ties, etc. Are not these kinds of factors an integral part of our notion of 'human being'? Physical viability is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for being human. It should be clear by now that the question "What it is to be human?" is not a scientific, but a philosophical one."

All right -- I just want to add that it is my personal contention that the cry "Abortion on demand", while essentially correct, does miss an important point. More relevant would be the petition for "Birth control on demand", in conjunction with the active dissemination, by competent administrators, of intelligent birth control information throughout all sectors of society.

Yours sincerely,
G. O. Borodin

(Copies of this letter sent to the U of A Gateway, Reverend Jean-Claude Bergeron, Dr. Jean-Marie Volduc, Mr. Pierre E. Trudeau, and Justice Minister Turner)

Lettitors

All letters to the editor should be typed double space, not more than 250 words. Otherwise they may be abridged (exceptions will be considered). The writer is asked to include his name and telephone number with his letter. Pen names will be used at the writer's request. Letters should be sent to THE GATEWAY, Room 282, SUB, Edmonton, or should be dropped off at our offices, no later than 6:00 P.M. Tuesday and Friday, if they are to appear in the following issue. THE GATEWAY shall not be held responsible for any libel or damages incurred.

Dibdin Papers Debate

Shit Sinks

I must take serious issue with the title you have chosen for your powerful expose (Gateway, 20 January, p. 4) of what would appear to be the English Department's brutally repressive policy with respect to creativity among its Graduate Teaching Assistants. On careful consideration of all the materials reproduced and analysis of your editorial attitude toward them, what emerges has nothing at all to do with "cream rising to the top", but rather with *shit sinking to the bottom*. I leave it to you and your readers to unscrew this inscrutable in any manner which seems appropriate, bearing in mind that the phrase, "You are not immune to the inevitable," has something to do with the law of gravity.

I have no personal knowledge of this Dibdin "paper debate" and I am sorry to find that your bumbling, cretinous attempts at innuendo do very little to inform me. But I will remark in passing that I find the words "creative" and "radicalize" particularly blasphemous when they appear anywhere on the pages of your paper. Please be reminded that creativity consists of something more than silly examination instructions, embarrassingly infantile poems in the *Casserole* or the pretensions of the Edmonton Film Society; and be assured that a radical is not merely an uptight middle-class provincialist who has memorized last year's Black Panther rhetoric.

At times like this one can only hope Brecht was right when he wrote, "Because things are as they are, they will not stay as they are."

David Arther McMurray,
Graduate student
Comparative Literature

Heresy

Dear Mr. Dibdin,
Heretic! Thou hast committed two incredulous sins: 1) You are guilty of trying to motivate your students, of even attempting to spark some creativity and originality from their plastic minds. 2) Worse yet, is your total disclaimer of the church society addressing sister Norman without (God-given) due title.... Nevertheless, though we sit in judgement against you, we are a humane race, notwithstanding. We therefore offer you the following choices: a) you may burn at the stake. b) (much more imaginative) we will nail your hands into wood and allow you to hang to death. c) tarring and feathering is always fun. d) answer Chariman Rose and the inevitable will inevitably see justice. e) all of the above. f) a, b, or e of the above.

Ellen Curtis
Grad Studies

Pompous Bureaucrats

Dear Editor,

As a graduate student and a GTA I can understand at least a fraction of Mr. Dibdin's former dilemma, and I consider myself fortunate to work in a department where the problems are not so profound as those Mr. Dibdin has apparently encountered.

Teaching assistants all too often find themselves in the "unenviable position" of trying to reconcile the justifiable cynicisms of their students with the programmed mediocrities from higher echelons in the department or University. The rigid indifference by many faculty members toward the absurdities of being an undergraduate student in a large university is nothing new.

It was a bold display of sensitivity that Mr. Dibdin added a touch of the absurd to an otherwise formal essay assignment. I believe that only by not taking ourselves too seriously can we prevent making full-blown nihilists out of our more perceptive students, or hopeless conformists of those less self-reliant.

Moreover, such pedantry seems odd coming from English professors. To claim that "originality never dwells with silliness" is to have never read *A Midsummer Nights' Dream* or to have done so and missed the point. I suspect that Shakespearians make poor bureaucrats, and the letters published in the Gateway indeed reflect the pomposity of "good" bureaucrats.

Sincerely,
Ken Hill
Grad Studies

Demand for Conformity

Dear Editor:

Re: Michael Dibdin -- English 210
Section Q4

As a member of Mr. Dibdin's class, and as a post-secondary instructor for the past three years, I would like to comment on his essay assignment.

The assignment was very clear and straightforward. The comments at the bottom were indeed amusing but they certainly did not detract from the seriousness of the assignment. Mr. Dibdin duly emphasized the importance of the essays at the time they were formally assigned. If Sister Marion, Mr. Bisland, and Mr. Rose were so interested in our reaction to the assignment it seems strange that none of the class members were ever approached by any of these persons.

Perhaps these rebukes were intended to encourage Mr. Dibdin to shorten the length of his hair, trim his beard, or make his dress more like that of his Master. Since Mr. Dibdin was effective at creating a favorable learning environment in his classes it would seem strange that the Words from Above might have been more of a demand for conformity than guidance in achieving an educational goal.

Yours truly,
Dallas Hauge
Education II

Other letters to appear Thursday

Creativity

Dear Mr. Dibdin:

Three years ago, as a student of English at McGill University, I had the privilege of taking a course in Canadian literature from the renowned Hugh MacLennan. One of the students presented as his "paper" an analysis of a play which consisted of a tape-recorded, contrasting sequel. Professor MacLennan, like Bisland, was not merely amused -- he considered it the finest piece of work ever done by one of his students.

It's too bad you are no longer teaching at U of A. We desperately need more professors and assistants who can demonstrate intelligence, creativity, concern, and a keen sense of what motivates students. It's too bad that marion, j.w., and e.j., are too busy puffing themselves up to distinguish between flippancy and ability. They need God's help!

Rob Curtis,
Law II

Progressive U

Let us sincerely hope that the remarks made by the Associate Chairman and the Chariman of the English department, in their respective letters to Michael Dibdin, are not indicative of the progressiveness of this university.

The besmirching rhetoric of Dr. Rose was unnecessary, irresponsible, and certainly intolerable. Are we to be educated by such narrow-minded formalists who perch in their ivory towers of academe and ego-trip behind the shield of the Ph.D's?

If so, then we are definitely not immune to the inevitable -- the gigantic shaft in the ear.

B. Milligan
Sc.3

Excommunication

Just who in hell - or is it purgatory - is SISTER Marion? She is certainly not my sister, nor do I believe that any sibling relationship exists between her and Michael Dibdin. Why then should he feel compelled to address her in this quaint and unrealistic manner? As for the insulting and intimidating style of the venerable Chairman of the Department of English, it would seem that in this case a Rose by any other name might not smell as sweet.

Caution, Mr. Dibdin! "You are not immune to the inevitable" -- you may yet be excommunicated.

D. Lentz,
Ed. 4.