The Minneapolis Athenæum: The Next Chapter by Terrance Dinovo

Two books on Cass Gilbert's Early Years reviewed by Robert Brusic

A Larger Perspective by George Anderson
Editorial Notes

Members of my family have lately been watching Junkyard Wars, a TV show in which two teams compete to build devices—such as a trebuchet or a monster truck or a mine sweeper—from parts they have scavenged from a junkyard. It’s sort of James Burke meets Survivor.

I am not particularly attached to Junkyard Wars, but recently, I spent a week helping my sister-in-law clean out her mother’s house. The most fascinating part of this experience was the antique and junk dealers we met.

These men were all non-stop talkers. They were Rex (a young auctioneer suffering from fibromyalgia); Larry (a long-haired, fast-talking real estate agent who dabbled in the stock market); Todd (a slow-spoken day trader who claimed to have made $350,000 and lost $400,000 on Enron); Axel (a young man who had undergone nine back operations and had at least twice that many stories about medical procedures); Lee (a widower who scouted sales for his five sons); and Bob (who told us a hair-raising tale—involving stolen cars and a police chase—of why he had moved from South Chicago to northern Indiana). I suppose these stories are a kind of buy—as opposed to sales—patter designed to reassure people that their belongings are going to a good home.

Collectively, these encounters were an fascinating look at the world outside of independent scholarship. Here were real problems of chronic disease, corporate greed, and crime in the streets. And the endings have yet to be discerned; no neat philosophical or historical ribbons are tied around the lives of modern antique dealers.

How are the antique dealers connected to MISF? The obvious answer is that we occupy the same educational and political space, but the more interesting and provocative answer is that both scholars and dealers are recycling and reusing, just like the people in Junkyard Wars.

Used furniture dealers are recycling furniture; independent scholars are reusing ideas. The articles in this issue deal with just such adaptive reuse: Cass Gilbert built his career on adapting older architectural styles; the Minneapolis Athenæum embraces an old idea [to say nothing of the old books kept within]; the microwaves that George Anderson describes have been bouncing around the universe for millions of years.

If our ideas are not new, then many of our problems are not either—as Shirley Whiting points out. Perhaps we should put teams of scholars, antique dealers, and politicians together in a show called Junkyard Peace.

Correction: Because of an editing error, Judy Yaeger Jones’s name was spelled incorrectly in the last issue of the Forum. The editor accepts full responsibility for this error and apologizes for any inconvenience it may have caused.

Lucy M. Brusic

The deadline for the next issue of the Forum is January 15, 2004.
The Minneapolis Athenæum: The Next Chapter
by Terrance Dinovo

As one of the oldest libraries in Minnesota, the Minneapolis Athenæum will soon celebrate its 150th anniversary. The Athenæum was founded as a literary society and subscription library in 1859, a year following statehood.

“The Minneapolis Athenæum,” never heard of it? A “poorer cousin” of many of its more prestigious east coast relatives, the Minneapolis Athenæum, nonetheless, has gone from a lending library representing the best in literature, science, and history of its day, to a special collections library of notable interest to the region. Here is its story.

The question most frequently asked is, what is an Athenæum? In Ancient Greece, the word _athenæum_ referred to buildings dedicated to Athena, the goddess of wisdom, and in particular to a temple in Athens where poets, philosophers, and orators gathered to read and discuss their work. Over the centuries the term also has applied to numerous academies and learned societies. Sir Walter Scott and Thomas Moore established the most famous of these, the Athenæum of London, in 1824. Members included individuals known for their scientific or literary attainments, artists of eminence in all classes of the fine arts, and noblemen and gentlemen distinguished as liberal patrons of science, literature, or the arts.

The most notable of American Athenæums is the Boston Athenæum founded in 1807. Their purpose was to form “an establishment similar to that of the Athenæum and Lyceum of Liverpool in Great Britain; combining the advantages of a public library [and] containing the great works of learning and science in all languages.” Other early Athenæums include Newport, RI (1747), Providence, RI (1753), Philadelphia, PA (1814), and Portsmouth, NH (1817).

In Minneapolis, the impetus for the formation of an Athenæum was an offer made by author and poet Bayard Taylor. While constructing a new home, Taylor found himself strapped for cash. To obtain money he began a lecture tour, announcing his willingness to help infant libraries. Any literary society willing to pay his expenses and a small fee could keep the balance of the proceeds to be devoted to the benefit of the society. Taylor’s appearance at the Methodist Church on Oregon Street, Minneapolis, the evening of May 25, 1859, was the result of a group of Minneapolis citizens, wishing to organize a literary association, who availed themselves of Taylor’s offer. The Young Men’s Literary Association of Minneapolis was then organized, adopted a constitution, and elected officers. In his lecture, Taylor discussed life in northern Europe based on his many travels. The following year, the Young Men’s Literary Association reorganized as the Minneapolis Athenæum and used the balance from Taylor’s lecture ($83.50) to purchase books.

In his first visit to Minnesota, Bayard Taylor was not enamored with the state, protesting the use of classic names for frontier beauty. “A little pond near St. Paul is called ‘Como,’ from its total likeness, let us hope. So a cluster of shanties is called Constantinople, and a miserable station where the refreshments are a lingering death, Paris.” Despite the sarcasm, we gather from local newspaper accounts that his lectures were well attended and received.

New England settlers
So it was that the early settlers in Minnesota, many from the New England area, founded a library on the prairie. William Thomas Hale, Minneapolis bookseller and former librarian of the Providence Athenæum, became the first librarian. The Athenæum operated out of Hale’s bookshop until a building was completed in 1866, at the cost of $8,900. Other notables behind the formation of the Athenæum included Isaac Atwater, associate justice of the state supreme court; Charles M. Loring, park superintendent; William D. Washburn, lumber and milling industries, later U.S. Senator; James Bassett, early financier along with Loring and James J. Hill; Thomas B. Walker, lumber industry and art collector; Charles A. Pillsbury, milling industry; David B. Knickerbacher, Episcopal minister; Charles C. Goodrich; Samuel C. Gale, lawyer and Unitarian.

Other early lecturers sponsored by the Athenæum included Ralph Waldo Emerson and illustrator Thomas Nast. Emerson came to Minnesota in the winter of 1867 as part of an extensive tour. Speaking first in Winona and then Faribault, he traveled by train to the Twin Cities to give three lectures, one in St. Paul and two in Minneapolis. On the evening of February 2, 1867, he spoke in Harrison Hall, Minneapolis, at the invitation of the Athenæum Library Association. That evening he “spoke in the Universalist Church at Fifth Street and Fourth Avenue South, of which the Reverend James H. Tuttle was pastor.”

Not much is known of his lecture, except for this brief comment in the local paper, “Ralph Waldo Emerson lectured in Harrison Hall on Saturday evening, to a very large and attentive audience.” On an earlier occasion, another reporter

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wrote, “The first impressions of the man, it is obvious, were disappointing; but the lecturer had to speak but a short while and his audience became aware that, though he was ‘a plain, unaffected gentleman... and looked like an educated well-to-do farmer,’ he was no common character. ‘He has a rich, deep voice, and a bearing that begets respect—almost reverence... Mr. Emerson has a slight frame, a noble cast of features, and a terribly keen eye,” according to the Milwaukee Daily Sentinel of January 24, 1865.

Another speaker was the well-known illustrator, Thomas Nast, best known for his Christmas drawings in Harper’s Weekly beginning in 1862. His engravings chronicled the American scene from the Civil War period to the turn of the century. A little known fact about Nast is that he could neither read nor write. His wife and later others were hired to read to him from literature, science, and history while he worked on his drawings. It is from these readings that he gained his knowledge—and inspiration—for many of his engravings.

The Library grew considerably in the early days. In an 1867 report, the secretary recorded the following: “The books now number 1,376 volumes, very carefully and judiciously selected, and adapted to every variety of taste... And now that our accommodations are henceforth to be so ample and attractive, it is proper to reiterate that the purpose of the Athenæum is not merely to accumulate books and keep them unharmed, but we desire that the men, women and children of the town shall wear our books by reading them.” For the purchase of a share, about five dollars, the shareholder was entitled to take out two books for two weeks. A fine was assessed for overdue books at two cents for each day.

Browsing through the printed catalog of the Athenæum from 1884, one is astonished at the breadth and depth of the young library. There are books on philosophy, theology and ecclesiastical history. Notably, there was a copy of the Douay Bible (Latin Vulgate, 1609). Natural history was well represented by Audubon’s Quadrupeds of North America (3 v.) and his Birds of America (8 v.). In the early 1900s, the Athenæum purchased the three-volume elephant folio (1828-37) of Audubon’s works. A copy of Alexander Wilson’s American Ornithology (3 v.) was purchased in the early years. The natural history section also included works by Minnesota notable, Swiss-American geologist and zoologist, Louis Agassiz. Prominent authors of the day represented in the collection included Anthony Trollope, Mark Twain, William Makepeace Thackery, Charles Dickens, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Sir Walter Scott, James Fenimore Cooper, and George Eliot. There were books on architecture, sculpture, music and art, including George Catlin’s North American Indian Portfolio (London, 1844). Later the Athenæum was to become one of only 222 subscribers to Edward S. Curtis’ North American Indian. Books on history, travel, geography, and periodicals, popular and academic, were part of the collection.

The third Athenæum librarian, Herbert Putnam, also served as the first chief librarian of the Minneapolis Public Library. Putnam went on to become the chief librarian at the Library of Congress. In the 1880s, the Athenæum was active in the public library movement. Its books were moved into a new public library building at 10th and Hennepin (1889), and with its own space in the building and its own librarian, became a major partner with the library in the intellectual life of the city.

The Athenæum was of significant help to the public library in the early years. In 1894, after the end of World War I, and in the economic chaos of the early 1930s, “a large share of its [the Athenæum’s] income was devoted to the purchase of current publications.” Altogether, books purchased with Athenæum funding numbered around 135,000 volumes, many of which remain on the shelves. Many others were worn out through public use.

Estate of Kirby Spencer

While the public library depended on tax-generated dollars, the Athenæum had an endowment from the estate of Kirby Spencer, a book-loving dentist. Spencer left the entire income of his real-estate properties (worth $200,000 in 1890) for the purpose of purchasing books. (Little is known of Spencer. It is thought he was born in New York and moved to frontier Minneapolis from Florida.) With this gift, the Athenæum prospered. Consequently, its success contributed materially to the fortunes of the Minneapolis Public Library. In the introduction to the 1884 catalog, the following tribute was written: “This name should be held in remembrance not only by the institution, but by the city and the commonwealth, as the first citizen of Minnesota, who not only in his life thought of the mental improvement of the community in which he dwelt, but by his will left his property for the public good.”

In 2001, the Spencer Society of the Minneapolis Athenæum was created, named after our benefactor Kirby Spencer. As a support group, the membership provides assistance in ongoing activities of the organization, including programming and new acquisitions. Currently with a membership of forty-five, the goal is to reach sixty by the end of 2003. [The next gathering of the Spencer Society will be Thursday, November 6, at the Minneapolis Club, beginning at 6:00 P.M.] Membership provides access to the collection and invitations to special events.

Today, the Board of Directors of the Athenæum continues to sponsor lectures and public exhibits which focus on various aspects of the collection. In recent years local Minnesotans, naturalist Stan Tekiela and Karen Hoyle, Curator of the Kerlan Children’s Collection, have highlighted the Natural History and Aesop’s Fables Collections respectively. Patrick Coleman spoke on the best writings about the Mississippi River in his “River of Ink: Writing about the Father of Waters.” In collaboration with the Minnesota Center for Book Arts, the Library exhibited over fifty books designed by Bruce Rogers,
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gift to The Athenæum from Warner Shippee. Looking ahead, the Athenæum will team with Special Collections, University of Minnesota, and the Minnesota Historical Society to commemorate the Lewis and Clark expedition and its local connections (Fall 2004).

A recent, significant addition to the library was the Heffelfinger Aesop's and Others' Fables Collection. In 1985, Ruth J. Heffelfinger donated her library to the Athenæum. The collection consists of approximately 400 editions of the popular Aesop's Fables, representing incunables from the late 1490s to private press editions of the 19th and 20th centuries. Highlights include a John Baskerville edition from 1761 and an 1800 hand-press copy by Giamattista Bodoni. There are also important editions of the fables of La Fontaine and Reynard the Fox.

New direction for the collection

In 2002, after an extensive reevaluation of the collections, the Athenæum rewrote its collection policy to merge the Early American Travel and Exploration, Native American Indians and Natural History collections into one focus—a Great Plains Collection. A fourth sub-field within the Great Plains Collection was added—Frontier Literature. Literary writers have long defined the Great Plains as a state of mind and hence will be a crucial portion of the focus.

In the years ahead, the Athenæum will move toward a further defining of the Great Plains collection. The time frame will roughly deal with the early exploration of the prairie (1670s), through settlement and development of the prairie into the breadbasket of the world (pre-WW1), to the dust bowl days of the 1930s. Geographically, the collection will cover the region known as the Great Plains, which extend from the Canadian provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba through the west central United States to Texas. The North American Indian Collection will focus on the Plains tribes that inhabited the region prior to and during the arrival of the settler, until the destruction of the buffalo.

This new emphasis provides a framework with which to reorganize the collection into a more manageable library. Natural History, for instance, is in and of itself a huge topic encompassing many disciplines. Now the Natural History materials will focus on prairie flora and fauna. The prairie theme also helps connect to current restoration projects here in Minnesota and across Middle America.

Plans are to seek out early editions of travel narratives to the region, first editions of literary works, histories of Native American peoples, and handwritten manuscripts documenting the lives of the early settlers and native peoples. In time it is hoped the Great Plains Collection will become a focal point of research and study by scholars and students alike. Ultimately, the goal is to include all aspects of life as it has been known and lived on the Great Plains. The efforts of natives and newcomers to adapt to the land itself and to transform not only the land but their own lives as well, forms a recurrent theme in all the materials.

As the Athenæum moves toward celebration of its 150th anniversary in 2009, several activities are high on the "to do list." First is development of the Great Plains Collections. Further study is required to fully understand the geographical boundaries and time frame, which will define the collection policy. Once we begin expanding the collection, we hope to make the materials available to the reading public.

Next the Athenæum will develop programming around the Plains theme. We will look at sponsoring conferences, seminars, and reading groups to explore the Great Plains theme. We will also look at our partnership with the Minneapolis Public Library to find ways to further the partnership that are beneficial to both organizations.

Developing new program concepts will require new sources of funding. As a partner with the public library, the Athenæum will seek monies to contribute to the expenses of building new space for reading, offices, and storage in the Cesar Pelli designed building now under construction in downtown Minneapolis.

As in the beginning, the mission of the Athenæum will always be to seek ways in which to inform and enrich the community in which it lives. But we also recognize that we are part of a larger region—the Great Plains. Many of us grew up in rural or small town America. Our children have grown up hearing stories of life on the prairie. Much of what we experienced has now changed, gone except in memory. But those memories define who we are as individuals, as a people, and as a nation. Keeping those memories alive, preserving what we can of the past and restoring the land as best we can (if only in our minds), is what the next chapter of the Athenæum's story will be about.

Terrance Dinovo is the director of Program and Development for the Minneapolis Athenæum. The collections of the Athenæum are currently in storage pending the construction of the new public library in Minneapolis.
CASS GILBERT'S EARLY YEARS
by Robert Brusic


Cass Gilbert Abroad: The Young Architect's European Tour by Paul Clifford Larsson. Afton, Minnesota: Afton Historical Society Press. 127 pp. $32.00

During the last third of the 19th century major cities in the United States expanded at a rapid rate. Increasing as centers of economic power, cities were magnets for immigrants as well as for the wealthy. The latter, wishing to symbolize and display their status, often built expansive and expensive houses appropriate to their station in society. In turn these people of power consolidated their position by spearheading impressive public and commercial building projects. These public structures became matters of civic pride and symbols of prosperity for burgeoning cities throughout the country.

A number of capable architects rose to meet the need for public and private structures, men (and they were almost all men) like Henry Hobson Richardson, Louis Sullivan, Stanford White, Daniel Burnham, and the young Frank Lloyd Wright. Among the giants who shaped and reshaped domestic and urban architecture in the era between the Civil War and World War I was Cass Gilbert (1859-1934). Born in Zanesville, Ohio, Gilbert came to St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1868 and spent most of his early professional years here. He helped shape the Minnesota architectural landscape, culminating his midwestern career when he became the chief architect for the Minnesota State Capitol between 1895 and 1905.

This project was the high point of Gilbert's early career, after which he sought larger fields in New York City and other parts of the United States. Insights into these early years are contained in books by Geoffrey Blodgett and Paul Clifford Larsson. Blodgett recognizes that Gilbert was not so much an architectural innovator as he was a stylistic consolidator. He built for his clients by satisfying their tastes. He did so by proficiently adapting ancient Greek, Italian Gothic or Renaissance, English medieval, and American Colonial forms for modern-era buildings and tastes. In that sense he might be termed not so much a modern architect as a modern traditionalist.

Blodgett's book admirably traces Gilbert's early career during which time he both formulated his own style and contributed to the shaping of Minnesota's urban landscape. While Gilbert was influenced by H. H. Richardson and Stanford White (he worked with the latter for about two years at the influential firm of McKim, Mead and White), his earliest and perduring inspiration was his mother. It was she who invested young Cass with the mythic Puritan injunction to "get behind thyself and push" (20), something the architect did throughout his professional life.

After spending his educational and wandering years at M.I.T., and in Europe and New York City, Cass Gilbert came to stay in St. Paul in 1882, where he labored until 1895. In that time he built houses in the so-called "Shingle Style" which were termed pretentious but nicely crafted, strong and brilliant but not gaudy (65). Gilbert also introduced the neo-Georgian style of domestic architecture in the mid-1880s. During his early years Gilbert built more than two dozen houses and five churches in the Summit Avenue section of St. Paul alone.

Blodgett details these projects, often with very fine photographs. Along the way the author also gives a verbal picture of life in late 19th-century St. Paul, including vignettes of such figures as James J. Hill and Archbishop John Ireland. Blodgett also gives an account of Gilbert's professional and personal life. Early on, the architect experienced hard times because he did not know how to market himself, as the term now goes. But eventually he gained confidence and even admitted to enjoying the game. Once, involved in politicking for an important commission, Gilbert wrote to his wife, Julia: "This is all great fun. It is like hunting large game and there is lots of excitement about it, while at the same time one must seem entirely cool and to a large extent disinterested." (94)

Blodgett's book is rich in such anecdotes; and one comes away from his account fairly knowing Gilbert and his milieu. The photographs of buildings—standing and demolished—are evocative. But one wishes that the author might have included an appendix listing where these building are (or are not), for such a list would provide a rich resource for personal tours. Also, Blodgett's account of the building of the State Capitol, Gilbert's crowning achievement, is sketchy. This chapter (with full-page pictures) covers less than ten pages. By comparison, the chapter on Gilbert's early sojourn in Europe is fourteen pages long.

This phase of Gilbert's life—the young architect's European tour—is the primary subject of Paul Clifford Larsson's book. This small but handsome volume is lavishly illustrated with watercolors of Gilbert's Wunderjahr as well as correspondence with his closest friend Clarence Johnston and his dear mother, Elizabeth Gilbert. This tour, his first in Europe, took place during the months from January through August, 1880. Gilbert was only twenty years old at the time; and he had just concluded (to his impatient satisfaction) his formal training in architecture—a little over a year—at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

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A map of Gilbert’s 1880 travels (32) traces his route from Liverpool, through Paris, to Milan and Rome, back through France and again to England. His epistolary account makes it clear that the young Gilbert was disillusioned with his initial nine days in England. He complained vigorously about the smog and fog, and he registered smug dissatisfaction with the architecture of Christopher Wren. “I have seen much of Wren’s work in London, and although seen in a hurry, I confess I haven’t the slightest admiration for it.” (41) The budding architect, however, did express approval of Chester Cathedral as being the most beautiful place he had ever been in. (36)

Crossing the Channel, Gilbert was absolutely captivated by Paris, the Mecca for students of the Renaissance. (46) While he considered the city of London dingy and smoggy, Paris was “as clean as a city can be kept and the streets are splendid.” (47) In various ways the City of Lights reminded the young traveler of Washington and New York. One of the quintessential aspects of Gilbert’s European correspondence is the way he frequently makes comparisons with Minnesota. Hence, his trip on the Rhone reminded him of the valley of the Minnesota River. (75) The landscape near the village of St. Di evoked a special association with home: “The road was broad and well kept up, but the shrubbery and trees on either side were let run wild as nature put them. There were about such trees and such an undergrowth as we used to see on the drives from St. Paul to Como [Lake] or White Bear [Lake]. In fact, the whole general appearance of this country is remarkably similar to many parts of Minnesota...”(102) Such comparisons might readily warm the hearts of Minnesotans who are not able to make the Grand Tour. By Gilbert’s standard, a Sunday drive in the country might satisfy one’s Wanderlust.

Gilbert’s own satisfactions were met by what the author calls “A Whirlwind through Italy.” (55-73) In less than a month Gilbert visited (and did some of his best watercolor sketches) in Milan, Venice, Florence, and Rome. Like most visitors who try to do too much in too little time, Gilbert experienced tourist overload. “Now I am commencing to get mixed up as to just when I visited all these places, but I know I saw them and retain a clear idea of their appearance.” (67) The lovely watercolor sketches of San Marco, Venice, and the Tower of Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, give colorful testimony to the fact that he not only looked but that he also saw the structures and landscape of sunny Italy.

Some experiences of Gilbert’s European journey were satisfactory, others not. The introductory chapter of the book makes it clear that he had high hopes. “Traveling abroad was widely regarded as the proper way to achieve social standing and along the way polish off the process of becoming a gentleman.” (11-12) To a large extent that goal was achieved, for Gilbert experienced firsthand the glories of Gothic and classical architecture—influences that stood him in good stead throughout his later, illustrious career. In short, this first European trip inspired him with an architectural vision that would last him for the rest of his professional life. The Minnesota State Capitol would not be as it is if Gilbert had not visited Italy and steeped himself in the architectural contours of St. Peter’s in Rome.

On the other hand, the young Gilbert was frustrated in his hope of finding a place in a London architectural firm. (25, 121) Moreover, his enthusiasm for travel seems to have waned as the journey went on. Initially Gilbert expressed hopes for a European sojourn of about two years; yet in less than nine months he was on his way back to the United States, seeking (successfully) a job at the firm of McKim, Mead, and White. One also gets the impression that some of Gilbert’s later conservative prejudices germinated during this trip. “The French were dishonest, Italians, were dirty, Catholics were superstitious and their priests self-serving, to name the most conspicuous in his letters.” (17)

Larsson’s book, like Blodgett’s, suffers from an ending that is both sketchy and abrupt. In addition, there is no index and very little commentary on Gilbert’s correspondence (which comprises the bulk of the text). However, both books, taken together, provide a satisfying insight into the early years of the life and career of Cass Gilbert, one of America’s great—if not original—architects. For a fuller consideration of Gilbert’s life and work readers might wish to turn to Sharon Irish’s Cass Gilbert, Architect (The Monacelli Press: 1999). Irish’s work, by the way, does include a helpful list of Gilbert’s buildings. (186-188)

Such important works as the Woolworth Building and the United States Custom House in New York; the Allen Memorial Art Building in Oberlin, Ohio; the United States Supreme Court Building in Washington, D.C. were to come later. But if one is interested in seeing the architectural matrix from which these later and significant works were to come, one could profitably read these books by Blodgett and Larsson. They provide rich and colorful insight into the early years and travels of Cass Gilbert, American architect.

Robert Brusic is the Seminary Pastor at Luther Seminary in St. Paul. He is an avid reader and traveler.
In his book, *Kinds of Power*, James Hillman lists kinds of power and the arenas in which they operate. He quotes Nietzsche in the introduction: “Neither necessity nor desire, but the love of power, is the demon of mankind.” Among the kinds of power Hillman lists are Control, Office, Prestige, Exhibitionism, Ambition, Reputation, Influence, Resistance, Leadership, Concentration, Authority, Persuasion, Charisma, Rising, Decision, Fearsomeness, Tyranny, Veto, Purism, and Subtle Power.

Much of this power is situational and opportunistic. One may have it in one instance and not another. The ethical manifestation of power by teachers and administrators rests not only on their abilities and capacities, but also on a high degree of self-awareness. Education is vulnerable to the abuse of power when adequate recognition of how humans learn and grow is swept aside for other considerations.

In the first of the year’s Voices of Concern series, “Education and Democracy,” Dr. Robert Tapp addressed the work of American philosopher and educator, John Dewey. Tapp outlined, for an audience of about 20 people, Dewey’s views on progressive education, stressing the full development of the individual. I listened appreciatively to views I’d arrived at through similar study of the work of Carl Jung.

Dewey and Jung, as well as Emerson and Thoreau, were interested in the individual learner. Emerson and Thoreau stressed self-reliance and reflection. Dewey believed that the function of education was to help a person reach his or her full potential. Course work should be tailored to the needs of the student—not the other way around. Fundamentally, this concept can determine the difference between a liberal arts education and vocational training.

Dewey’s approach is consonant with Jung’s view that individuals are born with differing innate predispositions and capacities. Because of these differences, people notice and process information from differing environmental domains. By the time a person reaches adulthood these differences will have resulted in recognizable constellations of features that Jung called “types.” Like Dewey, Jung felt that developing one’s innate abilities and latent capacities was paramount to becoming a “whole” personality.

When a country endeavors to educate all its citizens, something that in former times had been reserved for the favored few, it is paramount that educational practices be based on sound principles and tested theory. An effective educational system is the foundation of a democratic society.

At a time when so much of the world is in turmoil, education offers a way to make sense of the rapid changes on our planet. It is important that we educate our young people to maximize their full capabilities. We cannot afford a populace that is ignorant of political or psychological processes. The 50-50 political split in the country should alert us that deep changes are taking place. A confrontative stance will result in wasted energies, generating, as the saying goes, a lot of heat but no light.

Many people have little sense of the future. Yet most of us know that the future flows out of the present, and the present out of the past. It is no surprise that old hostilities re-arise if they have not been resolved. The guise in which they appear may be different, but teaching people to espy patterns as they’re developing will help them separate realistic threats from fear-based manipulations that squander resources. When power is consolidated in a political process, it is imperative that individuals rely on their own assessment of situations, freshly viewed, rather than the “group-think” mentality that has led to past disasters. A free flow of information and a critical education are vital to making accurate assessments.

With the new research on the brain, the rise of the women’s movement, the changing social climate, and the increase in technology, we can hardly afford to remain ignorant of our individual talents and inhibitions, yet many who seem otherwise courageous shrink from this kind of self-knowledge promoted by Dewey, Emerson, Thoreau, and that other great American educator, William James.

Jung said typology is innate and not gender-based. These two concepts help us sort what is cultural from what is inherent.

Certainly with all we know about education and human development, from Piaget, Montessori, Kohlberg, Gardner, Bruner, et al, we can’t afford to ignore this knowledge or make it subordinate to the whims of politicians with agendas no more imaginative than cutting taxes and fighting wars.

A Jung-Dewey-Hillman study group is being formed. If you are interested contact me at sgwhitin@pressenter.com.

*Shirley Whiting*

**Member News and Notes**

Rhoda Gilman writes, “I am now doing writing and editing for the Green Party’s publication *The Sunflower*. In April, 2003, I was honored by the Minnesota Women’s Political Caucus as a ‘founding feminist.’”

Lucy Brusic spoke to the Minneapolis Athenaeum on September 26. Her talk was titled “Getting to Know You: Cultural Interactions in the Old Northwest.”
A Larger Perspective
by George Anderson, Ph.D.

From a larger perspective, microwave energy has inhabited the universe for a very long time, perhaps longer than any other form of electromagnetic radiation. According to recent accounts, it has been traced back to an event in time shortly after the big bang 13.7 billion years ago.

In the beginning when temperatures were very intense and atoms and nuclei were too hot to stay intact, fundamental particles filled the entire universe. A high energy plasma of charged particles dominated radiation at all wavelengths and vigorously scattered it under these chaotic conditions. Light simply would not propagate.

Then came a time 380,000 years after the big bang, when the expanding universe cooled to a point where the plasma condensed. Electrons and nuclei combined into atoms, mostly hydrogen and helium. Dielectrics were born! An environment was created that was neutral. It would allow radiation to pass through without diversion, and light now could be seen at a distance.

Today, the afterglow of the big bang appears as a whisper of microwave power encircling us on all sides. It is characterized as blackbody radiation at 2.725 K having a peak frequency at 300 GHz and a wavelength near 1 mm. Its power density is 3 microwatts per square meter. This microwave radiation once was light that experienced an enormous Doppler shift as it traversed the cosmos: shifting from visible light through the infrared range into microwave radiation. It is a story that precedes all human stories, one of awesome proportions and design.

What meaning lies behind these epic facts? As a human family, are we the only ones to know them? Or are there other beings somewhere “out there,” aware of themselves and their/our surroundings? At the very least, we who are attentive to nature’s countenance, who know the integrity of mathematics and know how it may be applied, we stand in awe of this grand experiment.

Life. It is fair testimony in support of all that is good, just and beautiful. What we do not know should not prevent us from appreciating more fully that which we do know. These thoughts include aspiring to greater heights of human care, binding up the wounds of war, and sharing the endowment by which we on earth have been so richly blessed.

A full sky picture of the universe showing small ripples in the cosmic microwave background can be seen at <http://map.gsfc.nasa.gov/m_mm/pub_papers/firstyear.html>.

George Anderson is the past president of MISF and the past Editor of the Journal of Microwave Power and Electromagnetic Energy.


Tom Reiersgord, longtime friend and a member of MISF, died September 23, 2003. Tom realized early in his life that the field of law was just right for a bright young man born in Thief River Falls. Tom attended the University of Minnesota, earning his law degree in 1958. After a short period practicing in Hallock, Tom and his wife, Camilla Langguth Reiersgord, moved to the St. Louis Park/Edina area where he created a very successful law practice—Assistant City Attorney, Yngve Law firm, and Reiersgord Law Office.

As Tom began his battle with lung cancer, he decided to turn his voluminous notes and facts concerning the Kensington Rune Stone into a published book which appeared in 2001—The Kensington Rune Stone, Its Place in History. Tom was a collector, with decades-long memberships and activities in a broad collection of ‘collectors’ organizations (the Minneapolis Athenaeum, the Manuscript Society, etc.) including his lifelong favorite—stamp collecting.

Tom’s widely attended memorial service featured a long Dietrich Bonhoeffer quotation, the last part of which was, "The beauties of the past are borne, not as a thorn in the flesh, but as a precious gift in themselves. We must take care not to wallow in our memories or hand ourselves over to them, just as we do not gaze all the time at a valuable present, but only at special times, and apart from these keep it simply as a hidden treasure that is ours for certain. In this way the past gives us lasting joy and strength."

It is an apt description of both Tom’s life path and how he would wish us to remember him.

Dave Juncker

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Events for Scholars

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October 19, 2003
Stealth Democracy

The September seminar, Education and Democracy, led by Dr. Robert Tapp, ended with a question. In the United States, what are the barriers and incentives to citizen participation in the democratic process? Do these barriers lie external to the citizen or do they exist in the minds of the populus? If, as some research seems to show, the barriers are, to a large extent, made in the minds of individuals, the solutions are different than if there existed physical and legal restraints. Some of the answers lie in the research of John R. Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse and are reported in their book, Stealth Democracy. Theiss-Morse's article in the Maine Policy Review, <http://www.umaine.edu/mcse/MPR/Vol11No2/Theiss.htm> presents an excellent introduction to these ideas.

The October Forum, led by Tom Abeles, founder of the Voices of Concern Forums, will extend the conversation started in September and expand the discussion of Education and Democracy. It is anticipated that these discussions will culminate in an international conference on the theme of Education and Democracy being organized by Harvey Sarles on the University of Minnesota campus in late spring of

Annual Meeting: November 9

The Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Independent Scholars' Forum will be Sunday, November 9, 2003, at 4:00 p.m. at the Spaghetti Factory on Washington Avenue in Minneapolis. You will be getting a mailing with details. But for now, please save the date on your calendar.

Also: we need to fill several board positions so please consider standing for the board and taking your turn guiding MISF.

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