Francis Bacon: Religious Terror, The Rise of Modernity, and 9/11
by David Hopper

The Life of Emily Peake: One Dedicated Ojibwe by Jane Pejsa
reviewed by Suzanne Mahmoodi

What is an Independent Scholar?
by Roger Hammer

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We welcome to this issue a guest author, David Hopper, and his consideration of the importance of Francis Bacon for modern thought and history. We are also happy to have a review of Jane Pejsa's book, *The Life of Emily Peake: One Dedicated Ojibwe*. By coincidence I recently read a book that ties these two articles together—*Love and Hate in Jamestown: John Smith, Pocahontas, and the Heart of a New Nation* by David A. Price (Knopf: 2003). It is a reexamination, and undisneyification, of the story of Captain John Smith and Pocahontas at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607.

There are several parallels between our articles and Price's book. Francis Bacon and John Smith (1580-1631) were near contemporaries and were affected by the religious disputes of their era. Indian voices (some of them in Smith's words) figure prominently in Price's story of Jamestown.

But the great parallel is that both Bacon and Smith were players in creating the modern world. Francis Bacon took the idea of self-criticism that is integral to Martin Luther's criticism of the Roman Catholic church and extended it to all of life—the self, the community, the marketplace, and the "stage"—with consequences that reach still into our self-consciousness and self-awareness. Captain John Smith, possibly the only man who could have saved the Jamestown colony from starvation, had to wrest leadership from upper class proprietors who did not do manual labor and had no notion (and even less inclination) of how to grow their own food or build their own houses. In so doing Smith presaged the new world order that became America.

Hopper draws a more or less direct line from Francis Bacon to 9/11, saying that the capacity to think critically is a direct threat to religious fundamentalism. Price concludes *Love and Hate in Jamestown* with a chapter titled "March 22, 1611: Skyfall." On that day in 1611, Powhatan’s successor decided to get rid of the English settlers that were crowding him on the James River. He staged a surprise attack on outlying settlements around Jamestown, killing in one morning an estimated third of the 1200 English people then living on the James River. Parallels to the morning of September 11, 2001, are implicit.

Clashing systems of land ownership, leadership, and religious and secular thought have been around for a long time and will not go away. David Hopper gives us some perspective on the modern world by going back to Francis Bacon; Suzanne Mahmoodi tells us what we have not if we have not listened to the voices of native Americans. Price says that old ways of leadership would not work in the New World. For each author, active participation is—in one way or another—the key to survival.

Roger Hammer, in his ironic reflection on independent scholarship, says that active participation is a key to the survival of MISF. Hammer’s article signals a change in direction for MISF. We are going to tackle contemporary issues both in public programs and in this journal—thereby making MISF more like a “think tank.” My ‘take’ on this idea as it pertains to this journal appears on page 7 with Hammer’s article.

Lucy Brusic

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**Table of Contents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Francis Bacon and ... 9/11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book review: The Life of Emily Peake</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is an Independent Scholar?</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member News and Notes</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President's Message</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In June of 1576, Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper of the Seal under Queen Elizabeth, withdrew his sons, Anthony and Francis, from their studies at Cambridge. The youngest son, Francis Bacon (1561-1626), was sent to Paris to serve an apprenticeship under the English ambassador, Sir Amias Paulet, an ardent Calvinist. Francis at the time was fourteen years of age. His service under Ambassador Paulet came only four years after the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, which saw the slaughter, by conspirators and mobs, of an estimated 8000 prominent Protestants in Paris and, in the following weeks, perhaps tens of thousands of others throughout the country. The young Francis heard many accounts and testimonies of this disaster. Protestant England and other sections of Europe were shaken by the event. The historian A. G. Dickens has written:

If one sought to describe the most obvious and immediate effects of St. Bartholomew on the mass of Englishmen, one would doubtless have to say that it confirmed to the hilt the ugly conclusions they were drawing from the latest exploits of the political Counter Reformation—from Pius V’s ‘roaring Bull’ deposing the queen, from the northern rising of 1569, from the presence of a French garrison in Edinburgh Castle, from the savagery of Alva in the Netherlands, from the Ridolfi Plot [no poison Elizabeth], and the endless conspiracy turning around Mary Stuart, alias Guise. ... It requires no lengthy research to show that the Massacre nourished [English] fear and hatred of Catholic rulers and politicians... 1

Francis returned to England three years later after receiving news of the death of his father. Left with only a small inheritance as a result of an oversight, Francis took up the practice of law. For much of the next two decades he served in Parliament and unsuccessfully sought political appointment. After the death of Elizabeth in 1603 he began to rise in appointment to political office under James I. In 1605, however, an attempted terrorist attack, the notorious Gunpowder Plot, shook the nation. Guy Fawkes and a circle of Catholic conspirators sought to blow up the Parliament building with the king and most of his ministers present. The plot was foiled, the conspirators executed.

Bacon comments on religious terrorism
In an essay on “Religion” dating from that time, Bacon commented on the terrorist attacks of his day. The writing was first included in an enlarged second edition of his “Essays” (1612). Bacon quoted the Roman poet Lucretius who had noted how “powerfully could religion prompt a man to evil deeds.” Bacon then commented:

What would he [Lucretius] have said if he had known of the massacre in France, or the powder treason of England? He would have been seven times more Epicure and Atheist. Nay hee would rather have chosen to be one of the Madmen of Münster, than to have been a partaker of those counsels. It was a great blasphemie, when the Devil said: I will ascend, and be like the highest: but it is a greater blasphemie, if they make God to say, I will descend and be like the Prince of Darkness: and it is no better, when they make the cause of Religion descend, to the execrable accions of murthering Princes, butchery of people, and firing of States ... Neither is there such a sinne against the person of the Holy Ghost, (if one should take it literally) as in the stead of the likeness of a Dove, to bring him downe in the likeness of a Vulture, or Raven; nor such a scandal to their Church, as out of the Barke of Saint Peter, to set forth the flagge of a Barke of Pirats and Assassins. Therefore since these things are the common enemies of humane society, Princes by their power, Churches by their decrees; and all learning, Christian, morall, of whatever sect, or opinion, by their Mercury rod, ought to join in the damning to Hell for ever, these facts, and their supports: and in the Counsells concerning Religion, that Counsell of the Apostle would be fixed: ’Human anger does not discharge the judgment of God.’ 2

Lest one suppose that Bacon’s outrage was solely focused upon Catholic complicity in terror, we should point out that Bacon deplored as well the ongoing controversy and enmity that existed within English Protestantism. For years Bacon had attempted to mediate between the contending parties within the English Church. After Elizabeth’s religious Act of Uniformity (1559), which settled upon the 1552 Prayer Book and retained clerical vestments, factions continued to dispute the results of the settlement. Many within the church—mostly those of the Puritan party—pressed for further reform. The Crown interpreted the anti-hierarchical disposition of the Puritans as a political danger, a veiled attack upon the royal prerogative.

In the late 1580s Bacon argued in support of the hierarchical structure of the English church and rejected the imposition of a church polity from abroad (e.g., from Geneva). He warned against a “zeal” that was lacking in love, noting that some people were of a nature, not only “to love extremities, but also to fall to them without degrees.” This criticism of the more radical reformists did not preclude Bacon’s sharp criticism of those who held power in the church. Of the bishops he wrote: “It is hard for them to avoid blame (in the opinion of an indifferent person) in standing so precisely upon altering nothing....” ’Laws, not refreshed with new laws,
wax sour. ’ ’ Without change of the ill, a man cannot continue the good. To take away abuses supplanteth not good orders, but establisheth them.’’...[A] contentious retaining of custom is a turbulent thing, as well as innovation.’’ ’’Injuries,’’ he concluded, ’’come from them that have the upper hand.’’ 3

After the failure of the 1603 conference at Hampton Court to resolve ecclesiastical and theological differences between the contending Protestant parties, Bacon dropped his mediating efforts and devoted himself more and more to his own growing political duties and his philosophical interests. The latter, he believed, embodied the greatest hope for the future. This hope centered on nothing less than a new ordering of human knowledge, a Novum Organum, the title of Bacon’s 1620 major work. Bacon believed that humanity, by devoting itself to a careful empirical examination of the natural order, could achieve a new understanding of nature and generate new inventions for the purpose of easing the burdens of life and attaining ever-new knowledge. Towards the end of the Novum Organum, Bacon offered his vision for the future.

The benefits of discoveries... extend to the whole race of man, civil benefits only to particular places; the latter last not beyond a few ages, the former through all time. Moreover the reformation of a state in civil matters is seldom brought in without violence and confusion; but discoveries [inventions] carry blessings with them, and confer benefits without causing harm or sorrow to any. 4

Bacon embraced technological advances

Bacon’s early, benign view of scientific, technological advance must be described as naïve in the light of subsequent, more recent historical experience. But in the light of what he saw as escalating religious-political strife, Bacon embraced technological advance as a peaceful, promising alternative. What is interesting and thought provoking in Bacon’s early statement in support of scientific-technological progress is that he framed his thought independent of the Copernican cosmological revolution. Bacon was not attracted to, or convinced by, contemporary astronomical observations and speculations. He held rather to a somewhat modified traditional cosmology. In the light of his views on this matter the question must be asked: what then inspired his sense of need for a new ordering of knowledge?; what underlay his sense of a turning point in history and the potential for a breakthrough in human knowledge about the world?

One answer—only partial—lies in his interest in technological advance. At one point he argued that the human world had been more positively affected by the inventions of the compass, gunpowder, and the printing press than any achievements of empire over past centuries. 5 Yet one must observe that such developments did not demand the idea of a breakthrough and a new beginning. Similarly, Bacon’s interest in the discovery of the New World implied an incremental increase in knowledge, not a breakthrough or what is now called a “paradigm shift.”

Let me suggest, however, that the religious situation of the times, despite Bacon’s rejection of its zealotry, did bespeak, for him, a turn toward a new beginning. Though few interpreters have elaborated on the influence of the Reformation on Bacon’s thought, an analysis of major motifs in his thinking suggests that to neglect this point is a serious misreading of his work. To be sure, note has long been taken of a likely Calvinist influence—instilled largely by his mother—upon Bacon’s early life. In 1662, in a major lecture marking the 400th anniversary of Bacon’s birth, Virgil K. Whitaker, observed that Bacon, by “...equating the glory of God and the betterment of man...betrayed the practical bent of the Calvinistic Protestantism that he absorbed as a boy.” 6 A more recent, less theoretically informed intellectual biographer sees a confused, conflicted Calvinism in Bacon. 7

But it was not only Calvin, but Luther, I propose, who suggested to Bacon the need for a new departure in thought. Bacon was greatly averse to quoting anyone as an intellectual authority. There is, however, one (and, to my knowledge, only one) suggestive reference to Luther in the body of his writings. (None to Calvin.) This reference is found in The Advancement of Learning (1605). There Bacon noted that Luther scorned the authority-reliant tradition of the “Schoolmen”; Bacon credited Luther with inspiring a renaissance of learning in the fact that long-known past writings were reviewed with new, fresh inquiries and understandings. Bacon knew of Luther’s critique and rejection of Aristotle and the scholastic philosophical tradition; Bacon voiced in that criticism from the perspective of his own scientific interests and program.

There is question however that Bacon identified the source of Luther’s philosophical criticism in the Pauline description of the Cross as “the foolishness of God [that] is wiser than men and the weakness of God [that] is stronger than men.” (I Corinthians 1:25) Bacon did not draw upon this paradoxical passage in his own writings, but he seemed fully aware of this theological/intellectual significance when he spoke against the tendency of the scholastics and others “who have taken upon them[selves] to deduce the truth of the Christian religion from the principles of philosophers and to confirm it by their authority...” 8

The “idols” of the mind

It is argued here that Bacon’s criticism of the “idols” of the mind has its roots in this earlier Reformation perspective, Calvin also having described “the human mind...[as] a perpetual forge of idols.” 9 Many have argued that Bacon’s critique of the idols of the mind was his most influential idea, one in which he identified four “idols”—the tribe, the cave, the marketplace, and the theater—as impediments to advancement in human thought. His critique represents a distinctive capacity for, and practice of, intellectual self-criticism, one which was later applied to the West’s own religious tradition—provoked also, as Bacon anticipated, by the negative impact of religious terror during the 16th and 17th centuries. (It should be noted, at the same time, that Luther invoked the critical vein of I Corinthians 1 against concluded on next page
Francis Bacon... (continued from preceding page)

church practices and beliefs prior to any outbreak of religious violence.) Analysis of Bacon's critique of the idols suggests its influence upon the thought of such diverse later figures as Locke, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Marx, and Freud.

This critique of human thought processes by Bacon was fundamental to his efforts to formulate a new method of knowledge, the "empirical," or "inductive" method, which Bacon believed would ensure greater surety and utility in a variety of intellectual pursuits, not only in science. This method represents an effort to view the world with perpetually fresh eyes—and continually to question inherited, traditional knowledge. In the field of science Bacon's point-of-view is well represented, for example, by Thomas Kuhn's distinction between "normal" and "extraordinary" science, the latter the source of major scientific paradigm shifts.

In critiquing the idol of the tribe Bacon rejected the anthropomorphic propensities of human thought, the tendency of the mind to project its own image upon a world exterior to the mind. "Final causes..." Bacon wrote, "have relation clearly to the nature of man rather than to the nature of the universe; and from this source have strangely defiled philosophy." 10 The idol of the cave differs from this first common fault in that it represents the idiocentric nature of individual life in personality, upbringing, education, book readings, and "the authority of those whom...[the individual] esteems and admires..." 11 The "marketplace" yields an idol of social intercourse and commerce in which the words of discourse are accorded "vulgar" meanings "which wonderfully obstruct...the understanding." The idols of the "theater" are varied, generated by the "dogmas of philosophies," false "laws of demonstration," worlds of imagining set forth by ancient sects—and by sects and philosophies still to arise.

Bacon's caution against the idols of the mind, as a threat to understanding, was not a counsel of despair; it was rather an expression of his great hope and expectation that, in his words, "Truth is the daughter of time." For Bacon, this concept of dynamic truth held promise of ever new knowledge, new technologies, with a yield of great new material benefits. Bacon concluded his "Plan of the Work" for the Novum Organum with a prayer and final petition: "Humbly we pray that this mind be steadfast in us, and that through these our hands, and the hands of others to whom thou shalt give the same spirit, thou wilt vouchsafe to endow the human family with new mercies." 12

Links to 9/11

Further links between Bacon and Reformation themes can be elaborated, some subtle. But in the aftermath of 9/11 and with the resurgence of religiously motivated terror the thought and words of Francis Bacon elicit special note and reflection. The first thing of note is the response of outrage apparent in Bacon's words on "religion" in the 1612 edition of his Essays. Bacon's outrage is joined with a broad appeal to persons and institutions "worldwide" to unite in shared religious and simply general moral values to condemn the acts of terror. This response of outrage and the appeal to moral condemnation certainly has been repeated after 9/11.

The second thing of note is that Bacon was a powerful advocate of a critical mind-set and a source of its subsequent dissemination in the intellectual heritage of the West. It is with justification that Bacon has been described as "the first modern mind." The question that lingers after 9/11 is whether, for the perpetrators of this most recent terror, the enemy they perceive is the lax morality of the West or chiefly the West's capacity to entertain for itself and bear witness to the freedom and responsibilities of a critical mind. Still, to ask this question is not to imply that the intellectual developments that have followed Bacon are not new expressions of idolatry. As Bacon wrote in connection with his discussion of the idols of the theater: "Nor is it only the systems now in vogue, or only of the ancient sects and philosophies, that I speak; for many more plays of the same kind may yet be composed and in the like artificial manner set forth; seeing that errors the most widely different have nevertheless causes for the most part alike." 13

What is sobering in these last words of Bacon, in the context of the religious terrorism of his day, is not only the resurgence of the phenomenon in our own times and the light he sheds upon it; but the new powers that the "marketplace" and the media (Bacon's "printing press") provide for projecting new "...stage plays, representing worlds of their own creation..." even in the modern, critically-minded West.

David Hopper is James Wallace Professor of Religion Emeritus, Macalester College; author of three books: on the thought of Paul Tillich, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and a study of the relationship of technology, theology, and the idea of progress.

Endnotes

4. ibid, vol. IV, p. 113 (Aphorism ccxxiv).
5. ibid, p. 114.
11. ibid, p. 54 (xxii).
12. ibid, p. 33.
13. ibid, p. 55 (xlv).
**Book review**

*The Life of Emily Peake: One Dedicated Ojibwe* by Jane Pejsa


EMILY PEAKE, 1920-1995, was an activist for native Americans, an advocate for children and aging of all ethnic backgrounds, and a committed participant in the community affairs of both the Minneapolis-St. Paul urban area and of the White Earth Association. Jane Pejsa examines the complex environment and times into which Emily was born and in which she lived, bridging two cultures—the native American and the non-native American—as she describes the life of this enthusiastic, strong, persuasive, yet controversial leader.

Pejsa guides her readers in a lucid manner to a better understanding of European-American events which especially affected native Americans in mid-America. The Louisiana purchase by the U.S. government from France, encompassing land of several native American tribes and nations, marked the beginning of an era of negotiating, ceding, allotting, and apportioning those lands. The U.S. government, using Congressional acts, treaties, and other actions, separated the native peoples into categories such as mixed blood and full blood, or Lake Superior and Mississippi bands of Ojibwe (Chippewa). The government made these separations to achieve not only acquisition of land, but also cultural conformity. Strategies included enrollment, removal, relocation, and consolidation. These actions affected both the economic well-being and communal life of native Americans. Other factors that influenced Emily Peake’s life as identified by Pejsa are European-American tribal conflicts, intertribal conflicts, the Depression, World War II, McCarthyism, the rise of the American Indian Movement, and the ever-present discrimination. Pejsa uses interviews of more than thirty of Emily Peake’s contemporaries as well as letters, periodicals, newspapers, archival sources, personal and other histories to provide insight into the native American roots and the life of this extraordinary woman.

Emily’s family, although impoverished, were dedicated to helping others. Her father used his law background to work for justice for the native American community. Her mother organized and hosted an organization of young native American women and was active in the League of Women Voters, in addition to offering hospitality for family, friends, and others for as long as needed. Emily’s sister was also a political activist.

Emily’s life and education

Pejsa pictures the young Emily as a voracious learner—reading, learning the French, German, Russian languages, studying at the universities of Minnesota and the Sorbonne; as a fun-loving person—tap dancing, organizing a dance club of her schoolmates, writing plays, riding horses, and as an organizer of groups for social and humanitarian purposes. Emily became an advocate and organizer of programs for children and the aging. Her Aunt Emily Peake’s example and family tales of Ojibwe ancestry and traditions are credited as a contributing force in Emily’s “reclaiming her Ojibwe roots” and using her energy and networking skills to serve the urban and reservation native Americans. She helped found the Upper Midwest American Indian Center, serving as its director or on its board at various times. She participated in and served on boards and commissions dealing with the affairs of Native Americans, her Minneapolis neighborhood, community, and other civic and state organizations, including the Urban Coalition, the Minneapolis Human Rights Commission, and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Commission. She dealt with discrimination, FBI and military intelligence investigations, opposition, and controversy.

To support her insights into Emily’s life, Pejsa reports various incidents. Because of the storytelling style, these could be read aloud as vignettes of a native American woman. Pejsa ably describes the life of:

- a woman leader and activist
- an urban native American in the Midwest, specifically Minnesota
- adjustments made by native Americans in the non-native American culture of the U.S.

Pejsa is also to be commended for her documentation of sources and inclusion of a bibliography, a family tree, and appendices of related information. She is especially careful not to present as fact that which cannot be supported by the sources. She uses, in these cases, phrases to warn the reader such as “quite possibly,” “probably,” “no doubt,” “if then,” “perhaps,” “what do we know?”, “no record of.” There are some misspellings, and some outdated words and awkward phrases; these do not detract from a story well told.

*The Life of Emily Peake* is recommended for all Minnesota public and school libraries and to any reader interested in native Americans, women leaders, and Minnesota history.

Reviewed by Suzanne H. Mahmoodi, former librarian and library consultant, now pursuing her interests as an independent scholar.

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**Editor’s Note:** Jane Pejsa was the speaker for the annual meeting of the MIFR membership at the Old Spaghetti Factory in early November. She told how she came to write this book and something about the life of her subject.
What is an independent scholar?

Questions, questions, questions...
As long as I’ve been a member of the Minnesota Independent Scholars’ Forum, I’ve wondered just who we are. I thought, after a while, it would become clear. But many years later, and even after serving as a board member and membership chair, I haven’t a clue.

One thing I’ve figured, we are from Minnesota, or at least do out work here, or maybe have some link to Minnesota—but maybe not. Sometimes even the obvious escapes us.

Well, let’s try the second word: Independent. I think that means we work independently, not as part of a company or organization or academic endeavor of a broader scope. But maybe that is not so true either. Many of us have strong links to the academic world, so are we really “independent”?

Okay, well now what about being scholars? The dictionary says a scholar is one who attends a school or studies under a teacher, but in that definition, a scholar can’t be independent per se. Another definition says a scholar is one who has done advanced study in a special field. Or more simply, “a learned person.” Or what about one who is a “holder of scholarship,” defined as a fund of knowledge or learning. Do any of these fit you?

Still another question is, who bestows the title of “scholar” on anyone else? Well, you can become a member of a group called the Minnesota Independent Scholars’ Forum and “Voila!” you have bestowed the title of “Scholar” upon yourself! You can’t beat that—and if you pay your dues every year, you can continue to be a scholar, ad infinitum! This is a procedure that many, maybe even most, members seem pretty smug about. As long as they pay their annual dues, they can continue to claim the title.

But what about that last word: forum? This is an open, public place for discussion and presentation of things—ideas, concepts, innovations, bodies of work. Which raises the ultimate question for us—can we justify our membership in the organization, in the Forum, if we only pay our financial dues? Are there other scholarly dues expected of us such as participation in programs, on committees, in discussion? Do we have obligations beyond lending our name and money to the functioning of the Forum? Heaven forbid that anyone would expect willing participation!

So the board wrestles with coming up with programs, formats and the like in order to tempt us to come out of hiding and breathe life into the Forum. Months go by and the board plays guessing games about what the membership wants to make an actual forum not only live and breathe on its own but to become a place, a body, a caldron of excitement and thinking that nourishes the whole community in which the Forum survives.

And so, in this early time of the year 2004, the Forum has decided to try presentations beyond the “Profiles” and “Works In Progress.” We propose scholarly discussion, Forum discussions on:

Politics: “If we have trouble picking a man for president, could we ever pick a woman?”

Science: “Birth, Cloning, Abortion—Who Decides?”

Philosophy: “The Iraqi Sandbox: We teach children not to hit—then send them to kill.”

The ultimate question? Will you honor your designation and participate? Roger Hammer

Roger Hammer is a writer and a member of the MISF board.

What Roger Hammer’s reflections mean for this journal: You should write an op-ed piece!

The ideas that Roger Hammer talks about for programs came from the first board meeting of the year. The board has decided to follow definite themes both in public forums and in the journal. It is appropriate that the first theme we pick is politics, since this is an election year. I invite all members (and any interested non-members) to submit op-ed pieces (800 words or so) on political subjects for the Spring journal.

We are certainly not limited to the question of a woman’s running for president. Could we, for example, elect a Jew or a gay person or an American Indian? Your reflections on these questions would be welcome.

Moving slightly farther afield, we could include a review of the current movie “In America.” More traditional topics might be the history of political conventions or a reflection on the importance or irrelevance of primaries and caucuses.

Other political reflections might assess the ramifications of new immigrant groups for politics, political parties, and local government. Books that might be reviewed are appearing on bookshelves everywhere; American Dynasty by Kevin Phillips has received favorable comment in the New York Times. Would someone like to read and review it?

One could even take up the cudgels for some of the Wellstone initiatives that have been more or less lost in the conservative shuffle.

Someone has suggested that he could do a review of the Rembrandt show about to open in Chicago and call it Rembrandt, Human Nature, and Politics. In other words, we can get well beyond the question stated above and still talk about politics. The deadline is the end of May, but I would like to hear from you sooner if you are planning to write. A think tank without thoughts is merely a tank!

Lucy Brusic, editor
**Member News and Notes**

**Phillip Dahlen** is our newest board member. Phil was born in southern Illinois, the son of an American Baptist minister. He earned a BA in physics at Hamline University. After college he was a seventh grade math teacher on the Iron Range, and later a curriculum development specialist for Control Data Corp. He was the editor of *Electronic Technician/Dealer*, a publication for those selling and serving consumer electronic products. Before the invention of the CD player, Phil obtained personal US and foreign patents for a phonograph designed to play records with a beam of light. He "retired" around 9/11 as a technical writer. Phil is an active member of the MISF Philosophy Study Group. He also belongs to a writers group that normally meets during the afternoon the third Tuesday of every month at the Rice Street Library in St. Paul. (The group is looking for more members.) Phil is a volunteer at The Bakken Museum (a science center in Minneapolis for kids) and the Whittier School for the Arts in Minneapolis. He is divorced and currently seeking to adopt a teen-aged boy or brothers.

**MISF Database**

When Phil joined MISF, he completed a detailed membership profile, which was then updated and used as a basis for a printout that provided him with the names of other MISF members with similar interests. Lately, Phil has learned that some of the other profiles are up to twelve years old.

Phil has suggested that we work to keep all membership profiles current (and include short biographies like the one he just provided), and display them on the MISF website for review by fellow members, as well as potential members and those in the outside world that might have a special need for our unique talents.

Before Phil volunteers his help in this effort, he needs to know how many members would like to have their profiles displayed by MISF on the web, and what additional talents should be included in the database. A copy of the current profile questionnaire is displayed on our website. Phil needs a positive response from more than half the MISF membership before he is prepared to volunteer to help with this project. If you are interested in being included, please respond directly to: <mailto:dahelp@earthlink.net>. Please put “Yes Profile” in your subject line and include your name and any suggested additions to the talents list in the body of the message.

Phil understands that some members may not want to release their profiles to the public.

**Rhoda Lewin** writes that an “international conference on Kurt Lewin (1890-1947) and his work (behavior theories, and his impact on psychological research and treatment) will take place in Mogilno, Poland, September 11 and 12, 2004. (There may be a few events scheduled for September 10, too.)

“Mogilno is where Kurt Lewin was born; it lies between Poznan and Torun, east of Frankurt, on the Oder. You shouldn’t have much difficulty finding the little town on most maps of Poland, although it is a small town of only about 12,000 people. If your map doesn’t show it, the town is between Gniezno (pronounced “knee-ays-know”) and Inowroclaw. Gniezno was the first capital of Poland and dates back to at least the year 996. Its basilica was celebrating its 600th anniversary in 1998, when I was there en route to Mogilno in search of my family’s historical roots.”

For more information about the conference contact Professor Dr. Janusz Trempala, whose e-mail address is Tremjan@ab-byd.edu.pl.

**Letters to the membership secretary**

The following comments were included on the renewal forms returned by MISF members.

This from Deborah Miller:

“Sorry, but we are having to cut costs in our household because of job uncertainties. Also, for me the best benefit of MISF membership has been the U of MN library card. Without that benefit, MISF membership is hard to justify.”

This from Wallys Conhaim:

“Sunday forum program has been excellent this year. I'd appreciate future programs and/or dates being listed on website, which was not up do date last time I looked. Many thanks for everyone's efforts to keep MISF thriving.”

**Noted with sympathy**

We have recently learned of the death last summer of Donna McGarry. Donna was the vice-president of MISF in 1994-1995. She was also the driving force behind an operating grant that we received in 1995 from the Minnesota Humanities Commission. We extend our sympathy to Donna’s family and friends.
President's Column

I am sure many of you share my relief that 2003, with its excitement and excesses, is behind us. Let us hope that 2004 offers a more sober approach to the concerns of the planet and the people on it. As we strive to establish democracies in far off lands, we would do well to provide a model of civil society others could emulate.

I, for one, have not welcomed the dramatic, political rhetoric that seems more appropriate for the Broadway stage than the theatre of public opinion. "Shock and Awe" had a decidedly Old Testament ring to it, which was unnerving, coming as it did with the accoutrements of twenty-first century armaments manned by 19- and 20-year old American service personnel.

There has been ample opportunity, however, to study the communications styles of the various VIPs who crowd our television screens, flushed with the importance of their vision and their mission. They speak in sombre tones, as befits their weighty subject matter, while their conclusions, we find out later, are so often wrong. One is forced to choose between style and substance in these performances.

Communications has long been an interest of mine. And never has it seemed so important to be able to parse the thought processes of those who would lead us. I was, therefore, very pleased when a friend shared the contents of the manuscript he's been working on for a decade. The disparate viewpoints which characterized our early discussions have somehow merged as outer events have proven the accuracy of his observations. (I had difficulty, at first, with his view that multi-nationals are running the world and that the nation state is disappearing. I no longer have that difficulty.)

I refer, for those of you who know him, to the work of Dr. Alan Kahn, biomedical engineer, and communications theorist. Alan has taught a Systems Approach to Human Information Processing for several years at the University of Minnesota. His work, based on the work of Systems Analyst Walter Lowen (Dichotomies of the Mind) offers an analogue to the ubiquitous Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory.

Much of the work of both Lowen and Kahn has a basis in Carl Jung's work on psychological types, published in 1921.

My excitement over the completion of Kahn's manuscript relates to my belief that we need a new conceptual framework to discuss the changes on the planet. The speed with which the telecommunications industry can "wire" our planet far exceeds our human capacity to evolve and absorb these changes.

In many ways, one could say, we have eliminated space; we are living in a constant state of "now." We are bombarded with disturbing images of other cultures, of privations we can do nothing to alleviate, and fears that keep us in constant tension. It is not surprising that many turn to mindless pursuits or retreat into conventional religion to avoid discomfort. We have no idea how these changes will affect the human psyche in the long term.

Kahn's work focuses on the biological makeup of our genetic heritage, our genes. In addition, he clearly articulates the companion concept to the gene—the "meme." Mimetic structures are those that are transmitted by observation and modeling. Their formation is the result of our communications network. As more and more people gain access to electronic communications, the consciousness of the entire planet is being raised. We learn how other cultures are evolving, even as we see some of them disappear as a result of our scrutiny.

Another concept from Jungian psychology is that of "mirroring." We see ourselves reflected in the faces of others. This process starts in infancy and continues throughout life on an individual basis. Mirroring is closely related to 'projection,' in which something inside of us is seen outside in another person, or another nation. We then find a way to relate to what we see. (Unfortunately, we often relate by fighting.)

We are in a time, it would seem, of a shift in our perceptual abilities. The planet is shrinking. Problems are mounting. Leadership is uncertain. We can only hope to shift our perceptual abilities, our mimetic lenses, in time to make a difference. The values we say we espouse are themselves subject to these mimetic processes. Never have accurate perceptions and communicative abilities been more important. Dr. Kahn's work on socio-cognitive systems will provide welcome guidelines as we venture into this bewildering arena.

Shirley Whiting

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