

EDITORIAL

HOMILY TO THE NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY GRADUATING RESIDENTS IN PSYCHIATRY AND PSYCHOLOGY, JUNE, 1985

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Honored Professor Karen Halttunen, colleagues and friends:

I appreciate this annual opportunity to impart some penultimate wisdom to the graduates in psychiatry and psychology at our Institute; however, I would welcome it more if I did not have a whimsical recollection that when I was a graduating resident, back in the early Pleistocene age, I was far more certain of my encompassing erudition than I am now. So only with due humility do I again offer a few parting suggestions. If they sound a bit sententious, forgive this frequent failing of ageing academes—I shall be brief but I hope lucid, and what I shall say I have derived from many decades of experience.

In essence: Exist as long as feasible, but also make your life as physically, intellectually and esthetically fulfilling as possible. In the physical parameter, add to your customary indoor satisfactions in dining nook or bedroom, the outdoor ones of a winning tennis backhand, a bowling strike or playing subpar golf. However, also try leaving such merely earthbound pursuits to sail a boat or fly a plane, for the more ethereal exhilarations of being one with wind and wave and cloud and cosmos.

Such physical experiences will enhance rather than divert your intellectual vigor and professional dedication. Read widely, listen intently and observe acutely, but question freely and infer independently. Then read, listen and observe further, re-integrate and re-infer, and continue this Hegelian spiral of thesis, antithesis and ever-contingent synthesis in a never-ending approach to clarity, empathy and relevance. But also remember that although every spiral theo-

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retically reaches an apex, you will, unlike a Medieval angel, find it difficult to stand flatfooted very long on any point in space or time.

More specifically as to reading, let me suggest that after you have, of necessity, passed the professional boards in psychiatry or psychology, in a continued quest for comprehensive human understanding you spend at least as much time studying anthropology, history, comparative sociology and philosophy as in perusing the often stereotyped or semantically circular material in our technical books and journals—and that includes my own writings.

As to observation: travel as much as practicable to other climes and cultures. Clinically, I learned more about the social therapy of alcoholism in Yugoslavia, of schizophrenia in Japan, or of community services in China than I could have here. On a metapsychologic plane, I found greater existential serenity among the Brahmans in India or the musical Maori of New Zealand than I ever sensed even among highly esoteric sects in this country. And when, after my recent travels in the Soviet Union, the faculty of the Leningrad Institute agreed to write confirmatory chapters on all aspects of psychiatry in their country for me to publish in English for a worldwide readership, I was further reassured that the vast majority of our colleagues in the USSR as well as elsewhere are as devoted as I hope we are to human welfare, and equally dedicated to international understanding and global peace.

Finally, leaven all this with a profound love of communicative esthetics: write even your technical prose poetically, paint the world as you alone see it, sculpt human or other forms as you abstract them. I recommend music particularly: aside from the individual joys of composing and performing, music also symbolizes blending your unique melodies with those of others in an harmonious interpersonal counterpoint. This emphasizes the most important of all human quests: to make and keep friends. Retrospectively, my greatest satisfactions came not when I graduated medicine, published my first article or book or song, learned to fly, acquired a rare Albani viola, or even when elected president of the APA, but when, only a few weeks ago, eight former students and invaluable colleagues came from coast to coast to a surprise celebration of my eightieth birthday. My fondest wish for you, therefore is that, fourscore years from your own dates of birth, you too may have that most deeply heartwarming of gratifications. In the meantime, my perennial concluding pledge: if anyone on our faculty, including myself, can continue to help you in your careers, please let us know and we shall assist all we can.

Thank you, and Godspeed.