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TIPS has slipped further behind its schedule than ever before. We plan to make up all the delinquent issues by the end of the year. This issue tries to catch up with miscellaneous topics.

A Modernistic Assault Against the Social Institution of Guardianship

*The Fall 1991 issue of Entourage, published by the Canadian Association for Community Living (founded by parents of retarded persons, and formerly called The Canadian Association for the Mentally Retarded) was devoted almost entirely to issues of guardianship. It included articles that took the new extremist position that no person should ever control any other, and that guardianship makes "nonentities, non-persons...controlled by the choices of others" out of the people under guardianship.

It is also sad to learn that at its 1991 convention, People First of Canada (an organization of retarded persons) unanimously passed, of all things, and as its very first resolution, a condemnation of all forms of guardianship law. This carries virtually decisive weight with modernistic advocates because they consistently act and talk as if they were firmly convinced that retarded people--unlike everyone else--are never wrong.

In a previous and related article, one of the authors of the Fall 1991 issue of Entourage (McCallum, 1991) had advanced the argument against guardianship that mental incompetence is a "legal fiction" because there is no valid or reliable way of ascertaining anyone's incompetence. However, this is a blatantly invalid assertion. Everyone will agree that infants and people in a coma are incompetent, and almost everyone will agree that there is serious competency impairment in completely demented persons or profoundly retarded ones--at least those people will agree who have known such persons. Also, everyone, or virtually everyone, will agree that, at least for legal purposes, the majority of the population can and should be considered competent.
Where there is the most doubt and disagreement, and even inability to know, is in the regions between the general population and the indisputably severely competency-impaired people. But in support of the argument that mental incompetence is a legal fiction, it is the hard borderline cases that the extremists like to cite, such as people of borderline competency making poor decisions that would be overlooked if competent people made them.

It also does not help when the extremists talk about people being "labeled as disabled," as if being in a coma were something that could be fixed by a new label—a form of verbal Lourdes where one can go and restore people's competence by dipping them in a fount of politically correct verbiage.

One writer in the Fall 1991 Entourage also argued that if guardianship is considered one of the last legal resorts by the state, what was the state doing on all the occasions of earlier opportunities for less drastic resorts? If the state had not defaulted in so many cases at previous resorts, the person would not have ended up "needing guardianship."

This argument is partially valid, but largely irrelevant. The fact is that by the very nature of social stratification, states are always oppressive to all sorts of lowly people, and state default is, and will remain, a universal. On the other hand, individuals function much more erratically than states, in that at least some individuals can always be found to function morally with and on behalf of a vulnerable person, while the same is simply not true of established states which are oppressive by their very nature. So if we take away legal guardianships by private citizens (or, for that matter, informal decision-making by one person over another), then we have actually played into the hands of the universal oppressiveness of states.

The radicals are also ignoring the very long positive history and image that guardianship has had for over 2500 years, particularly prior to the era of social Darwinism. For instance, guardianship was widely practiced in respect to orphaned minors (of which there were many until relatively recently)—probably much more so than in respect to competency-impaired adults. Unfortunately, it is in the nature of things that instances of abuse of guardianship have been much more likely to be recorded and transmitted to us than the innumerable instances of conscientious and selfless guardianship that did, in fact, have the welfare of the ward at heart.

At their milder moments, the anti-guardianship radicals refer to guardianship as "discriminating," but they have also (ignorantly, combatively, or even deceptively) interpreted guardianship as "extremely intrusive" when, in fact, the opposite is normatively the case. Considering the kinds and amount of powers that guardians may possess, it is absolutely remarkable now, in the vast majority of instances, these guardianship powers have been used in an extremely restrained fashion. After all, it is quite common for people under guardianship to make absolutely zillions of decisions without being overridden by a guardian. Even a severely retarded person may make several thousand decisions (perhaps even tens of thousands) every day, and therefore, guardianship decisions over such a person may affect no more than one in a million of the person's decision acts.

At their less-than-mild moments, the radicals have gone as far as to liken guardianship to institutionalization—which goes to show how ignorant or insane this movement is. First of all, if one ignores the fact that at one time, people became wards of the state when they became institutionalized, vastly more people used to get institutionalized than were ever under non-institutional guardianship; and since the 1970s, the proportion of people under guardianships of all kinds has continued to decline to a miniscule trickle. Secondly, institutions have controlled (and to some degree still do) vastly more of the lives of their residents than guardianship has and does. In fact, as mentioned, a guardianship may entail very rare intrusions, and may affect a very small proportion of the life of a person under guardianship, whereas an institution controls most of one's daily life every day!
One writer in the Fall 1991 Entourage went even yet further, stating that guardianship takes away a "distinctive mark" of a person's "humanity." Actually, to people of the modernistic mentality, such an assertion is not at all far-fetched. After all, since such people acknowledge no other (i.e., higher) source for defining humanity, they rely on the law to define what is human. And since they believe that the law can establish a person's humanity, then they clearly will also believe that the law has the capacity of depriving a human being of his or her humanity, and they are quite commonly quite eager to see, for instance, the unborn defined as nonhuman nonentities before the law. In reality, all the law can do (as it has done) is to deny the fact of a human being's humanity.

Considering the enormity of the harm being done to competency-impaired persons, the amount that can be attributed to misuses of legal guardianship is truly microscopic. In fact, we would go even further and say that compared to all formal, or organizational, or paid arrangements related to service, advocacy or protection, individual private guardianship has probably worked as well, or better, than anything else. The one sure-fire way of making absolutely certain that one improves on it would be to kill all human beings.

Thus, one of the things that the above arguments against guardianship reveal is a common belief of the religion of modernism, namely, a denial of the imperfectibility of the cosmos and the human estate, and a pretense (even demand) that human, societal, and especially governmental, arrangements can or should be perfect, and that those that are not are invalid or illegitimate. There is no forgiveness for the normative imperfectibility of the human estate—unless it involves the imperfections of unbridled license, which are lavishly allowed. The extremist anti-guardianship position is thus also one of many of the rotten fruits of the extremism of modernistic individualism, that exalts every human being as his or her own god, with absolute and limitless "freedom of choice," and that acknowledges no authority whatsoever above the individual. In its very title, which was "The Right to Decide," one of the Entourage articles also revealed (a) a modernistic bias to individualism, (b) a strong parallelism to the modernistic slogan "the right to choose," and (c) an implied assumption that everyone can "decide," which, as mentioned before, cannot be the key issue since it is blatantly untrue, in that some people can make no decision at all.

The modernistic position is not only concerned with (actually, obsessed with) one's own unbridled license, but also advocates such license both in society at large, for mentally impaired people, and to some degree even for children, apparently on the basis of two largely unarticulated assumptions. (a) If anybody's choices or wants were in any way whatever restricted, then one's own might also be, and thus defense of the license of others constitutes a defense of one's own license, and is in one's own interest. (b) By (falsely) attributing to children and the mentally limited or incapacitated the capacity for informed rational decision-making, one can pretend not to be responsible for such others! In other words, it is a splendid, noble-appearing excuse for no longer having to be one's brother's keeper—as the saying used to go.

As mentioned, the new anti-guardianship extremism is profoundly intertwined with an exaltation of constitutional and legal rights, since the existence or relevance of any other higher moral authority is denied. We understand this connection better if we recall that either explicitly or implicitly, modernism is materialistic, and the logic of materialism dictates that there is no legitimate authority for an individual human outside the human him/herself. This is why the construct of "rights" assumes truly religious proportions. It also tends to
replace—or dismiss into unimportance or irrelevancy—many other kinds of constructs, including responsibility, competence for responsible exercise of rights, morality, obedience, communality, mutuality, etc. Not surprisingly then, in the discourse of the anti-guardianship extremists, we hardly ever find any language having to do with people's obligations toward each other, or with the obligations of the strong or competent toward the weak or competency-impaired. Indeed, these very distinctions are hardly even encountered in such circles. Relatedly, one also hardly encounters constructs of personal duty.

This entire mentality also uses language (such as guardianship "taking away freedom") which constitutes a crass denial of the reality that children only gain freedoms as they become competent to exercise them; and that historically, the attainment of adult status has been seen as a form of broadening of one's freedoms, rather than that childhood had been seen as a form of denial of adult freedoms to children. Thus, whenever in the past a mentally retarded child was denied certain rights when it came of legal age, that was not seen as being the same as when previously possessed prerogatives were taken away from other people. The latter would be the case when people who once were competent were put under guardianship, as might happen in the case of an insane or elderly person.

The fact that we are not just caricaturing the modernistic radicalism is further underlined by the following kind of thing its proponents say (as they did in the above Entourage issue): "when a person requires assistance, the best person to assess the circumstances is that person him or herself." Have those radicals ever seen a drunk? An infant? A comatose person? Or even an extremely unwise, self-destructive, moderately retarded person who lacks all sorts of competencies? Or any of the throngs of retarded people who ended up in prison or dead out of sheer stupidity?

Elements of the anti-guardianship insanity seem to be a bit hypocritical, since short of a form of decision-making-dumping, the major alternatives proposed by the anti-guardianship lobby (subsumed under the term "supported decision-making," which of course has already become SDH) are not only naive at best, but framed in the vaguest of terms.

The very first thing that is wrong with the construct of "SDH" is that some people make no decisions whatever, and therefore, there is nothing to support.

One example of what may be proposed under "SDH" is "legal acknowledgment of joint decision-making of a person with families or supporters"—again, all very vague, with not a hint of analysis of how, in comparison to guardianship, this would be of greater benefit when balanced against its disadvantages.

A more escalative proposal is to accord to family members or friends the legal status of decision-makers. First, this is a form of guardianship without either the name or the safeguards. The safeguards issue is very relevant here when one considers that it is precisely from their families that some people—such as abused children, infantilized retarded adults, and increasingly, impaired elderly people—have to be protected. One should only consider that the bulk of the abuse that is inflicted on competency-impaired people is not inflicted on them by ordinary citizens on the streets, in stores, banks, churches, schools, parks, etc., but in three sectors: medical services, nonmedical noneducational services—and in/by their families.
Another proposal that reveals both the faith and the naiveté of the radicals is that "personal networks" (such as the above) be "registered" with the government so as to have legal standing to act for or with the competency-impaired person. Good grief! This would (a) denature informal, extra-structural supports, (b) bring them under imperial surveillance and control, and (c) be just about the worst thing one could do, since this would play right into the hands of imperial powers that always try to control anything that smacks of communality, insofar as communalities, and communal ways of doing things, are one of the things imperial powers fear the most, and which they constantly seek to undermine, replace or coopt.

Along the same lines, some radicals go one step further, and propose that the state fund mechanisms for building relationships and networks for vulnerable persons. Both of these last two proposals leave us in stitches laughing, since the imperial powers would dearly love to be in control of every last relational and communal tie in their realm.

Gazing in astonishment at the extremist anti-guardianship position, one cannot help wonder whether its proponents have ever known people on an intimate and prolonged basis who are severely impaired in mental competency, and have had ongoing continuity of personal involvements with them. If they have, then one has to conclude that a religion of individualism has taken over their minds and rendered them insane, so that their religion overrides the most blatant empirical evidence before them. Have these radicals gone so mad that they need guardians?

However, perhaps the gross exaggerations that accompany the modernistic positions on guardianship should not be surprising, considering that the entirety of modernism rests on falsehoods, lies and deceptions, and is intimately intertwined with deathmaking.

Obviously, one of the things that guardianship extremism boils down to is that, without any doubt whatever, the extremists would let a lot of unequivocally competency-impaired people die "with their rights on," as we have seen happen ever since dumping became popular in the early 1970s.

Events

A world congress on Social Role Valorization is being planned for May 9-13, 1994, in Ottawa, the capital of Canada. The event will take place at Ottawa University, and is being coordinated by Dr. Robert Flynn of Ottawa University, with the assistance of Michael Kendrick from Massachusetts. This event is certainly a must for anyone involved in SRV leadership. Preliminary ideas for the event look very interesting. This is also a call for submission of ideas and proposals for the congress, and for offers to prepare presentations for it. Any such should be sent directly to Professor Flynn at the following address, which is his temporary sabbatical address (962 Robert-el-Seguin; Ste. Foy, PQ G1X 4K2; CANADA). Dr. Flynn plans to select the presentation of the highest quality for inclusion in a volume of proceedings.

The congress will also be yet another occasion for the North American SRV trainers (who have been meeting periodically with each other) to further discuss SRV-related issues, particularly in relation to training.

"Workshop hunger." A participant of one of our workshops coined the phrase "workshop hunger," meaning the craving to attend a workshop given by the TI.
In 1967, Robert Edgerton published a book, entitled The Cloak of Competence, which was an ethnographic study of the lives of 48 mentally retarded adults who had been institutionalized for most of their previous lives. In 1991, Edgerton (Edgerton & Gaston, 1991) published a 25-year follow-up (I've Seen It All!) on the survivors of his sample who by that time were elderly. An overarching finding was that on the one hand these retarded adults had been highly at risk of what one might call predation, and on the other hand had always to rely heavily on others for support. Furthermore, with advancing years, declining health put them at extreme risks. Throughout their lives, their desire for well-being and companionship was so strong that they were prepared to even sacrifice their independence to satisfy these two desires. All of this pretty much bears out what parents of retarded children had been saying all along, and does not very well bear out the position of the "advocacy radicals" who would turn mentally handicapped people loose to "die with their rights on."

The above paragraph provides a backdrop of special poignancy to the film reviewed below, because Edgerton was one of its producers.

This documentary film tells the story of Ted, a slightly overweight 57-year-old man who was in a state institution for the retarded as a child, and apparently in various other institutions afterwards. He also claims to have lived for a time on the streets as a teenager. Among his more obvious stigmata of low mentality are marginal articulation, a mild speech arrhythmia, inelegant attire, and occasionally, eyeglasses that have been mended with tape. He now lives in a crowded single room in a residential hotel for the down-and-out in a bad section of a large southern California city, probably Los Angeles. Many people in this neighborhood are Hispanic, and many speak little or no English. He works from 9 pm to 5 or 5:30 am in an all-night laundromat, keeping the place clean and trying to keep out those of the homeless, drug dealers, prostitutes, and drunks who make trouble. He says that he hates the job and the troublemakers he has to deal with there. In one of the scenes, Ted is shown having run across a killing on one of his walks. Aside from the violence, killing, drug dealing, begging, prostitution, etc., in his neighborhood, there is an adult bookstore and a pornographic film theater. The streets are strewn with garbage and with people laying about. From the conversation in the film, we learn that Ted had his bicycles and his drums stolen by the kind of people who make up his world.

One of the sad elements is that in many ways, Ted is actually "above" so many of the other people in his culture. In a social environment that is obviously drenched in violence, Ted manages to escape a lot of it by either (a) not interfering when it goes on around him, (b) playing a clown role that tries to convert hostility and aggression from others into banter, and (c) occasionally accepting mild forms of aggression before they escalate into major ones. Another way in which Ted buys himself goodwill throughout the neighborhood is by lavishly handing out small amounts of money to people left and right, including a lot who virtually extort it from him in an exploiting fashion. Also, a chunk of his money goes to prostitutes. Considering how lowly his job is, and that he seems to eat out a lot, it is a surprise that he still has so much money left over to give away.

While Ted is on friendly terms with many people in his lowly culture, one wonders how many, if any, are really his friends, and one is not surprised to learn that one of his "friends" is a cat. A sad fact to contemplate is that if Ted should become sick, at the very least, it will probably mean a nursing home if he survives, because there is no one who would or could take care of him.

There is one amusing episode where one of the street people tells his woes to Ted, who advises him to "go see your father Reagan"—meaning, of course, President Reagan who initiated so many of the social policies that were so disastrous for poor people.
One of the most unfortunate things about the film is Ted's apparent obsession with sex. One contributing factor is probably the marginal street culture in which he lives, rife with pornography and prostitutes. Much of his conversation is about sex, the language that he and others use to talk about sex is gross and offensive, he is shown leafing through pornographic magazines in his room, and this room is littered with bottles and bottles of pills that he takes in hopes of increasing his sex drive and his potency. This can get on a viewer's nerves, and certainly does nothing to counteract negative stereotypes about mentally retarded people being oversexed and lacking more than a child's control over these drives. Ted's endless dwelling on sex may not even be driven so much by his sex urges but, judging from various scenes of the film, seems to serve him as a major vehicle for gaining and maintaining social interaction with others, since it seems to provide a mutual topic of interest. Unfortunately, a large proportion of his verbal discourse also consists of what one could call garbage talk, since neither he nor his conversationalists talk much of anything that is real. We can here see the effects of people living in an environment that, despite its hardships and threats, really lacks substantive reality, having very little to do with genuine labor, nature, natural rhythms, and so on. It is the same kind of alienated talk that one increasingly hears these days in more sophisticated forms in more sophisticated circles.

The only time we see Ted get any kind of "human service" is when he goes to a man dressed in white (apparently a physician or psychiatrist), and tells him in an endlessly voyeuristic session that he "can't get a hard-on anymore," and the man in white seriously discusses with him the possibility of a penile implant. This is a classic example of what we call model incoherency: someone who lacks almost everything might just be given a penile implant rather than the things that make for a better life.

One thought that occurred to us in viewing this film is that so many people in it could probably do alright if only their lives were stabilized by integration with valued people. But as it is, virtually everybody in the film seems to be socializing only with others of their own underworld sub-culture, often in or near homelessness, and not very far away from death.

Because there is no narrative or interpretation at all of the film except for one short printed paragraph at the beginning, it is rather confusing. For instance, Ted mentions going to "Manatic," the title of the film, but it is never explained what or where this is. Similarly, the identity of some of the other people in the film is left to the viewer's inference. This considerably reduces the usefulness of the film, because it leaves many important questions ambiguous if not unanswered.

The film is introduced with the following printed text on the screen: "Most intellectually handicapped individuals with IQs below 55 are living in large institutions or smaller group homes, regimented, supervised and warehoused. Regarded as incompetent and lacking freedom, they become inactive and of little use to themselves or others. What you are about to see is a very different picture of the retarded, one which tells us something of the human spirit."

This is a profoundly deceptive introduction, for at least the following reasons.

1. It equates institutions and small group homes, implying that both types of settings are equally bad ("regimented" and "warehoused").

2. It implies that even in smaller group homes, people are inactive and "of little use," when in fact, many residents of many group homes lead very active (even if not very integrated) lives.

3. It implies that the "different picture" that the film will show represents a life for retarded people that is preferrable to that of institutions and group homes, when in fact, the life that Ted leads is perhaps even worse, but certainly horrible in many respects.
4. It implies that Ted has an IQ lower than 55. Even though his institution records show that on one occasion, he tested at an IQ of 54, the film depicts a man one would judge to be mildly retarded, most likely with an IQ around 70. While he apparently cannot read or write, he displays many competencies, and very facile verbal discourse.

In summary, what we are seeing is a life sketch of a man whose asylum was exchanged for a jungle. This probably suits persons of certain liberal mentalities just fine—as long as they themselves do not have to live in the jungle which their social-political ideals or advocacies have created for others.

The sound background of the film includes a lot of music from a number of formerly popular songs, but all it adds is a surrealistic touch of artiness.

For what purposes might one conceivably recommend this film? We can think of only three. (a) To illustrate what dumping out of institutions results in, because even many people in expert roles in mental retardation seem to have not the slightest notion of the lives that are led by such dumped retarded adults—although this purpose would apparently be exactly opposite to that intended by the filmmakers. (b) To illustrate how out-of-touch even the experts can be. After all, one of the most renowned social scientists of mental retardation played a decisive role in making this film. (c) As an exercise in analysis, such as of the images conveyed about devalued people, and how to make or not make films about them.

1987, 53 minutes, color, sound; 3/4-inch videocassette; produced by L. L. Lagness & Robert B. Edgerton; & Regents of UCLA; purchasable for $100 from SBG/NPI, Room C9-943, University of California, Los Angeles, 760 Westwood Plaza, Los Angeles, CA 90024, 213/825-5731, 825-0205.

Other Resources

*The Person to Person/Citizen Advocacy Office of Onondaga County has compiled a directory of all known Citizen Advocacy offices in the US, Canada, Australia, and England. This is an absolutely essential resource for every CA office. It is useful so that the various offices can stay in touch with each other and with the wider CA movement, know what other CA offices are close to them, know where they might be able to refer callers and visitors, and possibly have access to them for other purposes. The directory is available for a ridiculously cheap $5.00 per copy from: Person to Person/Citizen Advocacy, 650 James Street, Syracuse, New York 13203, 315/472-9190. It has recently (6/92) been corrected and updated, so even people who have an earlier edition will want to obtain this updated one.

Human Service News

*One very big problem with the Americans with Disabilities Act going into effect in 1992 is that the term "disability" was used to subsume groups of societally devalued people who are devalued for reasons other than what would ordinarily be considered a "disability." Worst of all, a few out-and-out vices and antisocial behaviors were subsumed under the construct of "disability," which is bound to be image-diminishing to handicapped people, or to even vice- and menace-image them. For instance, under this law, employers interviewing applicants are no longer permitted to ask about a person's use of illicit drugs in the past, even though this past may not have been very long past. Thank goodness, employers can still "discriminate against" people with certain vices, such as fire-setting.
One of the things that remain to be seen is whether in its totality and over the long run, the law will do more good than harm to handicapped people. After all, what it asks even of very small employers could wipe out a great deal of good will, and might precipitate a backlash, particularly if there are oodles of very nasty lawsuits with huge damage awards—a considerable likelihood. Even employers who win their cases in court are apt to incur huge legal bills. One thing is absolutely certain without any doubt whatever, and that is whether handicapped people win or lose, the lawyers win.

*One of the best human service news (if it is true) of a systemic nature that we have run across in a long time is a study that California's "workfare" scheme, adopted in 1985, is showing strong signs of working, and of helping people break out of a long-term dependency cycle. However, not every scheme that is given the name "workfare" is the same.

*Perhaps one of the grossest forms of institutionalized discontinuation of relationships in human services is the personnel or civil service practice of "bumping" (on which we have reported before) that has been adopted in many public human service systems. When a job gets eliminated because of reorganizations or budget cuts, then instead of being fired, the person in that job is accorded the privilege to choose to move down to a position lower in the personnel hierarchy by replacing (bumping) an individual on that level. That person in turn can "bump" somebody yet lower, and so on all the way to the bottom, where somebody finally gets extruded with no one lower left to bump. One can call this a relationship discontinuity chain reaction, because a single personnel change at the top could result in personnel discontinuities in close to a dozen positions. One obvious implication is that scores—and perhaps hundreds—of hapless human service clients lose continuity of functioning and contact with their staff members because one human service worker at a high level refuses to give up his/her job and get a job elsewhere, not to mention that the self-same worker displaces his/her own job elimination downward to a totally uninvolved lowly worker.

*A most bizarre thing is happening in Indiana. The state is trying to charge former institutional residents for the cost of their institutionalization many years ago. For instance, one retarded man who was released from an institution after nine years in 1974 was informed in 1992 (18 years later!) that he owed the state $18,000. Also, when former residents now are entitled to a state tax refund, the state seizes the refund and applies it toward their "debt" (7/92 clipping from Joe Osburn).

*New York State spends 60% more on its public education system than the national average, has succeeded in steadily increasing the teacher to pupil ratio to 1:14 by 1991, and in reducing average class size to 23.6. Yet more than 50% of all expenditures go to administration rather than class-level education—and pupil achievement scores have dropped steadily, and more high school graduates going to college had to take remedial classes.

*In 4/92, we achieved a deep insight into what is going on in human services. Namely, we were able to perceive and formulate that human service disfunctionalities are now coming at such an increasing rate and variety that they have overtaken the pace in breakthroughs in understanding them. No sooner has one been able to formulate the dynamics of one class of disfunctionalities than more than one new class present themselves!
Social Role Valorization

*Here is another illustration of the superiority of SRV over normalization. Normalization came to sports competitions of handicapped athletes (including the 1992 Paralympic Games in Barcelona held in parallel with the international Olympics) in the form of requirements that the handicapped athletes be tested for drugs. It would have been social role-valorizing instead of normalizing if one could have said that drugging may be common among the decadent athletes of the regular Olympics, but is virtually unheard of among handicapped athletes.

*In 5/92, Doug Mouncey gave us a poster of unknown provenance that he had found that proclaimed "senior citizens are the biggest carriers of AIDS," followed by an unflattering picture of an old man and the following listing: hearing aids...bandaids...rolaids...walking aids...medicaid...government aid.

*Brainwashed by the mentality of modernism, family members who have someone elderly close to them have begun to speak in terms of having "lost" them once they begin to have "Alzheimer's disease." For instance, when a man "got Alzheimer's," his wife spoke in terms of having "lost her husband" and her children having "lost their dad" (Aging, 363-363, 1964).

*To our amusement, we learned in 5/92 that there is a syndrome associated with mental retardation that has the acronym TORT. Next, someone will discover MR syndromes with acronyms like TART, TURD, etc.

*Social role-valorize them by killing them! In the lead article of the 5/92 issue of the American Journal On Mental Retardation, two professors from Columbia University argued that mentally retarded offenders should not be exempt from the death penalty because that "undermines the very assumptions required to restore respect and value for citizens with mental retardation as participants in society." We have here another instance of how SRV is superior to the normalization construct, in that being put to death for committing certain crimes may very well be normal, but certainly does nothing to enhance one's social role. In the ensuing debate, Robert Edgerton from the University of California in Los Angeles (perhaps the most prominent anthropologist who has dealt with mental retardation) agreed with the Columbia professors. (See our above review of the film Edgerton produced).

Perhaps the authors felt that there was some validity to the old saying of someone being worth more dead than alive.

Environmental Health

*Pyotr Kravchanka, Byelorussian Minister for Foreign Affairs, cited Revelation 8:12: "A great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the water--the name of the star was Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from waters that had become bitter." He then noted that in the Slavic tongues, wormwood (a bitter grass) is called chernobyl, that one third of Byelorussia is now polluted by the Chernobyl nuclear accident, and that hundreds of thousands of its acres will be uninhabitable for thousands of years (Plough, 11 & 12/91).

*The public has not become aware yet that all over the world, both the eatable and uneatable mushrooms are dying out in a mass extinction. Without them, forests may not be able to survive. Apparently, the same environmental degradation that is killing them is virtually wiping out the amphibian frog.
population of the world as well. In addition, edible fungi in Eastern Europe are reported to have suddenly become deadly. While this is being ascribed to a mutation, we also suspect that the fungi may have taken up radioactive fallout from the Chernobyl disaster.

*In just one central NY county, there are 3 nuclear power plants. In 12/91, all 3 had to be shut down because of malfunctions that were unrelated to each other, and some had to be shut down several more times during the month.

*Even Time (21/10/91) had to admit that almost 60 years into the nuclear age, and despite all the lying promises in between, the US does not have a reliable long-term plan for disposing of radioactive waste, and that most of its "temporary" storage sites of such materials are de facto permanent storage sites.

*There are more than 32,000 hazardous waste sites that are known in the US that qualify for the so-called Superfund cleanup, with the total estimated to be about 75,000. The US Department of Energy that has been making nuclear weapons under its misleading cover has polluted so many of its sites so badly that to clean them up is estimated to cost $100 billion at the minimum, possibly as much as $360 billion. It probably would have cost a tiny fraction of this to prevent the pollution in the first place. A really good cleanup is estimated to cost a trillion dollars, which is a thousand billion. One fact rarely mentioned is that even after a cleanup, there would still be much hazardous waste about, since cleanup often means merely condensing the waste rather than eliminating it (Science, 21/2/92).

*In 11/91, a train wreck over a bridge in Kentucky ruined the bridge and caused a big fire. It turned out that the train included a freight car with 90 cluster bombs that had been coupled very close to a tank car of a highly explosive chemical used to make plastic (e.g., SHJ, 20/11/91).

*There are 3 million acute pesticide poisonings among agricultural workers in the developing countries alone, with 20,000 of them dying therefrom a year. Even in the US, itinerant farm workers are exposed to gross violations of health practices the way they are exposed to crop pesticides. The US is a major exporter of these pesticides, and these are coming back to roost in the form of pesticide-contaminated imported fruit and produce, most of which slips by undetected, particularly since the government is not very interested in the issue (USN&WR, 10 June 91).

*USN&WR (1 July 91) declared the US Forest Service to be "out of control" because of an irrational system of incentives that rewards it for felling trees, harvesting worthless timber, giving away the public's forest resources, damaging the environment, and trying to please the logging industry. It documented one instance where the forest service sold timber rights in order to thereby obtain funds for an inventory of archaeological sites—which were actually destroyed by the very timber cutting that it sold. Of money allocated to wild life improvement, only 3% actually goes to this purpose.

*In some impoverished Third World countries, First World strategies of eradicating rats with synthetic pesticides have instead had the effect of killing the rats' natural predators, such as snakes and owls, resulting in a catastrophic explosion of the rat population. This happened in Bangladesh, where armies of rats have destroyed vast stretches of fields, orchards, and even railroad tracks.
US firms have established themselves just across the border in Mexico and there are befouling the environment in ways comparable to what happened in East Germany and other Eastern European locales prior to the collapse of communism. One way in which they can keep down costs is by hiring girls as young as 13 for less than $1 per hour, and have them work under the most hazardous conditions. One of the numerous consequences of all this is a dramatic increase in congenitally damaged babies. Another consequence is a dramatic increase in hepatitis because of polluted water (USN&WR, 6 May 91). In the long run, the consequences of these offenses will find their way back up north and take their revenge in unexpected ways. People who are gifted with wisdom know this, and those who are merely smart do not.

In Germany, up to 15% of all children now suffer from asthma, and with many of these, it is becoming a life-long problem. In many other countries, asthma deaths have been increasing in all age categories (AW, 5 Aug. 91).

Anyone who does not take radical measures to protect their eyes during sunshine will probably get cataracts because of the destruction of the earth's ozone field. Because of stupid people such as our poor president (which is actually an extremely kind interpretation of motives), we are all apt to end up with cataracts and skin cancer.

When the first scientific reports came out that predicted the ozone loss, "the reaction was zilch" said one of the scientists involved. Now, even if everything were done to stop entirely what causes ozone loss, it would take at least 100 years for the atmosphere to return to normal. This phenomenon underlines that if one always waits until one has certainty about some deleterious development, it is usually too late to do anything incisive about it (Time, 17/2/92).

Four organizations with positive-sounding names are actually fronts for business and industry to do the exact opposite of what their names suggest. The Alliance for a Responsible CFC Policy is working to replace one ozone-depleting gas with another; the Council for Solid Waste Solutions is trying to prevent recycling or packaging reductions; the American Council on Science & Health tries to convince the American public that pesticides and food additives are not health hazards; and the National Wetlands Coalition tries to destroy government protection of the environmentally critical and rapidly shrinking wetlands. By the way, the Bush administration has thoroughly agreed with this latter aim, and because the wetlands were not being destroyed fast enough, it proposed in 1991 that the definition of wetlands be changed so as to de-define half of the shrinking wetlands as being wetlands (Greenpeace, 1/92, though the journal is mismarked as 1/91).

The single most important survey of US eating habits, conducted at a cost of $7.6 million between 1987-88, was so poorly designed and conducted that the results appear to be inedible (unusable). The study had been contracted by the US Department of Agriculture to a private Philadelphia vulturing firm that was, in turn, a subsidiary of an accounting firm (Science, 20/9/91).

The scientific community has been surprised to learn that the oceans are absolutely loaded with viruses, and that many of these are quite dangerous and can cause all sorts of diseases in plants, animals and humans. It is even possible that people who spend more than the casual amount of time in ocean water, as during a vacation, may pick up diseases and flus without ever noticing the connection (Discover, 2/92).
Public or Population Health

*Since 1900, more than 100,000 workers have been killed in US coal mines alone. It was only when the public could actually see on TV the impact of a mine disaster in 1968 (one of an unending chain of such) that finally, in 1969, the first really meaningful law for mine safety was able to be passed (*I&T*, Summer 1992). Mine accidents and fatalities declined sharply thereafter, but mining is still among the three most dangerous occupations, together with agriculture and construction.

*An estimated 360,000 people in France are believed to have been infected with hepatitis from blood transfusions between 1980-1987, and 36,000 a year between 1988 and 1989, for a total of 460,000. Half of these are expected to develop chronic hepatitis, and 10%-20% of these of the liver. The former Director General of Health in France, the former head of the National Laboratory of Health, and the former manager of the National Blood Transfusion Center were all charged for failure to prevent contaminated blood products to reach the market during 1984-85, to draw attention to the risks, or to call for precautions. However, the 4/89 report that revealed the above facts was itself suppressed by the French government (*Guardian Weekly*, 3 Nov. 91; source item from Peter Millier).

*There are an estimated 43 million people in the world who are blind, most of them in the Third World where they have little recourse to effective medical help which, with even only simple remedies, could restore about half of them to sight. For instance, in India alone, about 17 million people could benefit from simple cataract surgery, but only about one percent of them get it (*Atlanta Journal*, 30/10/90; source item from Charles Mingle).

*Every year, 400,000 Americans die earlier than they would have otherwise as a result of their smoking habits (*Health Letter*, 5/92).

*By late December-early January 1991, the flu played a role in about 7% of all US deaths, but almost entirely among the elderly and chronically ill (AP in *SHJ*, 11 Jan. 92).

*One of the reasons why the mainstream of medical practice does not seem to be particularly interested in preventive health care is that preventive health care is uninteresting to them, and of a relatively low-technology nature. After all, the kinds of routine examinations made of patients who do not have complaints can be largely performed by technicians, nurses, or nurse practitioners. No wonder that when it was proposed in Britain in 1991 to make routine preventive health care part of the national health scheme, the medical profession objected vigorously, claiming it was a waste of time and resources.

*Syracuse has the seventh-highest infant mortality rate in the US, and the highest rate for "black" infant deaths of all US cities. One might also contemplate that Syracuse is not exactly blessed with a low level of transmission of sexual information, nor a low abortion rate, and thus these factors do not account for its relative national standing on the above statistics.

*Children have played with marbles since prehistoric times. Now the US government wants to require marbles to come in packages that warn people that children may choke on them. Expect warning labels soon on pencils that they can be used to poke out eyes (*SHA*, 1 March 92).
The number of low-weight babies who survive has been increasing, and many grow up with heads that are abnormally small, but not small enough to be noticeable by ordinary observers. This abnormality is usually well established by eight months of age, and is highly correlated with poorer mental performance later on, including difficulties in school (APA Monitor, 11/91).

Other Health-Related News

*A 6/92 study reported that virtually every medical journal carries drug advertisements that violate the regulations of the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for fairness and balance, with 92% of the advertisements appearing to violate at least one regulation, and 38% violating 5 or more. But the FDA has taken legal action for such violations only twice in the preceding 24 years (Health Letter, 8/92).

*Drugs and medical devices require all sorts of governmental approval before they can be marketed, but new surgical or diagnostic procedures can be performed without anyone being obliged to review them for effectiveness, or even safety. Four of the most common dangerous diagnostic or surgical procedures are angiograms, balloon angioplasty, heart bypasses, and radical mastectomies.

Roughly a million angiograms are being performed in the US every year; 90% of them may be unnecessary, and yet the death rate from the procedure can be as high as 0.5%. To add injury to injury, the test is not a particularly revealing one in many cases.

There are an estimated 300,000 balloon angioplasties a year in the US at $15,000 a piece, but with death rates of 2-4% either during the procedure, or within a year. There has been no study that this procedure adds to life expectancy, and it may even do more damage than good to arteries.

We have commented before on the heart bypass scam which apparently kills more people than would have died of the disease it was supposed to cure. We have also reported before on the very dubious evidence for the benefits of radical mastectomy.

*Even though a significant percentage of such surgery has been revealed to be quite unnecessary, research has shown that heart surgery will expand to consume (i.e., to occupy) the available supply of heart surgeons—but only in regard to Caucasian patients. "Black" patients may not even get it in those instances where it might do them some good (AP, in SHJ, 18/3/92).

*When women have heart attacks, they have a much higher chance of dying than men, and are twice as likely to die within the first few weeks. One of several reasons is that they are only about half as likely as men to get the standard kinds of tests that men would get with analogous symptoms (AP in SHJ, 20/3/92).

*Several of the ten most frequently prescribed drugs in the western world are exclusively gynecologically-related. The significance of this is further brought out by the fact that three of the four most frequently performed surgical procedures are exclusively gynecological (Legacy, 1/92).

*Electronic fetal monitoring is now used in about 75% of US births (NC Register, 1 April 90).
*A family in Dallas with no health insurance had a 4-year-old child with a chronic lung problem. On a visit to British Columbia in Canada, the child had an acute episode and had to be admitted to a hospital. Amazingly, there she had to stay for two years because no American hospital could be found that would take her. She cost the Canadian government $1 million during this time. (Burlington (VT) Free Press, 4 Aug. 92; source item from Susan Mack)

*At a 4-day medical conference on lung cancer in Melbourne, Australia, participants were intensively exposed to reports about the association between smoking and lung cancer, but it turned out that about 20% of the 1200 delegates, many of them physicians, smoked in between conference sessions (Age, 12/91; source item from Michael Steer).

*A long article on leprosy is found in the 4/92 issue of Bible Review. Leprosy, which is now often called Hansen's disease in an effort to detoxify its image, is still one of the most widely distributed diseases of our day, ranking among the 10 most common diseases in the world, and is found in at least 140 countries, with perhaps as many as 50 million cases altogether. However, as has always been true with all sorts of plagues, many countries have tried to cover up the facts. Also during the 1960s and 1970s, both the scientific and popular press began to announce victory over leprosy, whereas recently, there may actually have been an increase in this disease. However, leprosy is difficult to diagnose and to differentiate from other conditions. It is therefore nearly certain that prior to modern medicine, some people were diagnosed as lepers who had other afflictions, while others who did have leprosy escaped undetected for a long time, and perhaps for life. People are told that it is extremely difficult to catch leprosy, but a lot of that is detoxification and deception. After all, there are 50 million people who did catch it from somebody or something, and it is small consolation to them to now be told how very hard it was for them to catch it, or that they might have prevented it if they had been more careful.

**Signs of the Times**

*Here is a classic instance of the modernistic entitlement mentality. A reader of Modern Maturity (4&5/1992, p.6), published by the American Association of Retired People, had become impaired, and wrote, "I hadn't planned on becoming dependent, and it makes me very angry." Who will this person sue? God? About the same time, the National Hemlock Society (for suicide) started a chapter in the Syracuse area. One of its founders said, "I've had a happy life, and I can't see myself having an unhappy death." Another of the founders included a "geriatric psychiatrist," and an insurance company officer.

*Newsweek (4 May 92) carried a 3-page article that interpreted the school system in California to be in utter collapse, creating what it called "a lost generation," and said that educators are "quitting in droves." Yet not long ago, California schools were said to be among the nation's best. One of several contributing factors is the "multi-culturalism" that is so highly "celebrated" in the PC culture, but which we interpret to have become a systems overload phenomenon. Declining public willingness to pay for schooling is also a factor. More and more parents who can afford it are pulling their children out and sending them to private and parochial schools.
*We read in 4/92 that a certain 82-year-old man by the name of Francis Bacon died "whose disturbing paintings of humanity in despair fetched millions of dollars and ranked him among Britain's greatest 20th century artists." TIPS tries to paint verbal pictures of the despair of human services and society, but apparently people would rather see it painted than printed.

*Perhaps we should not be surprised that after actors have become so successful running for political office in the US, political candidates increasingly use entertainment shows to either announce their candidacy, or as campaign media. Perot launched his presidential campaign on the Larry King Live show, Jerry Brown appeared on the Phil Donahue show, and Clinton made an appearance at the Arsenio Hall talk show, playing the saxophone and explaining himself (Indianapolis Star, 7 June 92; source item from Joe Osburn).

*In 6/92, we were first informed that there is a new type of joke that pokes fun at male stupidity, is apparently meant to be the counterpart for dumb blonde, bimbo, and similar jokes, and appears to be at least in part a form of feminist revenge. An example is the fictitious headline, "Miracle Baby Born: Has Both Penis and Brain." However, the dumb male motif has also found expression in other media, such as TV advertising.

Miscellaneous News

*A major article in Science (3 Jan. 92) took a global look at the status of children in the US, and came to some very depressing conclusions. It noted that there has been a dramatic decline in the proportion of children in the US. The number of households without children has grown from 49% in 1960 to 62% in 1988. One would have expected that this would result in a substantial increase in the well-being of children, but instead, the opposite has happened. Nearly 20% of children are now said to have one or more developmental, learning or behavioral disorder, and this rises to close to 25% in the teen years. Test scores on verbal abilities have fallen to an all-time low, and only 1 child out of 7 in 8th grade performs at grade level in math. There has been a sharp increase in children's poverty rates—and in their obesity. (In poor countries, the poor are underweight; in rich countries, poverty is highly correlated with obesity. In the US, obesity is a striking curse of poor women especially). Child abuse and child suicide have tripled in just a few years, and the child murder rate is climbing sharply.

Many of the above problems were attributed to the fact that an increasing percentage of children came from homes with only one parent, where both parents are working, or where the parents did not speak English. In households without an adult male, 1988 income per child was one third (!) of what it was where there was a male adult. All this despite the fact that income available to families per child, adjusted for inflation, had been going up, but had not been able to counteract the above problems. All these awful things have happened even as government purchase of goods and services for children, adjusted for inflation, has risen not only overall but also per child—but not as much/fast as for adults! Almost the only positive indicator has been a continued drop in infant and child mortality.
A growing segment among environmentalists has singled out population growth as the cause of causes behind environmental degradation. What they often do not tell is that in many European countries, the birth rate has fallen so dramatically that the only way to maintain population levels has been through large-scale immigration from other countries. One is also not told that a catastrophic AIDS plague is drastically cutting down populations in much of Africa, and might even lead to a population collapse in the African equatorial belt. Aside from withholding these truths from the public, the above environmentalist sector has also begun to make war on the family, and on Christianity. It sees Christianity as interpreting the family as (a) a divine institution that (b) preceded, and is even superior to, the state. Obviously, this is only one of many contemporary attacks on the family, in this case coupled with a peculiar exaltation of the state that almost smacks of Marxism.

We are herewith warning our readers that we have become convinced that in American society, democracy is on its last leg, and will soon be dead. The reason is very straightforward: democracy requires a certain mental attitude from a very significant proportion of its citizens, including a willingness to give more than one takes back. The American people simply no longer have the necessary mental attitude to sustain a democratic system.

For those of our readers who do no believe in God, or do not trust that God will provide for them, we strongly suggest that they lay in some gold coins against the inevitable day that cannot be too far off when the economy, or even the social fabric, collapses.

Miscellaneous News

The deficit of the US federal budget for 1990 was about $330 billion, but in order to deceive the public, the President and the Congress conspired in a form of "legitimate fraud" to manipulate the transactions in such a fashion that it appears that the deficit would only be $126 billion, and thus only $16 billion above the timetable target set several years earlier in an effort to reduce the deficit gradually to near zero. This sort of thing underlines how totally corrupt and impotent the governing circles in the US have become, but also how unwilling the voting public is to put people of integrity into office.

According to a news analysis (SHJ, 18/12/91), President Bush has broken virtually every campaign promise he ever made. This could mean that he will be re-elected. No politician can get elected anymore by telling the truth.

After President Bush's vomiting spree in Japan, some news services began to release "just in case" obituaries on President Bush. (Source item from Michael Steer)

We have commented before on the plaint of many readers that there is too much "bad news" in TIPS, and that even when they and we try to find "good news," the purported good news often turns out to be bad news instead, or merely less bad news than other news. We are therefore happy to report that on 30 December 1991 (appropriately enough in the Christmas season), we received much good news in our mail—so much that we had to disperse it over a period of days to the TI staff, because they have become so accustomed to hearing bad news that we were afraid they wouldn't be able to survive in good health from such a surfeit of good news
at once. Readers will be interested to know that the good news had to do with
large book orders, multiple requests for our services, people paying us for work
done earlier, editors accepting manuscripts, and an occasional moral service
worker who lost his/her job for having done the right thing.

*In the US, the tax structure channels 25% of the gross national product to
the government: This is a peacetime record (Newsweek, 4 November 91).

*Modern complexity being what it is both despite and because of
computerization, the US Internal Revenue Service has been losing 2 million tax
records every year in its offices. In addition, millions of other documents
disappear without a trace in transit from one section to another. Usually, all
this is to the benefit of the respective taxpayers (AW, 22/4/89).

*Canadians may be surprised to learn that as bad as the national debt is in
the US, it is infinitely worse in Canada. Of every US tax dollar collected, 17¢
go to service on the national debt, while in Canada, 30¢ do (Time, 9 March 92).
This bodes ill for Canada's economic and social future, and for formal services.

*Newsweek (4 May 92) carried a major article on contemporary slavery,
claiming that as many as 100,000,000 people in the world are in some form of
slavery. This may be out-and-out ownership, as is still practiced in Mauritania,
or more likely something like debt bondage where people are put into a situation
where they are indebted and the whole family has to work from one generation to
the next in always futile efforts to get out of debt. In many countries, so
called "guest workers" exist in a de facto state of slavery. Arabs are
particularly likely to be slave masters, and particularly so over dark-skinned
Africans or people from the Indian subcontinent. In Asia, girls are commonly sold
into sex slavery.

*The chairman of Corning gave a speech at Syracuse University, entitled "Six
Strategies for Total Quality," copies of which were then sent out in 11/89 to
various people—with the pages out of order.

*An interesting controversy has risen in the US as to what should happen
when parents disagree strongly with major features of an individual educational
plan drawn up for their child by a school system. In fact, the issue has reached
the courts, and all sorts of organizations have taken positions on the issue
(source material from Guy Caruso).

*Australia was founded as a colony of convicts and exiles from Britain, and
yet anyone who wants to go to Australia today for any reason has to apply for a
visa which asks—without any consciousness of irony—"have you been deported or
excluded from any country?"

*The study of events that are apparently real, but difficult to explain by
the laws of nature, has been called higgledy-piggledyology (Science, 1 May 92).

*Occasionally, Science Watch publishes a listing of the world's most
prolifically publishing scientists. A Russian chemist led the list for the
1981-1990 decade with 948 publications, or one every 3.9 days. Even down in 20th
place, another chemist had a publication every 11.3 days. It is quite obvious
that none of these people can be involved in personalistic human service (Science,
17/1/92).