

1

Aphorisms of a Burned Out Pessimist

Burton Blatt

I have confronted the foul,  
and we are all people.  
I have been to the bottom,  
and it is a part of the human continuum.  
When appearances tell you that nothing remains,  
you either die or become an optimist.

Optimism is not in believing that  
things will turn out well, objectively --  
But, in believing that one can face things,  
subjectively, however they turn out.  
Optimism is not in feeling good --  
But, in feeling that good has a chance to survive.  
Optimism flows not from defeats  
and bitterness, or victories and joys, of the past --  
But, in being here now, knowing that  
the past has strengthened you.

Optimism is in believing there is a grand design,  
that holds eventual Good -- for each of us.  
All optimists are lucky people.  
As all lucky people are optimists.

The lucky man neither works to live,  
nor does he live to work.  
His work is a necessary one part of his life.  
He has difficulty deciding what is work  
and what is pleasure, not because he  
cannot recognize joy in leisure but because  
he does not encounter drudgery in work.

The lucky man knows that the language  
of computers will not replace the language of  
humans,  
The hardware of technocrats will not  
decelerate the thinking of thoughtful people,  
The technological process will not obscure  
the humanitarian ethos.  
And, the Group will not overwhelm the  
person.

---

1. Presented on an occasion the writer will  
long remember, September 20, 1969.

The lucky man is rarely asked to  
climb a mountain of Moriah,  
He is rarely forced to choose between  
love and duty,  
Between compassion and justice,  
Between humanity and integrity,  
Or between friend and friend,  
When he is required to choose, he makes his  
own decision.

The lucky man is judged for those things he did --  
not for those things others believe he should have done --  
For his accomplishments as well as for his failures --  
For that which he attempted as well as for that in  
which he succeeded --  
For his lovely defeats as well as for his glorious victories --  
For his intentions as well as for his credits --  
For his credits in spite of his intentions --  
And, for the style and process as well as for  
the content and achievements of his life.

The lucky man walks with the belief  
that his friends are steadfast, in spite of  
his defects, not because of his virtues --  
In spite of his thoughtlessness,  
not because of his generosity --  
Not because of what he may give to them,  
but because of what they must do for him --  
Because they need him as he needs them.

The lucky man has been taught to  
love, because he has been loved.  
He has learned to care, because he  
has known those who care.  
He can give something he values,  
because he has been given all that is priceless,  
He has learned that there is never shame  
in true emotion, never embarrassment  
in true feeling, and never fear in truth.

The lucky man has a wife who believes  
he is a lucky man.  
He has children who, in their maturity, continue to  
believe he is a good man.  
He has parents who respect as well  
as love him  
And he has brothers and sisters,  
and uncles and aunts who do not envy his luck.  
He has everything.  
And, he has this moment.