

Participation and Grooves

If I have figured out anything as a "strategy for our situation" it is that participation needs to increase and alienation needs to decrease. Being before knowing: it is becoming a matter of life and death for us all.

Over the past few years it has come to my attention that all three varieties of proliferating weapons of mass destruction – biological, chemical and nuclear – can be made small to very, very small and can be designed, packaged and delivered by one person. Armies, navies, the heavy machinery of militarism and war itself are all obsolete. Terrorists can and will be working in very small groups or individually. Any child anywhere in the world who grows up without getting into the groove, can't find flow experiences, does not feel "part of" some bigger and more important purpose, can become ever more deeply alienated as an adult and is a potential threat to us all. Any one person who is not participating happily or at least feeling the possibility or promise of living happy, joyous and free, can easily drift off toward suicide or toward wreaking havoc on a world that is corrupt and meaningless, from his or her point of view.

Of course, "his or her point of view," the worldview of the alienated and in-the-know, is our point of view much or most of the time. I will never forget the day when a well intentioned professor of physics on campus, an all too rare "concerned scientist," called for a demonstration in front of the administration building where we would count down to the detonation of an imagined nuclear blast and then describe the destruction of our immediate environment, instant by instant. The activists, the engaged, the "progressives," the choir of less alienated (?) agents for social change gathered at the appointed time and place and the professor preached with some passion into the PA system: "During the first tenth of a second the entire campus and the Marriot Hotel are flattened!" A loud, spontaneous and unrehearsed cheer went up from the crowd! A pause. Laughter. Whispers. Open mouths in awe of how much we hated our university, its ugly architecture, its people and its commercial environs. Dismay at how much we hated ourselves -- that we could spontaneously cheer so heartily the announcement of our very own superswift annihilation.

Every university and college, certainly every primary and secondary school, needs a group of teachers whose primary focus and purpose is to reduce alienation and enhance participation in the learning community. The chapters in this section raise a few questions about the relation between "being" and "knowing," offer many definitions of "participation" and "grooving," and begin to suggest a "primary communication" vocabulary for talking about the blessings that flow from these actions.

See Section 8 for further thoughts on What is To Be Done. See the Music Grooves website and Appendix E for still more definitions of "participation" and "grooving". See Appendix G. for the "situation" that requires all the strategies we can muster.