

"The mass of mankind will never have any ardent zeal for seeing things as they are; very inadequate ideas will always satisfy them." -Matthew Arnold

I am living in a dream world, and my guess is that you probably are, too.

Every once in a while, do you get really depressed? Maybe it's when something triggers a memory of rejection or when you get into a situation that makes you feel vulnerable and alone. Perhaps you remember the number of people who will spend every day of their lives in a prison cell or you try to conceptualize the fact that hundreds of thousands of people in our country today do not have a place to call home.

The grim reality of life lies just below the surface. We avoid

it, we conceal it, and we lie about it, even to ourselves. Our times of depression occur when we fail at attempts to escape and we actually see the truth.

Let's look at an example. Jane Campion's film *The Piano* conveyed many examples of injustice in our world. Scott McLean's review of the movie in the *Davidsonian* represented his and our tendency to avoid dealing with the truth.

In the movie, a mute woman is bought as a mail-order bride. Later, she agrees to give sexual favors to a stranger in exchange for the ownership of her piano. Her young daughter, whom she locks outside

the house, observes her naked mother being molested through a crack in the door. Eventually, the woman's husband chops off her finger with an axe in a fit of jealousy. And Scott "found it difficult to feel anything but apathy for any of the characters."

McLean's blatantly apathetic reaction to the offenses of sexual abuse, domestic violence, devaluation of women, child abuse, adultery, and prostitution reflects the numbness of our culture. We do anything not to have to deal with facing pain. In efforts to avoid the truth, we have created a world of escapism.

But neither the truth, nor the

painful effects of the truth will just go away.

Another example: In McLean's review of *Philadelphia*, a movie about the tragedy of AIDS, he shares his feelings only about the movie's camera techniques and the actors' abilities to "pull off" close-in shots.

We also pull off concealing many social catastrophes in our society. We tuck our elderly away in "homes" where they won't bother us. The wealthy conglomerate in their own neighborhoods so they won't have to look at poor people. Addicts drown themselves in entertainment, fashion, and abusive substances in order to allevi-

ate the reality of pain they feel. Many people at Davidson laugh at their problems to escape from them. What they don't realize is that their laughter prevents them from experiencing true joy.

Reality hurts, but hope is real. I think we need to prove Matthew Arnold wrong, and develop a zeal for seeing things as they really are. Only when we have faced the truth will we be able to alleviate the pain that harbors below the surface, within ourselves and in our environment.

The next time you feel depressed about the painful truths in your life, let yourself feel the pain. Be true to yourself and to God. Bring your wounded spirit before your Creator and become a new creation. Only then will your hope become reality.

Rob King

The yin of human relationships.

Before I get started with my "serious" article, I would like to make one humorous observation. Doesn't the picture of Tom Bavis with those headphones on look sort of like Princess Leia? (If you have seen the movie *Spaceballs*, then you know what I mean.) Anyway, here's the serious stuff (and by the way, Tom, please do not take offense to my humorous observation).

A little half-naked brown man bringing the mighty British empire to its knees . . . A black Baptist preacher from Atlanta ending segregation in the southern United States . . . A twenty-two year old college student from St. Petersburg, Florida, saving a budding friendship from going down the tubes. So what do these three people all have in common you may ask? All three of us have experienced in some way the true effectiveness of the nonviolent method. (In case you haven't guessed it already, the two other people I have mentioned are Mohandas K. Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.)

So where is the connection? I'm not really interested in leading some massive social movement or conducting sit-ins at the Union Outpost.

To be honest, when I first heard about nonviolent resistance (notice the word "resistance," which means the method does confront the opposing party) I thought that it represented a great method for massive social change, but in my relations with other people I still adhered to my mother's militant Catholic outlook of just war.

From an early age, I was taught that if someone hits me or insults me, then I am justified in returning the bloody nose or caustic word with a similar counterattack, and even a little bit extra for good measure.

Even though we live in the refined and sophisticated Davidson College community where disputes are usually not settled with physical violence, I still think that we are all guilty of psychological violence in relationships. Countless times I have exchanged an angry word or insult with an even more cutting word or insult. I'll show him (or her)! No one can get the best of me.

Recently—I don't really know why I handled this situation differently—I handled a dispute with a newly found friend in a different way. Every time she would lash out at me or hurl an angry word my way, I would just smile and make

an even bigger, more deliberate effort to be nice to her. At first, she thought I was stupid (or something), and then she eventually became so infuriated with my constant niceness that the attacks grew more severe, and I started thinking about throwing in the towel and ending the relationship.

Right at this time, when I was ready to give up, a truly miraculous thing happened—we sat down and talked, were finally completely honest with each other, and we both ended up saving our budding friendship.

Wow, meeting belligerent force with the divine power of God's love. What a radical concept! And the best part of the whole experience was that the end result was extremely constructive. We are now able to become much better friends than we were capable of before the dispute.

So, what the hell does this have to do with the Chinese notion of yin? In order to answer this question, I will sign off with a single image.

Lao Tzu once described the awesome power of a tiny stream in relation to a huge boulder. The boulder looks extremely strong and durable, yet when a stream encounters such an obstacle in its path, the stream does not try to go through the boulder, but rather gently flows around the boulder.

Give this little stream a thousand years or so and the boulder will be nothing more than particles of sand flowing down the riverbed. This is yin. This is the true power of nonviolence.

Aftermath of drunk driving accident lingers

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faces. The funeral procession was miles long. Police officers escorted us across town to bury our dear friend. And as I said my last goodbye, I choked at the thought of never seeing him again, of burying another friend, of not making it glaringly clear when I loved someone.

My life changed that day. He died, and part of me died also. A part of him was in each of us, but the memory of the tragedy was blatant as we thought of a friend who lay in a coma just miles away, a victim of the same drinking and driving accident. He would awake weeks later with memories of a

Mustang and, vaguely, a close friend. He would never wrestle again, walk without a limp, talk without a slur, or look through uncrossed eyes. All of this for a couple of beers before trying to make curfew.

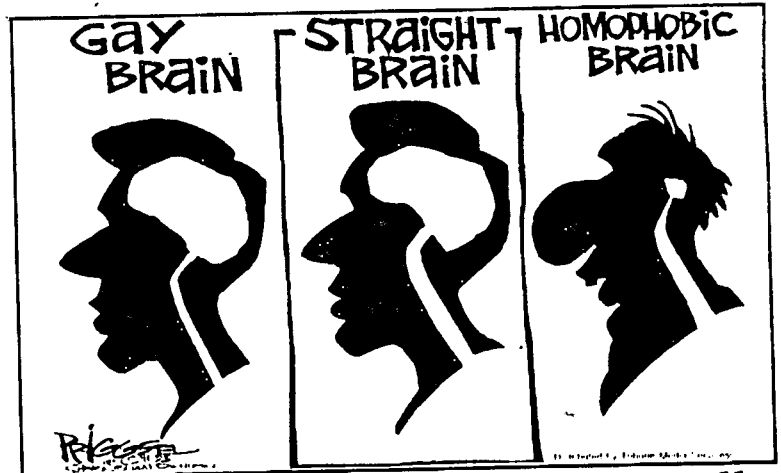
I lost two friends that night in a car wreck caused solely from ignorance—the belief of being invincible when you are young and beautiful and everyone loves you. One I will never see again; I will never laugh with him again or bicker with him anymore. The other friend I will never be able to truly speak to again. I will not be able to look at him and think of anything else—he is something different to me now, almost a walking lesson

rather than a person.

More importantly, Mark died without knowing how much I really loved him, how much he meant to me, how much I appreciated his friendship. That is by far the most painful thing I have done to myself.

I realize now how uncertain tomorrow is, how important it is for people to know they are loved, and how I never want to make that mistake again.

And "The Greatest American Hero" plays on in my mind. Mark will live within me forever since his time to be with us has passed. And the thoughts keep bringing him back. If only something else could.



The drug image continues to sell.

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able to most high school students because of the expense, but Phoenix's timely death does reflect the increasingly open attitude that the youth in America are taking toward illicit substances.

Much more now than a few years ago, but certainly much less than in the 1970s, the members of this generation are making mind alteration a central part of their social life.

The thing I find so catching about this development is the fact that it is taking place among the most environmentally and health conscious, politically correct group of young people to ever exist in this country.

Kennedy points out that, in Hollywood, it is much more acceptable to take heroin than to eat red meat, for example. River Phoenix was an avid vegetarian and a spokesperson for an animal rights group, while slowly becoming a kind of animal himself.

Many of the figureheads of this culture actually and blatantly condone drugs. The most media-happy example is the group Cypress Hill, whose songs such as "Legalize It" don't mince words.

And then the pop culture icons that try to send a different message are so hypocritical one can do nothing but laugh. *Beverly Hills, 90210*, a literal mainstay of American youth, is now running its second drug plot since that messy business with Emily Valentine. That is very commendable from a sociological standpoint, but it is hard to take social messages seriously when they come from Shannen Doherty. It's like hearing a public service announcement from Madonna exalting the joys of monogamy.

Drugs never disappeared,

though. For the last twenty years, The Grateful Dead has been one of the most money-making musical groups in the world. One reason is they tour year-round. Another reason is they sell drugs.

I doubt Jerry Garcia runs a drug ring from backstage, but The Grateful Dead certainly sells the image.

And it has sold well. Marijuana and LSD paraphernalia can be seen on cars, on walls, around necks and fingers, almost anywhere.

But does this necessarily mean that drugs, especially illegal ones, are on the return? Of course not, it just means that drugs are coming out of the closet—again.

After the drug culture of the 1960s lost its velocity, drugs went underground. Actually, they went above ground.

The late 70s and early 80s were the time of closed cocaine parties hosted and paid for by the ultra-chic and ultra-rich.

Now, according to Blonston's data, these parties are opening. Taboos in this culture have a way of losing their unattractiveness over time, and it is happening with drugs.

Proponents of the freedom of the 60s and 70s and the support of bands like Cypress Hill are being heard, it seems.

And this may not be a bad thing. Only when drugs are brought out into the open will the truth be clear.

Perhaps we will discover that drugs are a relatively healthy pastime compared with some of our other habits. Then again, we may discover the opposite.

What will be the outcome until then? Like Amy, a 22-year old club hopper, says in Kennedy's article, "You could end up like River Phoenix or you could end up in the White House."