



by Morgan Tannhauser

Since this is no daily, we should all know by now that "radical activist" and founding father of the Sixties Yippie movement Abbie Hoffman died in his sleep April 12, 1989, an apparent suicide, in ironically enough - the city of New Hope, Pennsylvania.

For many this passing is just a belated death knell of the whole Sixties ethos; it had long since perished, and Mr. Hoffman was simply responding to that fact having been so deeply identified with it. According to such appraisal we may definitively close the lid on the casket of the Sixties that's been sitting outside so long in the rain.

Mr. Hoffman's spirit is hardly violated however by suggesting that, in keeping with his exuberant methodology he is held closest to the collective psyche as a media-image; and that image freights a large amount of symbolic surcharge. Through that image (an impression that lingers potently in the general imagination) "the Sixties" comes to us as a particular interpretation. Through "Abbie Hoffman" as a psychic formula, the Sixties is passed on in a particular way. And it isn't so much that Hoffman represents a flamboyant advertisement for socio-economic and political change but that he stands for such a change, in the subliminal shorthand of psychic equation, as a means toward the transformation of Consciousness. He seems now to apotheosize the method belonging to the "inflammation of issues" as a catalyst for public action, and a wholesale Change of Mind.

The argument he presented always read out to the effect that issues, blown up to public notice through the media magnifying-glass would prove the necessary goad to rouse mass conscience from its torpor and indifference, to affect a decisive turn of heart. Implicit in such an argument was the confidence that critical issues carried an essential sympathy of substance, able to strike a resonant chord through the universal keys of identification if only struck loudly enough. This was in fact a very democratic idea; for democracy depends if nothing else on the responsiveness of the enfranchised multitude to the content of concerns that bear on the general weal. In that sense Mr. Hoffman had the "radical" character of the founding fathers.

Under influence, then, of the jocund Abbie-image impressed on the mass mind, the key was certainly issue; the message had the effective and therefore penetrating, symbolic simplicity of a cartoon (the "Yippies" indeed played Wile E. Coyote and Sylvester P. Pussycat to good effect): the modern means of mobilizing a complex, confusing society given to conditions of technological alienation and ennui was to use the competitive greed of the communications media, formally committed to the status quo, in the manner of a jujitsu expert flinging it into exposes and confessions it otherwise couldn't countenance on the forward momentum of its own, sensation-seeking avarice.

The Issue of "Issue"

As a consequence of several dovetailing factors, we seem to have let the Abbie-imprint set into a concrete pigeonhole conveniently categorizing the Sixties, allowing us in effect to file it away - and all of this as a "de facto" datum of psychic reality entirely independent of whether one personally liked, disliked or never heard of Abbie Hoffman! According to such a tacitly accepted interpretation - obviously passed along generationally as distilled, taken-for-granted wisdom - issue is the premier key to conscious change, the catalyzing factor that necessarily must serve to turn the general heart from fridity to kindled action. We've come to "understand" the Sixties according to the color of a light that makes all such turmoil and transformation filter to a matter of issue; everything, then, may be read in the explanatory context of issue, from the war to civil rights to psychedelia. The very meaning of mind-manifesting and consciousness-modifying agents such as LSD, by

this interpretation would be located in the "issue of their legalization", etc.

The silently suffusing, Yippie-energized Zeitgeist obviously served to subliminally inspire the "neo-social consciousness" of the Eighties; taking their spiritual cue from the Abbie, stars of filmic and musical renown sought to resume a continuity in the current by bringing to world conscience the media-magnified spectacle of world problems. They assayed to do this through fundraisers, concerts, benefits and drives rather than through riling an over armed police phalanx; but the principle remained constant. The chord to which this presumption resonated, had obvious harmonic affinity with the classic Sixties acknowledgment that government - the duly constituted "public sector" - was in no way a responsive organ as advertised, to be relied upon as the accountable agent for targeting and taking care of critical issues - and that as a consequence any expectation of positive change would have to shift to the private sector and the personal participation of every freshly concerned and accountable citizen.

But times, as they say, had changed. The revival of such a socially-mobilizing presumption in the Eighties played quite well, with no sense of discrepancy or divergence, to the Reagan refrain coaching the extemporization of public solutions through the private sector, making firmly implicit the basic federal unwillingness to address either global or domestic problems that had no fiduciary juice. This "taking for granted" the general notion that the public sector had no intention at any time of responding to or caring for critical public problems (!) as if that were now axiomatic for the era, was hardly the same thing as the government-baiting of the original model - but it sprang undeniably from the same source; in this way we can see an interesting consequence of extolling the primacy of "issue" in the context of a society for which there exists a deep discontinuity in the democratic apparatus between representation and its ostensible constituency.

The Drug-Store-Solution

Thus the media-inheritors of the echoing Yippie ethos eagerly rolled up their sleeves so as to put the collective shoulder to the problems that had been giving world governments such an apparently insoluble hard time. Also in keeping with the seeping esprit of the Reagan era, it was implicitly presumed that money was the universal solvent (another critical breakdown in the continuity of imagination between "then" and "now!") and that therefore the ultimate purpose of "issue" was to provoke sufficient sympathy or outrage on a public scale to open private pockets in precipitation of a downpour of dollars on the target-zone.

This we may call the "drug-store solution", the idea that there must exist something you can just purchase at the counter as long as you have the money, which will automatically furnish the made-to-order nostrum for any ache or ailment. After a while, of course, it became apparent that the "drugstore" solution had its hidden flaws. Bob Geldof, for example, the original organizer of Live Aid, walked off as we all know in the dispirited realization that (in keeping with the Reagan-era logic of the displacement of responsibility) it was he who was ultimately being held accountable for the inertia and resistance of bureaucracies, the corruption and criminality of governments through which the dollars were being filtered and fatally absorbed. It inevitably became apparent to the likes of Willie Nelson, Neil Young and J.C. Mellencamp that one couldn't put a Band-Aid on a wound festering from something greater than cash neglect, and expect spontaneous remission.

When however the shibboleth of Issue folds over itself like yesterday's banner in the absence of any more wind, there inevitably arises (in the disquieting lull) some vague intimation of the actual proportions and lopsided dimensions of the difficulty. Where cash-and-carry fails, it becomes progressively plain that the resistive structures squatting over the problematic landscape with the weight of privilege and position take their ponderous power and immovable air from the strength of real hearts and minds that stand in the way. It becomes plain that it's the inertia and resistance of consciousness rather than the mechanics or logistics of any given problem, which lies under the labyrinth of tangled concerns.

The real magnitude of the difficulty as it asserts itself following the flush of a foiled enthusiasm, predictably provokes strong psychic reaction - a reaction that affirms the deeper kinship of the "socially wakened" ego-pattern with {he inertial level of consciousness in general. In sudden confrontation with the reality behind the catchphrase issues (a reality that won't back down when its bluff is called, that refuses to yield to good intentions and a tax writeoff) consciousness just goes numb again. Like the tentative tortoise it contracts into the private carapace it had never really left, but from the portable enclosure of which it had proposed to stretch the long distance reach of a universal hand.

Already returned to the routine tedium and restive, brooding boredom from which it had sought relief in collective action, consciousness looks once around the empty stadium, asks "what happened?" and, finding no clues whatsoever in the

direction of issue-orientation closes down around the perfectly private and precious dimensions of its background monologue constantly murmuring in support of the ego behind every act.

Limit of the Interior Monologue

The David of the thinking mind occasionally takes it upon itself, to challenge the Goliath of the world-order with the slingshot of change; it is that feisty underdog spirit which we identified in Abbie Hoffman, so that for a while he could become a projection for our more noble ambition. What is discovered, by every revolutionary and pioneer regardless the degree of apparent success (and this includes our dear Abbie) is that the process of change does not resolve itself into a simple etiology, in which the personal application of force induces a one-way grinding buildup in the slow ponderous parts of reluctant but begrudged movement. There is no domino design. The inert architecture of the world-order exerts a resistance which is more than simply proportional to the sum of the assembled, ad hoc sections participating in the protest. The thinking mind discovers, suddenly or gradually, that the implement of change is not a personal possession even when the identity of the "person" is stretched to include a multitude of common cause. It discovers the principle of effective Ratio, i.e., the problem as to which sectors in the numerical subdivisions correspond to the greater proportion of summed powers contributing to the overall "action".

On the basis of this assessment, it is observed that the inertia of ingrained privilege is so great that it gives the distinct impression of pushing back.

The magnitude of the actual difficulty proves to be out of all proportion to the acceptable quotient of resistance figured into the structure of common psychological content; the thinking mind can't safely engage the polar parental principles when they're swollen to such unmanageable stakes of symbolization, inflated over the boards of the world-theater.



The flickering flame of "social awareness" inevitably lumines in closeup the gargoyle monstrosity operating behind any change, even in which it actively participates; that flame then pales predictably, having lost the ruddy confidence that first fed it regarding the outcome of anything that may (as a technical matter) be altered.

The mind numbs, returns to the more modest stature of its original project; and that project, after all, was based as well on an ideal of harmony and stability only belonging to a more personally proportional scale. Somehow the standard ego-model that implicitly characterizes the thinking mind of this world subscribes to a greater likelihood of success in achieving its untouchable harmony, its unshakable stability where effort is applied in the direction of some fantastic fixity proof against unanticipated change, the private

securing of coordinates and subduing of circumstances to perfect predictability and control - a one-way regulatory flow in which everything is covered, nailed down, reduced to an infinite consistency and descriptive self-conformance hermetic in its refusal to admit a single, un-selected dot of deviation.

What awaits "Abbie" after the turmoil and excited movement, what awaits all of us in the inevitable lull of the passing storm is the self-same inner monologue, the chronic self-talking that saw us through the turbulence as our constant conceptual counselor. What awaits the return to itself is, after all, the only thing that had been going on during all that time; what shows up to claim the identity of "Abbie" after its seeming diffusion through the social sphere, is that which had never gone anywhere. The incessant interior monologue that held old "Abbie" together beneath the divisiveness scarcely had the preservation of Abbie's face at heart but something of a more general aim common to everyone, i.e. the validation and stable completion of "selfhood", the perfect settling of that inbuilt ego-anxiety spooked by its own chronic emptiness and incompleteness.

It's for this reason that, in the aftermath, one can flee to Rio, resculpt one's features with plastic surgery, assume a new life and social identity in service to a whole new set of causes and still there is nothing going on but the expression of an implicit project of psychic being; there is the constant abstract value presiding over the flux of exterior transformations, conspiring to confect a continuity and maximum stability at the heart of the changeable ego-image by "averaging" its blinking self-presence through the mechanisms of memory and repetition, rehearsal and associative reinforcement: the stock-in-trade of the thinking mind. Such a compulsive reiteration and subliminal cycling of the essential "Abbie", juggles

its monologous contents at a particular rhythm and cognitive rate; its secret is simply that such a rate happens to be optimal for the support of the impressioned continuity or linear consistency of its synthetic parts.

Our real problem has always been, and remains, that we don't understand this mechanism behind the question "what makes Abbie run?"; we don't understand the nature of its effort, and we don't understand the larger context in which it takes place. Therefore we don't know how to slow either "Abbie" or ourselves to a monologous pace sufficiently subdued to permit a revealing shift to the side, where we can examine the whole process from a vantage that is not thoroughly submerged in its flow.

The Real "Visible Man"

If we could do that, we'd see that the characteristic rhythms of "Abbie's" thinking mind (that rifle the frames of his self-description like a book of animation-drawings) aren't simply a function of neuronal discharge localized in the brain, as science presently supposes; we'd see that the ratios and harmonics of the mind-brain patterns themselves, through which the identity-content of the thinking mind is structured, are regulated and complexly coordinated through the totality of subconscious processes physically describable as the autonomic system. We'd discover (with the resultant, opened Interior Eye) that the very rates and ratios in the interaction of the subconscious ganglia, plexuses, endocrine centers and physical organs that sustain "Abbie's" vital being, are coordinated through interdimensional fields with currents and energy processes carrying the psychic signatures of the subtle mercury-lights of the mind; in this way we would understand directly the "secret" sense in which those rates and ratios don't simply serve to sustain the vital vehicle, but in fact encode and lock in place the general allowable patterns or permissible, cognitive structures through which the continuum of thinking may most probably discharge. We'd see that the rhythms of subconscious current-interaction hold the very pattern of "Abbie" in place as an average psychic configuration, resonating to a self-enforcing system of ongoing identification.

That filtrate grid of polarized identity-patterning, we'd come to find out, extends to the perceptual processes; those processes aren't the expression of an independent sensory apparatus, they aren't fixed "givens" of the system at all. We'd see that the function of all "Abbie's" sensory systems was synchronized and closely correlated with the processes of his thinking mind, efficiently encoded in the autonomic circuits. We'd see that, since those rates and rhythms at which "Abbie's" subconscious current-energies interact is an actual variable, then the structure, tempo and content of his thinking process isn't set or permanently fixed, a "given" of the condition of birth! We'd come to know directly that those "intimately familiar" features of the ordinary overall identity are variable as well.

At this belated stage of planetary development however the ego-identity of the thinking mind still effectually rules, as "Abbie" inevitably comes to find out. That ego-identity accepts its order and conditional contents as fixed, indeed as absolute. This is how the compulsive delusion of its own permanence and infinite stability is sustained.

The Return of the Depressed

The level at which the ego-identity of this sphere operates, however, is functionally depressed (although, being subject to the variable factor it isn't permanent as a condition despite what the ego supposes). The routine rhythms and interactive harmonies of our sub-conscious-autonomic systems with respect to the conscious axis, which we take for granted as the necessary "norm", are feeble and low-scale in relation to the total scope of mind-body functioning potentially available. It is characteristic of the thinking-pattern at this general stage of ego-development that, where global circumstances grow greater in complexity and the coefficient of overall "resistance", less manageable and subject to personal influence, the ambition of the ego-project correspondingly recedes, the scope of its considerations retract; and, rather than face the requirements of promoting beneficial change through those field coordinates that in fact sustain and cross-correlate its centralizing "self sense", the ego presumes instead to lock out that whole category of Being so as to preserve itself against the antagonist potential for producing change. It should be clear that this psychic rhythm of expansion and contraction, the typical general flux between "we" and "me" is all of a piece; they are motions of the same basis structure, and coinhere like apple and seed. They are functions of the identical psychological pattern, so that no matter which role is in favor neither represents a superiority or transcendence over the other. They are manic-depressive phases, collectively shared and so unremarked. They're equally states of inertia.

And it is the index of inertia which current activists such as Larry Ephron (cf. book review, The End) cite as the real source of frustration in inducing positive change over pressing issues. It's the apparent resistance of consciousness itself, or its short attention-span even in the midst of activism at the front which proves more discouraging than the refractory character of the crises.

Death Wish and the Monopoly of the Thinking Mind

According to commentators such as Mr. Ephron, the peculiar inertia or indifference with which the most exigent and personally relevant themes are met bespeaks a kind of silently settling "death wish"; the public seems, in general, to have gone quite comatose, and the "body politic" hooked up to the artificial life-supports seems to have lost its independent will to live.

This noted reaction is the natural consequence of having approached ultimate challenges of life on the insistent terms of the thinking mind; exhausting its consideration of content (the material on which the interior monologue feeds) through the chewing up of themes, mastication of subjects and topical solutions all grown on the common level of concept, the thinking mind like any one-track specialist throws up its hands in despair proclaiming the obvious insolubility of the issue, the terminal character of its malaise.

The general state of contractile depression into which the psyche lapses as a consequence of having played the only hand it apparently has, can certainly be characterized as a "death wish"; the aggravated tendency toward the protectionist model of stability coveted by the ego-project, the exaggerated drive toward an untouchable fixity of compositional coordinates and perfect predictability to the infinite degree, certainly suggests the idealization of corpse-like properties. It is this inert, sarcophagus state that comes to comprise the extreme expression of the ego's ongoing abstract aim.

Yet this sense of ultimate frustration and despair bending collectively tomb-ward, depends for its bathetic over-valuation of itself and the exclusivity of its thought-problem approach on a selective forgetfulness. We began this article by pointing out that "Abbie Hoffman" symbolizes to us a particular interpretation of what the Sixties taught us. If the Sixties constituted a virtually unprecedented and uniquely "peculiar" revolution, it is peculiar as well in the sense that - almost alone amongst significant revolutions - its influence seems to have completely evaporated. What was really unique to that revolution has been all but lost, as if we'd had a very specific amnesia regarding the quality of that whole era.

What was "brought forward" from that revolution was an interpretation which is precisely not specific to the geist of that time. What was distilled out of all the creative turbulence and transferred along the bucket-line of the Seventies was exactly an element of continuity with the psychological structure that went before, not a gem salvaged from the actual defining discontinuity that made the Sixties what they were and which caused them to comprise such a break with every thing (including the hoary psychological structure) that had preceded.

So the "continuum" of wisdom that we intercept streaming out of the sluice of the Sixties decade does not display itself as continuous with the Sixties, but as resuming a continuity relative to the standard psychological viewpoints and conventionally available options that we identify as having walked into the Sixties from previous, stultifying eras of human consciousness. The "preserved wisdom" apparently brought to us by way of the crinkled, yellowed Abbie-image does not preserve the revolutionary value of consciousness demonstrated in the Sixties; it keeps in aspic the conventional glaze' belonging to the standard psychological structure, that glosses a common interpretation of causality making all the possible rotations of consciousness dependent on the "charge" or relative "value of intensity" belonging to the content of thought-contemplation, i.e. making all indicators of Mind dependent on the subject-matter of Issue.

An Amnesic Conspiracy

What is absolutely lost out of the Sixties in proportion as we accept such an interpretation, is the unique recognition that the real fulcrum of change with respect to any circumstance at all is the primordial leverage exerted through a basic transformation of consciousness.

There has indeed been a conspiracy of forgetfulness, not in the sense of a bunch of "controllers" getting together in a back room and deciding on a particular propaganda, but in the sense that the resurgence of the conventional psychic pattern (reeling from a Pandora's Box of Sixties unknowns and grasping instinctively for the security and pompous assurance of its "certified" values) produced an unstated complicity through all structures of society wordlessly resolving to misrepresent the Sixties Revelation as a deliberate psychological resort.

In this sense we've been emphatically hypnotized so as to forget the actual etiology exhibited by the unparalleled demonstration of the Sixties. We've been hypnotized into automatically repeating the mantram of "issue", hallucinatorily

misremembering the entire Scene as a kindling of collective consciousness through the brushfire of "social concern". And by just that measure we're induced to forget that the real catalyst was, after all, the pharmacological agent of consciousness-transformation; verboten a confession as it is in light of our trained reflex, we "remember" perfectly well that it was the LSD and mescaline, the peyote and cannabis that shifted the perspective so thoroughly, that critically compressed the span of time required to relocate in conscious terms so as to see all things in a new Light.

For, despite the way in which we've been cleverly coached, it was not at all axiomatic that the pressurized contents of the issues themselves possessed sufficient power to move consciousness in its inert psychological foundation. Indeed there is every reason to be confident that they did not, nor could they; for there had certainly been imperative concerns, fiery issues of comparable magnitude before that era - just as at present we can confidently suppose that if the severity and crisis character of issues were alone adequate to turn the trick and inspire a collective change of heart, we should even now be rotating wildly on the swivel of our inbuilt conscious variable toward a Holistic Vision of Reality millennial in its character, and cosmic in its scope.

It was, on the contrary, a sufficient change of consciousness that came first (often absorbed by cultural osmosis, it is true, for not everyone dropped acid!). And it was that basic, transformed consciousness which caught onto the issues as an active index of the interior change - not the other way around.

What It Was

We do not have to isolate the efficient "cause" of that consciousness-shift - i.e. drugs - as the indispensable ingredient for any, possible repetition of such a wholesale psychic reorientation (with respect to concerns of global stature, etc.); we do not have to affect a literalism of mind in the manner of present-day commentators such as Terrence McKenna, to revive an appreciation of the Conscious Factor. It is only too obvious and overstated that such catalytic powers as were confected in the alchemical labs of Owsley and Sandoz possessed drawbacks of "dependency" (not in the Jack Webb sense, but in the sense of having to rely on something inescapably extrinsic.)

If however we learned anything at all we should have learned that such modes approximated, for our drug-store-solution mentality, the keys potentially available through the natural but "presently inert" chemistry of our own organisms.

We should have learned that whatever was being cultivated or cooked to supply facsimile codes serving to unlock the dormant biochemistry of our systems, was only an exterior copy or imperfect parallel of quite organic elements that could be awakened and silently synthesized in the natural laboratories of our own being, if only we knew how to go about doing it.

We should have learned that whatever such exterior keys were furnishing artificially was simply in response to the inbuilt longing of lobes and hemispheres organized - by learning patterns - to operate at a relatively low and "unrealized" level of function, programmed to run at only a fraction of their joyful potential.

It is in this understanding that we can divine the instinctive justification even in the sometimes tragic drive to ingest the right agent or inject the right substance that will "turn on" potentials of the system presently starved and rightfully longing for their fuller development; we can see that it is simply a misplaced wisdom, turning in the wrong (i.e. the exterior) direction for that which can "be found most satisfactorily in the justified systems of one's own being. It is in the conspiratorial suppression of this insight that we create a deep rift with those magical factors of the Sixties we otherwise desire so desperately to recapture, for the sake of turning all present terminal problems around; it is through amnesia relative to this knowledge that we sense the real lesson of the Sixties has somehow simply evaporated, replaced by a spurious standard manufactured out of all the outworn material.

What It Is

It was indeed the elusive spirit of that knowledge that Abbie failed to secure; for even as he was being pursued, almost in Keystone fashion, by the combined police force of this world, he was living archetypally the pursuit of everyone after that one forgotten insight, that one irreplaceable Pearl.

It's only at the End, that we can ask with a reconciled heart "what has been learned?" So Abbie, do you know now, do you understand?

What has been learned?

Have we learned, have we really learned that it isn't in the "Issue?" Have we learned that consciousness in the reductive form of the thinking mind fails at a conceptual comprehension and goes numb, falling into a more depressed phase of its general low level state of mind-body composure? Have we learned, have we really learned that it isn't in "drugs"? Have we learned that drugs stimulate mind artificially to a momentary magnification of itself equal to its actual unity, in order to operate a more holistic perception; but that the extrinsic character of such effect makes it eternally superficial, and leaves a sense of loss all the more bitter for having been shown something basic to the Being now as functionally remote as the Grail, so leaving consciousness in depressive preference of the usual, amnesic numbing? Have we learned?

If we believe, after taking such a negative inventory, that we've exhausted the existential reserve, we may certainly succumb to a despair that correlates quite integrally with the average depressive state of our mind-body systems; but to that degree we will have once again for far-too-many-times running, overlooked the indispensable cornerstone that the builders perennially reject: the necessary change of Heart, the decisive transformation of Consciousness. Q