

ARTS WORLD

By BOB LANE

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"One person's opinion is as good as another's." This popular claim seems to be made more and more these days. Neither its frequency nor its popularity, however, guarantees its truth.

Often we seem to warm to this claim of equality on the grounds of fairness. It seems only fair to accept every one's opinion as a candidate for truth. And, of course, we should evaluate every opinion regardless of its source. But where we get confused is in assuming some connection of importance holds between a person and an opinion.

What we can agree to is that the ownership of an opinion has nothing to do with the truth or falsity of the opinion. We must learn to evaluate the opinion not the person who holds it.

Bobby Hull's opinion about razor blades is not better than mine — though his claims will sell more blades than mine, but his opinions on how to prepare hockey players have an excellent chance of being much more valuable than mine. He knows more than I do about hockey, but probably no more about razor blades.

I read recently of a teacher who asked his class to vote on two different reviews of the same performance. He apparently did not ask them to analyze or criticize the pieces, but to say which one they liked better. Obviously, the results of such an exercise tell us nothing about the merits or deficiencies of the items being "judged" but do tell us something about the teacher.

I have faced many a student whose opinion was that Shakespeare was boring. A few have changed their opinion after learning how to understand Shakespeare.

We all hold many opinions. Some are right and some are wrong. What we should concentrate on is the practice of the rational process which will tell us which is which.

All opinions are not equal. It is our misconceived notion of equality which leads us incorrectly to believe that they are. Today we are disposed to argue against rational canons of judgement and intellectual discipline. To the extent that we do so we are responsible for the pile of so called creative works produced today which are trivial, banal, and stupid.

We are only five years away from Orwell's 1984. His first sign of trouble was the corruption of the language. I think it was the Dodo in Alice's Caucus race who said "everybody has won and all must have prizes." Now that's equality.

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By RDLANE

Once upon a time there was a beautiful principality called Buena Vista which was governed by a fine, bold prince and his council of elders. Buena Vista was a beautiful kingdom of azure blue lakes, cool green forests with walk-ways, and fertile fields. From its position on the side of a beautiful mountain one could see the ocean and the rest of the landscape stretch out before one's eye.

The people of this kingdom were happy and prosperous and gladly paid tribute to the prince. For indeed the prince and his elders had caused to come to the kingdom prosperity and many good things such as musicians to play in the village square, philosophers and other wise people to talk to the people, and works of art to delight the eye.

Bands of players enacted tales of old for the people of the surrounding villages and produced many festive celebrations for all the people to enjoy. Indeed, it was said that Buena Vista was the best and most beautiful of all the 14 kingdoms making up the confederation of the People's Empire.

Into this peaceful kingdom crept an evil snake of a man called John of Petula. John of Petula gained power over the minds of many of the people by casting an evil spell of seeming wise words. The people began to quarrel with each other over interpretation of the charter that established the principality. They began to argue about the value of the many good things that they had done over the years and lost faith in their good works.

And so it came to pass that all of the people around Buena Vista levied a special tribute and with the gold they caused to be made a special suit of armor for the prince which was to be worn on special occasions. After the prince was presented with the grand suit of armor, he held long debates with the elders as to where the sacred emblem of the Empire should be placed on it. One elder held it should be worn upon the shield, another said it should be worn upon the breastplate, while still another said it should be displayed from a pennant worn on the helmet. So it was that the emblem was not placed on the armor, for a decision could not be made.

Meanwhile, John of Petula's hatred grew and grew. For days he brewed spells in the cauldron in his castle. He boiled up a brew that would cause people to see only ugliness in the Empire. It blocked their eyes from the beauties around them and turned them into angry and irritable grouches. The people, previously happy and productive in their Empire, became frightened and angry. The birds stopped singing in the green forests, and the people no longer celebrated. Neither the prince nor the elders could explain the changes in the people because, of course, they did not know about the evil spell cast by John of Petula.

Will the spell of the evil spirit be broken? Will laughter return to the mountain? Time, not I, will tell.