

## (02) BILL HOWARD - FURTHER THOUGHTS, STAN'S EFFECT

**Subject:** Re: Stan  
**From:** Howard, William A.  
**To:** robtully  
**Date:** Tuesday, 15 September 2015, 23:30

Dear Rob,

A few years after Stan's memorial, I was talking to Juliette Kennedy, who was a close friend of Stan, and, in fact, had been responsible for the memorial itself. I told her that my presentation at the memorial had not mentioned an essential aspect of Stan's influence on me; namely, that he had expanded my horizons. Here are two examples:

(1) The liberal education. He had gone through the U of C College during its prime (actually, it was still at its prime when I arrived in 1949). Great Books and all that. From him I learned all about the liberal education. I am not saying that the liberal education is suitable for state universities, but knowing what it is all about has given me a valuable perspective on the academic world and education as a whole.

(2) Psychoanalysis. He spent a few months at Bettelheim's Orthogenic School (a school for really really disturbed kids), and from Bettelheim he acquired a deep understanding of psychoanalysis. So he taught me some of this, indicated how it helped to understand various people. He occasionally analyzed a dream of mine or the people we hung out with. I was so impressed that I made a thorough study of Freud's book, "The interpretation of dreams."

Actually, I think I have put my finger on the two most important ways in which he expanded my horizons. Good.

Item #2 did not have much effect on my career, but it helped me understand who I am, so it would go under the heading: metaphysical journey. Item #1 helped me understand who I am academically, and this has been a great help in my career.

But the above is just a summary. In regard to item #1, you have given an excellent summary in the Spring 1965 - Fall 1965 section of your memoir, starting with "When you entered Stan's class, you entered the totality of his Cardinal Newman's 'Idea of a University' scholastic world, ..." and ending with "one of the most interesting episodes being when Stan asked Bonnie Gold in a number theory course whether she would bet her life on something she had just stated, ..." Incidentally, I met Bonnie in the summer of 1968 (the month-long conference at Buffalo university); very smart, very nice.

Also relevant to #1 are the two paragraphs in in the Spring 1965 - Fall 1965 section of your memoir, starting with "I always had the impression that Stan's life started at 16 at the U of Chicago, ...".

As I say in my memorial presentation: the decline of his physical health and psychological condition from (say) 1972 onward distressed me more than I can say. I have often pondered this change in Stan. I find the following passage, in the first of your two paragraphs mentioned above, particularly interesting: "I also had the feeling that it was here that he 'constructed' himself, block by block, building an intellectual, philosophical, metaphysical foundation, of course informed by the Chicago curricula, out of his own rational thought". The result was certainly impressive, but maybe he was trying to do something impossible.

Let me end this email with the following story bearing on educational matters. In the spring of 1991 (or possibly a year or two earlier), Stan suddenly appeared on campus (U. of Illinois, Chicago). I was running to teach a class, a large lecture section on Finite Math for Business Students. Stan asked if he could sit in. I was happy to have him do so. He sat in the back and observed.

It was a typical lecture. Halfway through, a couple of students decided to leave, causing a commotion by making their way across the aisle (auditorium style lecture room). A few minutes later, someone dropped an empty Coke can: clank, clank, clank as it made its way down the tiers. And so on. Afterwards, I said to Stan: "I don't know how to handle this. Will you be a guest lecturer in Friday's class so I can pick up some pointers as to what to do?"

Stan's reply was: "Sure, under two conditions. First, the students' parents need to be present, so that they will see how immature their children are. Secondly, the Dean needs to be present, so he can see what the educational situation is at his university"

ME: "Okay, Stan, I get your point. But I really need advice. Tell me something practical."

STAN: "Bill, this course is bad for your mental health. You should go to the chancellor and ask, on grounds of mental health, that you be relieved from the duty of teaching this course, and, to make up for this, that you will spend an equivalent amount of time cleaning latrines."

I did not take this specific advice, but it helped me understand that courses of this kind were indeed bad for my mental health. One way or another, I managed to avoid them for the next ten years, at which time the math. dept. administration was beginning to catch on, so I retired.

One strategy was to concentrate on the math. ed. courses. The math. dept. had an excellent program of courses for prospective or already practicing high school teachers, and I had already found these courses pleasant to

teach, in particular because they were taught in small classrooms holding at most 32 students. In fact, on the same day as the above episode, I taught one of these classes in the evening and Stan came along. He got so excited that he could not restrain himself and took over the class. It was a typical Tennenbaum performance; I don't know what the students thought. What I thought was: Well, it was good for them.

Best regards,

Bill