

FOR MERVYN SPRUNG

THE MAGIC

From the beginning back there in Winnipeg
philosophy was for Mervyn
a magical gift - a magical task - a magical vocation.
With his professor, Dr. Rupert Lodge
he began to speak of, to listen to,
to read of, to write of
"the dearest freshness deep down things"¹
which is the source - the measure - the goal.
With the discipline of an Olympic class athlete
of a runner - a rower - a high jumper
he learned the Oxford way
of doing philosophy historically
with the Greeks and in their language.
He began to take joy
in the craft and art of writing
as he developed the skills
of fresh and gripping expression
with organized focus and simple clarity.
He began to be enthralled with knowing
as distinct from the thrall of faith
and yet he learned to think through
even the thrall of knowing.

OF UNKNOWING

In Berlin from '36 to '39
he philosophized together with Nicolai Hartmann
and his phenomenological circle as they
explored together the metaphysics of worth
and the worth of metaphysics.
The war came and he lived through
the horrors of savage loss.
He philosophized with the discipline of
the Samurai warrior and the noble knight.
Under siege and in panic
he took his young soldiers
into that intimacy
where his teachers had taken him.
They learned how to let go of appearances
and thereby be held closer by the source.
They learned the magic of unknowing
which is a leap; which is a Sprung.

¹ Poetry quotations are from the poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins.

AN EAST-WEST SOLILOQUY

And on his soldier's sick bed
he read the life of the Buddha
and he knew that he too knew
the magic of unknowing;
of the letting go of "religion"
that lets you be more generous;
of the letting go of knowledge
that lets you be more affirmative.

With John Mayer at Brock
he founded the philosophy department
which could always be
a four pillared colloquium
of voices Greek and Continental,
Anglo-American and Oriental.
Then from that colloquium
he stepped forth into
the soliloquy of the Hyrst.

AFTER TRUTH

After truth there is the silence of the Buddha
and the unnameable of the Tao.
The more often Mervyn looked
into the starry sky above
the more deeply he abided
with the source and the way.
The one word "starlight" became
like the one word "lake"
and the one word "pinegrove".
And they were like the one word "doe".
And he would say them softly
with reverence, with magic
within an aura of silence.
And they would give him
the gift of sky, the gift of lake,
the gift of woodland, the gift of doe.

David Goicoechea
April 29, 2000—