

**THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:  
A MOTIF FOR THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY  
by André Houle**

**GREECE: Classical Period—450 to 330 B.C.**

The community in which Greeks lived in classical times was called a *polis*. The closest translation in English would be to call it a city-state. The city-state consisted of the central city plus the countryside. People living within the city-state were considered citizens. Athens was one of the more influential city-states.

The Greek city-state was a natural result of the geography of Greece, broken up as it was by mountains into well-defined areas. The people that lived together in a particular area came to feel a bond of social unity amongst each other. Each citizen felt responsible for the protection and welfare of the city-state. Each citizen also felt the city-state was in part responsible for their own welfare. It followed that everyone was ready to defend the city-state against invasion and equally eager to participate in the politics of government.

In classical times the government of the city-state was a democracy, the first of its kind, a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. At any particular point in time, not just on election day, an estimated 75% of voters were participating in government in one form or another. The American democracy is government by the people through their elected representatives meeting at stated intervals. In Athens, the people were the government—they exercised their powers not at intervals, but at all times and in all departments. Our word "politics" is derived from the Greek word *polis*, the city-state, where citizens played a highly active role in government. The Greeks then, and still today, are known as a very politically active people.

The Greeks in their democratic city-states were able to set precedents in fields other than government, including art, literature, and mathematics, which are still studied today at the college level, and athletics, for which the Olympic games are named. The Greeks and their city-state have had a significant impact on the development of civilization (Miller, 1941).

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:**

The United States Declaration of Independence was adopted by the Continental Congress in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776. The following is a statement from that Declaration :

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

The Constitution of the United States was introduced at a convention of the thirteen states on September 12, 1787. It consisted of the Preamble and seven Articles. The Constitution was then ratified by the thirteen states through their elected representatives in the following order:

State	Date	Vote
Delaware	December 7, 1787	30 yes / 0 no
Pennsylvania	December 12, 1787	43 yes / 23 no
New Jersey	December 18, 1787	38 yes / 0 no
Georgia	January 2, 1788	26 yes / 0 no
Connecticut	January 9, 1788	128 yes / 40 no
Massachusetts	February 6, 1788	187 yes / 168 no
Maryland	April 28, 1788	63 yes / 11 no
South Carolina	May 23, 1788	149 yes / 73 no
New Hampshire	June 21, 1788	57 yes / 46 no
Virginia	June 26, 1788	89 yes / 79 no
New York	July 26, 1788	30 yes / 27 no
North Carolina	November 21, 1789	194 yes / 77 no
Rhode Island	May 29, 1790	34 yes / 32 no
Vermont: ratified at convention on January 10, 1791.		

Shortly after its introduction and ratification by a number of States, the Constitution began to confront growing opposition in Congress. Many believed the Constitution was not sufficiently explicit as to individual and States' rights. This led to an agreement to submit to the people immediately after the adoption of the Constitution a number of safeguarding amendments. So on

September 25, 1789, Congress adopted and submitted to the States the Bill of Rights, the first article of which guarantees:

#### **Freedom of Speech, and of the Press, and the Right to Petition:**

Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech or the press, or the right of people to assemble peaceably and petition the government for a redress of grievance.

In summary, the establishment of the United States was based on, and was meant to continue to be based on, the participation of citizens in government. We, the citizens of the United States, should do as the Greeks did in their prime, and become politically active.

President Eisenhower may have said it best:

"Politics ought to be the part-time profession of every citizen."

#### **CHINA:**

China is the oldest civilization in history. Its existence can be traced back over 5000 years. Perhaps such a long-lasting society has some worthwhile characteristics. Let us take a closer look at the Chinese.

The Chinese have long viewed the family as an important part of society. From a book entitled *My Country and My People* published in 1935, the author Lin Yutang writes: "The family and the family system can account for all there is to explain in the Chinese social life." The family is the glue which has held China together.

To clarify the role of the family in Chinese society, the following is also a quote from *My Country and My People*:

The Chinese view the family as the "basis of the state" or more generally as the basis of human society. The family affects all their social concerns. It is quite personal. It teaches children the first lessons of social obligation between man and man, the necessity of mutual adjustment for mutual existence, self control, courtesy, a well defined sense of duty, a sense of obligation and gratitude towards parents, and respect for elders. The family very nearly takes the place of religion by giving man a sense of social sur-

vival and family continuity, thus satisfying man's craving for immortality. The family is the base upon which the Chinese place personal satisfaction and social stability.

The Chinese idea of the family as the basic social unit is based on the teachings of Confucius, the venerated Chinese philosopher who lived from 551 to 479 B.C. Confucius' teachings provide a context by which people in the family are to relate and interact with each other and with society at large. A basic tenet of the Confucian philosophy is to treat the family as "the base and origin of society." After 5000-some odd years of China's existence, there may be some truth to this statement.

Perhaps, as presented in "The United States of America: A Social Diagnosis" (see ΣΚΟΛΕ, Winter, 1995, pp. 78-88), a discussion among citizens of the United States with the intent of re-establishing the American family may be in order.

#### **JAPAN:**

The development of Japan over the centuries has been unique as a result of its geography—it is an island. Until recently, Japan has had the capacity to isolate itself from its neighbors, or, as Japan has done on occasion in the past, open its doors to foreign influence.

At about 400 A.D., the Japanese acquired the Chinese script. Prior to that they did not possess their own method of writing. Since then, many changes have occurred in the two separate languages so that they are now hardly recognized as relatives.

Buddhism was introduced to Japan at the end of 800 A.D. Prior to this, the Japanese had their own religion called Shinto which means "the way of the gods". Shinto is based on the worship of nature, gods, and ancestors. The Japanese, however, accepted Buddhism because it was far more complex and spiritually satisfying than Shinto. To this day however, both religions are still vibrant within Japanese culture. If you were to ask, "How many Japanese are Shinto and how many are Buddhist?" you would be informed that almost every Japanese is both.

On the coattails of the acceptance of Buddhism, from China also came the Confucian philosophy as discussed earlier. The Japanese were quick to integrate the importance of family into their social structure, as they still do today.

After the integration of written language, Buddhism, and the Confucian philosophy, Japan reverted back to a more or less isolated island state. They remained so until the mid 1800s and the era of Meiji, which translates to "Enlightened Government".

During the Meiji period, 1868 to 1912, a tide of Western influence swept over Japan. The Japanese shed their long-standing feudal system of government and adopted many aspects of Western civilization. This period of modernization included the establishment of a more Western-style government, the introduction of Western technology, and the integration of the Western free market economy. The Japanese went from Shoguns and the feudal system to an open society where people were allowed to choose freely their own profession, residence, and religion. The peasant, once attached to the soil, was freed and land became a commodity that could be bought or sold. The Japanese began to study profusely the technologies that the West had to offer. Education became a priority among all Japanese. By the end of the Meiji period in 1912, Japan had developed into a world power (Keene, 1959; Langer, 1966).

An aside will be taken here to clarify that all cultures have positive and negative aspects. The same Greek culture referred to earlier that was the first democracy in history, was a limited democracy in that women, metics, and slaves could not be voting citizens. "Metics" were foreigners residing in the Greek city-state and could never attain citizenship. Only men, and only men whose ancestry could be traced as being from the city-state, could vote. These issues and the presence of slavery are negative aspects of Greek culture.

Concerning China, as expressed earlier, "The family and the family system can account for all there is to explain in Chinese social life." Family is a priority in China, perhaps to the neglect of other important areas such as participation in government. The author has spoken with a number of Chinese individuals who have said their culture long ago came to the conclusion that participation in government was worthless: "Why bother; we can't make a difference. Let the government do what it wants; we've got kids to feed and a family to raise." Perhaps in antiquity this attitude was viable, but today on the verge of the 21st century (47th by the Chinese calendar) China is the only remaining communist power in the world, a communist power with a poor human rights record. This human rights record may be considered a negative aspect of

Chinese culture, and it may be the result of China's belief that participation in government is not worthwhile.

A negative aspect of Japanese history may be its Imperial rule in the 1930s that led to its military aggression in World War II. Japanese society is also particularly strict in imposing standards of behavior on the individual. Because the Japanese exert greater dependence on the group as a whole, the individual tends to conform more willingly to social pressures. This may relate to Japan's popular support of its military efforts under Imperial rule in WWII. Such social pressures may also tend to stifle the creativity and independence of the individual, and may explain why Japan has had to rely on outside influence for new ideas.

To return now to Japanese history, after its defeat in World War II, Japan was leveled. The Allied Occupation following Japan's surrender was necessary for a number of reasons: to provide necessities such as food and temporary housing, to plant the seeds of a democratic government, and primarily to help rebuild Japan. The Japanese were surprisingly receptive to the input from the Allied Occupation, perhaps because they were utterly frustrated with the military regime to which they had seemed so devoted. The Japanese welcomed American input.

In 1941 at the start of the American involvement in WWII, a scientist by the name of William Edwards Deming was introducing a concept of management to American companies involved in wartime production. His management theory was based on Statistical Quality Control. A number of companies implemented his philosophy. Shortly after the war however American companies throughout the country adopted a different method of management as professed by Frederick Winslow Taylor. The Taylor method was based on the present "assembly line" model of corporate culture. Front-line workers were to perform simple tasks that are coordinated by several layers of management (bosses), all of whom are under the control of the reigning CEO (Corporate Executive Officer). This method of management itself may be considered somewhat feudal—great wealth and power for the few; low tech, highly repetitive jobs for the many (Jaccoby, 1991).

Since no one in America was interested in his philosophy of management, Dr. Deming in 1949 graciously accepted the first of what was shortly to become hundreds of invitations to Japan to lecture on the subject of management and quality (Austin, 1991). The Japanese, as they have done throughout history, accepted and promptly integrated a foreign influence: Dr. Deming's philosophy.

They have since out-performed the United States in the marketplace.

On that note, let's look at Dr. Deming's philosophy of management, (Walton, 1986):

#### 14 points:

- 1: Create Constancy of Purpose for Improvement of Product and Service.
- 2: Adopt the New Philosophy.
- 3: Cease Dependence on Mass Inspection to Achieve Quality.
- 4: End the Practice of Awarding Business on Price Alone.
- 5: Improve Constantly and Forever the System of Production and Service.
- 6: Institute Training for All Employees.
- 7: Adopt and Institute Leadership.
- 8: Drive Out Fear.
- 9: Break Down Barriers Between Staff Areas.
- 10: Eliminate Slogans, Exhortations, and Targets for the Workforce.
- 11: Eliminate Numerical Quotas in the Workplace.
- 12: Remove Barriers that Rob People of Pride in Their Work.
- 13: Endorse Education and Self Improvement for Everyone.
- 14: Take Action to Accomplish this Transformation.

#### 7 Deadly Diseases:

- 1: Lack of Constancy of Purpose.
- 2: Emphasis on Short Term Profits.
- 3: Evaluation of Performance, Merit Rating, and Annual Review.
- 4: Mobility of Top Management.
- 5: Running the Company on Visible Figures Alone (counting

the money).

6: Excessive Medical Costs.

7: Excessive Cost of Insurance, Fueled by Lawyers on Contingency.

#### Some Obstacles:

Neglect of long range planning and transformation.

The supposition that solving problems, or automation and new machinery will transform industry.

Obsolescence in schools.

Reliance on Quality Control Departments.

False Starts: pitching a whole new and improved managerial scheme when nothing is seriously being changed.

Inadequate Training.

Inadequate Testing of Prototypes.

Resistance of Unions to any kind of change in the system.

In summary, the Deming philosophy is based on cooperation rather than competition in the workplace. To be successful in a complex world of constantly changing products and services, employees must be highly motivated. That may be asking a lot, but Deming's model is ready and waiting—it doesn't do away with the hierarchy of management *per se*, but replaces the adversarial workplace with a more humanistic system. Managers are responsible for rooting out poor quality and improving the workplace by LISTENING to employee input. The Toyota employee averages 33 suggestions to improve production per year (Aguayo, 1990). Who knows how to improve production better than the one doing the producing? Most importantly, most of these suggestions are implemented with the consent of management—no deaf ears, no brick walls. Managers become coaches, encouraging all members to improve. Workers are highly motivated and take pride in their work. And guess what happens: PRODUCTIVITY INCREASES.

## SUMMARY:

The establishment of the United States was based on, and was meant to continue to be based on, the participation of citizens in government. We, the citizens of the United States, should do as the Greeks did in their prime, and become politically active.

We, the people of our country, should re-establish the family, the family upon which the Chinese have based their long-lived society.

We, the people of the United States, should adopt the Deming philosophy of management, as the Japanese have recently done, as they've done with a number of foreign influences throughout history.

## CONCLUSION:

In the United States then, the motif for the individual and society is to utilize synthisophy (sin thi' sa fe), to be synthisophic (sin thi saw' fic), to synthisophize (sin thi' sa fiz):

### SYNTHesis/HISTory/SOPHY

Synthesis: the putting together of two or more things to form a whole

History: what has happened in the life and development of a people/country

Sophy: Greek root; *sophia*: skill, wisdom, knowledge

### SYNTHISOPHY: TO PUT TOGETHER THE WISDOMS OF HISTORY:

Integrate the wisdoms of the Greeks—become politically active in a democracy that's based on citizen participation.

Integrate the wisdoms of the Chinese—emphasize the importance of family.

Integrate the wisdoms of the Japanese—the capacity to accept and implement new ideas—particularly the Deming philosophy, which the Japanese originally acquired from the United States.

### SYNTHISOPHY: TO PUT TOGETHER THE WISDOMS OF HISTORY

## DISCUSSION:

Concerning government, hats off to the Clinton administration in areas of income tax, sin tax, crime, and health care—our democracy is working. To quote a trite but applicable proverb with reference to this paper however, you can't legislate morality. Although the administration and Congress are doing everything within their power, they cannot legislate citizen participation, they cannot legislate the importance of family, and they cannot legislate the Deming philosophy. This synthisophic revolution is in the hands of the people....

An old adage is most applicable here: wherever there is a group of people, there's politics. I'm sure you are well aware of this in your profession, at the workplace, or wherever you are a member of a group. The synthisophic revolution is in the hands of the people. Wherever there are people, there's politics. To go one step further, since the government cannot legislate morality, it is only in the power of the people to become politically active at the moral level that we will incorporate the importance of the family and the Deming philosophy. Let's do it.

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*Special thanks to James Ruell and Shu-Hui Ho*

*André Houle, also a contributor to the winter ΣΚΟΛΕ, has been a University of Mass. graduate student in education and history. André is a person of many skills and talents with widely varied job experience. Having just completed his student teaching, he intends now to teach in public school. Let's hope he doesn't lose his idealism as he learns to cope with the "politics of experience" there.*

*André also sent us the following excerpt from his historical reading which supports our belief that in using the term ΣΚΟΛΕ (SKOLE, pronounced "skolay") as a description of the concept of learning we are hoping to exemplify, we are not entirely out of line in attributing it to Socrates and Plato. Thanks, André!*

from:

**PLUTARCH AND HIS TIMES**

by R. H. Barrow

Indiana University Press

Bloomington, Indiana, 1967

... As Plutarch grew older, he became the leader; he gave a lecture, threw the matter open to discussion and later put the results into written shape. Roman friends were welcome and indeed took a leading part. The activities of this centre of learning and fellowship were described by Plutarch as *schole* or *diatribe*, terms which suggest something voluntary and spontaneous, and the ultimate issue, though not the professed motive, was a way of life. The affiliation of the gatherings is indicated if it is noted that the birthdays of Socrates and Plato "...were observed as feast days"... To use modern ideas, it seems that we are to think of a combination of elements taken from a "University extension lecture", a reading party, a literary club, a session circle, a house-party, while Plutarch himself must have been something like the highly cultivated "squire-parson" around here and there in the eighteenth century.

**Here are four treasures reprinted from *A Voice for Children*, with kind permission from the editor, Edward M. Jones: Thanks, Ed. Long may you flourish!**

**REVIEW:**

*A Voice for Children*, Volume 1, Number 8. Spring 1993, Woodward, OK

**Reviewer, Malcolm B. Campbell**

**SUMMERHILL SCHOOL:  
A NEW VIEW OF CHILDHOOD  
edited by Albert Lamb**

Good news! A.S. Neill's *Summerhill* is back in print. The Bible of the 1960s alternative schooling movement in the United States is now available for the 1990s. Brilliantly edited by former Summerhillian pupil and now teacher at Summerhill, Albert Lamb, *Summerhill School: A New View of Childhood* provides an opportunity to hear once again A. S. Neill tell of fifty years of running his "pioneer self-governing Free School, Summerhill." Neill's narrative reveals a message to educators, to parents, and most significantly, to children as appropriate in the 1990s as it was twenty and more years ago: children have an inherent right to childhood.

This reissue of *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing*, originally published in the United States with a foreword by Erich Fromm, author of *Escape From Freedom*, November 7, 1960, the beginning of John F. Kennedy's short-lived New Frontier, is an occasion not for nostalgic celebration.

While there are those, including this writer, for whom this edition will evoke empathetic agreement with Orson Bean's observation in *A Voice for Children* (Winter, 1992) that thirty years ago "the book hit me like a ton of bricks," Albert Lamb's new edition of *Summerhill* should encourage a revaluing of Neill's (1883-1973) accent on self-determination. And a new edition is what *Summerhill School: A New View of Childhood* is.

Former Summerhill student Lamb's edition more than compensates for its lack of the poetry by William Blake and Khalil Gibran as well as Erich Fromm's trenchant foreword which graced the original Harold H. Hart edition of *Summerhill* (1960), reprinted by Simon and Schuster in December, 1984. *Summerhill School: A*