

The Drowning Sphinx

*Commonly accepted values must help
all countries to a new level
of operation.*

IN the Valley of the Nubian Nile stands a drowning sphinx. Nine months of the year it holds its head above the waters. At times, the river leaves only the top showing. During the other three months the gates of the dam let the life-giving water flow forth and the sphinx is revealed in its entirety. This mammoth sandstone sculpture with the head and breasts of a woman and the body of a lion is found not to be alone but one of an avenue of sphinxes representative of the culture of days long past. The sphinx bears upon its figure the watermarks of the rise and fall of the ancient and modern Nile. A high ring commemorates the great flood that occurred under the reign of Rameses II, and a lower one the level of the water during the time of the Hittite's conquering wars. Other rings occurred when the stamp of the Roman soldier was heard in the land or during the time the conquering Greeks brought their love of beauty and architecture to these peoples.

Kaleidoscopic are the changes that have come while the sphinx remained. Yes, the sphinx has stood through the

coming and dispersal of many cultures. Each of the peoples brought with them new ways and new values which were blended with or displaced the old. But, through it all, there have been some eternal values that most men seem to hold dear whether it be in ancient Nubia, in chaotic Africa, or modern America. If selected out of the welter of choices, four of the most persistent values would be:

Man's common concern for progress, wherever found

Man's ultimate belief in the brotherhood of man, even over selfish interests

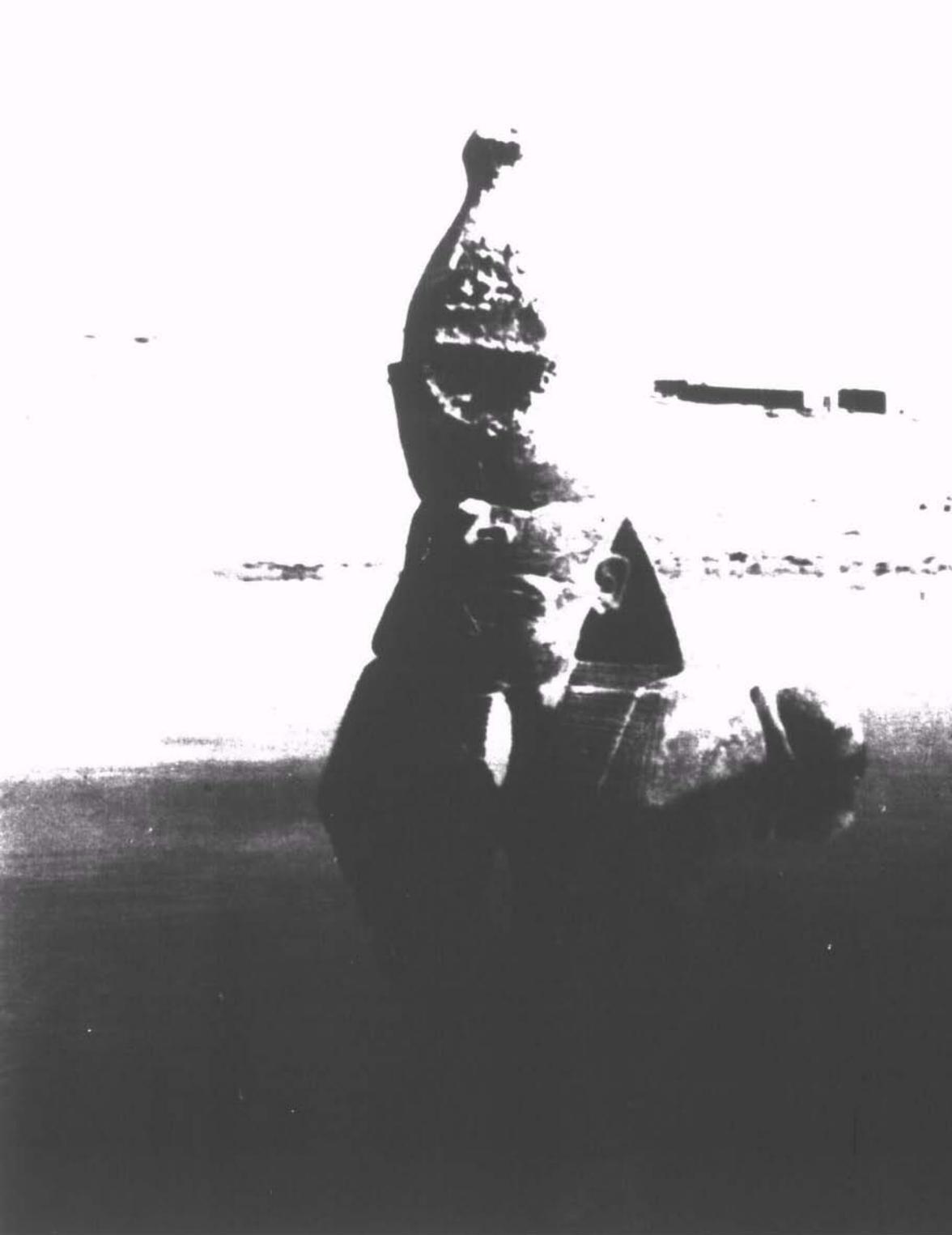
Man's recognition of ability and skillful workmanship—a respect for excellence

Man's recognition of a need for spiritual guidance.

It is worth while to reaffirm once again such values, for values refine the methods, and lift the goals of living far above the materialistic or even merely humanitarian levels. Although assent to these values may be dictated by reason, their driving power is generated in large part by the spiritual and emotional loyalties which they create in the hearts of mankind.¹

¹*Moral and Spiritual Values*. Washington, D.C.: Educational Policies Commission, National Education Association, 1951. p. 34.

Florence E. Beardsley is Director of Elementary Education, State of Oregon, Salem.



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In the coming years the drowning sphinx and companion pieces will be lost under the water that will gather behind the new Aswan High Dam unless through united action the governments and their peoples lift them to permanent high ground to save them. So the sphinx in a small way becomes a symbol of a greater need—the need of peoples to find points at which they hold common values and can take concerted action.

Like the values in the cultures of the time of the sphinx, our American values are encountering the swirl and the rise and fall of the floodwaters of international pressure. Our values, too, are changing, as we seek to provide good leadership in the international role that has been thrust upon us. We are a nation of idealists. We believe in the dignity of man and the integrity of all people. We transpose to international affairs these beliefs which become our guidelines in dealing with other nations. We have a fundamental belief in the worth of every human being. We hold each individual responsible for his own conduct and we have trained him to join in teamwork under rules which are established cooperatively for the good of all. Believing this, when we find nations making commitments and promises which they do not keep, and perhaps did not intend to fulfill, we do not understand. When we find other people not responding in like manner, there are those among us who would “pick up our marbles and go home.” But in today’s world we cannot be even semi-isolationists if we would.

It needs to be reinforced within our consciousness, over and over, that we cannot expect peoples who have not had opportunity to be free, and who have not had the chance to determine their obligations and to practice carrying out their

plans, to react in the manner that we would. In our eagerness, we forget that many of the governments of the world are paternalistic in nature and the people are completely dependent upon their government for existence, for direction, and for all of the needs of their lives. In some governments the power is concentrated in one source, and tyranny reigns; and thus again the people are enslaved and dependent. We must be content to stand by with outstretched hands doing what we can while many nations learn to take their first steps toward freedom. Their first steps may not take the same direction which we took as a nation, but there are many paths that lead to freedom. “Democracy is a flower of a thousand faces,” said Madame Pandit. We, the American people, must be content to seek its several moods as reflected in our brothers’ faces.

Power To Know

A first step toward accepting responsibility is having the power to know. There are in this small world of ours millions of people who can neither read nor write, who long to be free but have no access to knowledge beyond their narrow confines, nor opportunities to practice carrying responsibilities.

We must be more adroit at helping men to help themselves. Our patience will be tried again and again but, as we gain deeper understanding, we will seek better ways when we note that many of our efforts have failed their purpose. Countries cannot understand why we are lavish. It is difficult for them to believe in our sincerity. “What are the hidden strings behind these gifts? Will there be penalties or tributes yet to be extracted?” The values they place upon these efforts are much different from ours. Then, too,

we must remember that on "the block" nobody likes the rich kid who throws his money around. It makes the rest of us seem so poor. The matter of face is very important.

By our very naïveté, as a people, we have cultivated the use of such words as the "biggest," "greatest," "best," "the mostest," "terrific," "gigantic," "stupendous," when referring to ourselves, our country, our buildings, our activities, our properties, or our projects. This has been carried to such an extreme that it is hard for us to have another nation score an important first, alas sputnik!

Although the values that we have held as a pioneer nation have seemed so permanent and so immutable, we now know, just as we know the sphinx will be permanently inundated unless reset, that our values will be drastically changed if not given new settings. Unless we can extend and reshape our values to meet our new role of leadership in the world they, too, will be lost. But America will not give up; she is daily working toward better understanding of herself and of the world.

In the United States we have had opportunity to gain knowledge, and to develop skill in carrying responsibilities; concomitant with these achievements grew a unity of intent. What we search for now is a national commitment to goals that will forge leadership skills.

America turns to its schools and to the curriculum, not requesting a new course but rather a deeper understanding of issues, a permeation of a way of life that includes sympathetic treatment of the values held by other peoples, and the development of a cohesiveness through values held in common.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is an instrument for this purpose. Thirteen of the statements in the Uni-

versal Declaration of Human Rights have their counterparts in our American documents, either the Declaration of Independence or in amendments to the Constitution. Supervisors and curriculum directors, imbued with these goals, will carry a vision which will be caught as well as taught. Feelings rule the heart when values are at stake.

In addition to ~~spurring~~ a commitment, we must build a willingness and the ability to be ceaselessly and critically objective of ourselves and our efforts.

New values are being shaped. Not all of us will accept them in totality, but this is their essence:

1. The rejection of violence as an instrument of policy. In the hearts of our people is found the will to make changes in the relations between states by peaceful means only.

2. The belief in national sovereignty under international law. We believe it is the right of all nations, large or small, to be secure in their territories and to determine their own form of government, their own economy, and their own foreign and domestic policy. This is an extension of the value that is basic to us individually; namely, the free and responsible individual person.

3. The value of collective security within an organization of nation states—as the individual person is a unit in society and is conditioned by that society, the independent nation is a unit in a society of nation states and must accept those limitations on independence of action which derive from that fact. One can see this being forged in the debates which wage ceaselessly in our papers and on our platforms about the value of unilateral action between nations or multilateral action between na-

tions, especially between other nations and ourselves.

4. The belief in the well-being of the community of nations through mutual aid. It is painfully apparent that there cannot for long be prosperity in isolation. This value supersedes the frontier value of being strong in oneself alone and fending only for oneself. It incorporates the human compassion often found on the frontier of caring for one's neighbor because of the rigorous environment.

5. The belief in the observance of international law and international commitments. The honoring of treaties is basic to our beliefs, just as we believe that observance of local law and local commitment is essential to the integrity of the individual.²

Way of Life

There exists in people everywhere a stirring of concern for a better way of life. UNESCO is the organization which provides the channel for a free flow of knowledge throughout the world in the areas of education, science and culture:

Education. This interchange cannot approach even appropriate dimensions until millions have been taught to read and write. The world has 700 million illiterates. UNESCO is engaged in teacher education projects to provide teachers for elementary education to countries desiring it. Nations of Latin America, Asia and Africa are cooperating.³

² Ralph Henry Gabriel. *Traditional Values in American Life*. Washington, D.C.: United States National Commission for UNESCO, p. 36.

³ There is an urgent call at the present time for teachers for the Congo. If you speak French and would like to qualify to teach in the Congo, write to the United States National Commission for UNESCO, Department of State, Washington, D.C.

Science. UNESCO has had splendid cooperation in its scientific projects. The Arid Lands Project, its heavy support of the International Geophysical Year, and the latest project to explore the potential of the oceans, especially the unknown Indian Ocean, have all contributed important knowledge to mankind. It has been conjectured that man has not touched the edge of the ocean's potential as a source for harvesting food.

Culture. While UNESCO has engaged in many ventures which allowed nations to enjoy the artistic products of other cultures, a very special and urgent project in which all nations have been asked to join is the effort to rescue the hieroglyphics, inscriptions, frescoes, historical monuments, and the temples of the upper Nile, called the Nubian Project.

Today a cold war is waging, but even while the struggle continues, peoples of these countries have demonstrated that they can gather together for purposes of science, for purposes of art, for purposes of humanity, and work together to accomplish their objectives. To some it may have seemed that the light that symbolizes the values of right has almost been extinguished, that the night has been long. But there are many who have held fast to the hope of a dawn that would break when peoples can communicate through a free flow of ideas, and when governments will exist to reinforce the dignity of man.

The sphinx has been surrounded and at times obscured by swirling waters, but by the united cooperation of nations she and her companions will be lifted to new permanent foundations. And so, too, the values of the world which are established when people are enlightened will lift the countries of the world to a new level of operation.

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