

IV. STORIES OF THE ZEITGEIST AND POPULAR CULTURE

People we don't even know surround us with their stories. They flow from the television, radio, video recorder, movies—even from the Internet. They insinuate themselves into our lives through books, magazines, journals, manifestos, and street-corner tracts. They come to us as films, dramas, documentaries, songs, advertisements, and news. All of them advocate something: an attitude, an outlook, a value, a fact, a product, an experience. We do well to ask ourselves what these stories are doing to us.

1. What are your favorite novels or short stories; your favorite myths, folktales, and children's stories? Why do you like them? Have any of them changed, even slightly, the way you think about yourself or life? What characters have you closely identified with and why? (Ask the same questions about poetry, drama, film, and other art forms.)

2. Can you identify any television shows, single or a series, that have had an impact on you? What was powerful about them? Who were the memorable characters? How did they affect you and why?

3. How would you characterize the kind and quality of stories being told in popular culture and the media? What values recur in these stories? Has this changed in your lifetime? How do you account for the change?

4. What kind of stories in the popular media are you drawn to? What kind disturb you? What might this reveal about you?

5. What stories do advertisers tell us? About America? About our bodies? About our values? About what we want and what we need? About what constitutes success or happiness? Can you identify any attitude or outlook you hold, perhaps unconsciously up to now, that has been influenced by stories from advertising?

6. How have your political, economic, and social views been influenced by stories? What relevant stories did you hear growing up; what stories from popular culture and the media? What stories do you now tell to support your views? What stories from your own life experience are relevant here? Who are your heroes in these areas? What choices did they make that you admire? Who are your villains?

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by Daniel Taylor, pp 163-164