

Nancy Mroczek: Psychologist and visionary

If you were to ask Nancy Mroczek Ph.D. for an opinion, you wouldn't be disappointed. Mroczek, a behavioral psychologist, philosopher, TV personality, singer, and filmmaker has insights into many issues, from animal rights, politics, and the environment to the role of psychology today. Her cable TV show "Toward A Quality of Life," which airs in Boston, is a forum where she discusses her concerns. Massachusetts Psychologist's Lynne Forti spoke with Mroczek recently to hear what she had to say.

Q. You have a number of titles. What do you consider yourself first and foremost?

A. First, I consider myself to be a human being. Then, a human being who is very attracted to the study of knowledge, questions of meaning, and pursuit of justice.

Q. How did you come to be so diversified?

A. Throughout my life...I've worn a number of different hats. At the foundation I'm most[ly] a scholar and a thinker, philosophically inclined, who happens to be a dyed-in-the-wool psychologist.

Q. What's your TV show like?

A. I've started a series on psychology which began with some of the fundamental concepts that have come down from philosophy into psychology. These shows incorporate concepts of what science is, the history of science, philosophy, and psychology and the concepts of attitudes and belief systems. I've done a show called "Teen Love and Beyond." I've done shows on the different aspects of the current scandal in Washington. I've talked about liberalism of the 60's and the heritage and the value system that that engendered.

Q. You've done shows expressing opposition to animal research. Why?

A. Having studied different branches of psychology I've become only too aware of the "subject" in the experiment. Invasive research pains me to no end. The basic axiom of all axioms is that animals feel pain. They suffer. They suffer to be caged, they suffer to be in a lab, they suffer to be at the hands of an intending individual, they suffer to be used as things. No matter how "well" they're treated. On that basic premise, either life is violable or not. You have to take your pick.

Q. How did you wind up on television?

A. Coming out of a scholastic background the whole thing was to publish or perish. (One had to) write articles of research in areas which were very specific, narrow, focused, fractional. This didn't appeal to me. Ignorance can happen when everybody's stuck in their own little closet, their own little corner of a closet. Cross disciplining wasn't enough. I was looking for a broad-

er, deeper kind of truth, one of logic and consistency. I also realized that books, even great psychology books sit on shelves collecting dust. Some of the basic principles from general psychology are not being filtered into peoples' awareness. So, looking at this and being a person with many different interests, I realized that media is where the war is being won. The media is where people get whatever they get into their brains and into their souls. It's at the level where things scholarly have no opportunity. The media is truly where one has to be to have any effect.

Q. What is the most important message you could convey to fellow psychologists?

A. I think there's too much careerizing of (the profession), too much watering down, too much after-the-fact looking for where we can fit. This is so lopsided and in reverse because nothing is more broad, more deep, more pervasive than psychology.

Psychology should be at the head of the table. The way to do this is by really knowing what psychology is about from its history, its basic concepts and by having scholars and thinkers and bold visionaries who think it and feel it and love it and care about it.

Q. Why is this so important?

A. Because the culture is being shaped every day by marketing and it's being shaped for the values of dollars. Some of the most crass things are the main things shaping who we are and what we are becoming. What role does psychology have? Is it some little, tiny role? Or is psychology and things like psychology really more about the meaning of life and what human beings fundamentally are all about? These are the things that should be pushed to the forefront.

Mroczek invites you to a showing of her video film "Vietnam" at the Cambridge Multicultural Arts Center on March 18th. ■