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## **In Memoriam: An Appreciation of Bob Good**

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## | In Memoriam: An Appreciation of Bob Good

August 13, 1920 - April 29, 2010 **Robert J. Good, PhD**, *Philosopher and Mentor*

Robert J. Good, Ph.D, served as Professor of Chemical Engineering at State University of New York at Buffalo from 1964 to 1991 and as Professor Emeritus after that—always delivering a rich philosophical context for the many advanced students and international faculty he so generously mentored until serious illness curtailed his active work in the past decade.

The first I heard of Bob Good was at the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory's Surface Chemistry Branch in 1966, during a time of great controversy about emerging, competing, theoretical treatments of NRL's abundant stream of new empirical contact angle data, when Bob Good was singled out from the curse "...kinetics, thermodynamics...fie, a pox on both their camps!" as the only active theorist "who actually took real data into account." Bob's philosophy about theoretical sanctity was illustrated when in 1968 at his small, sparsely appointed office in SUNY Buffalo, I brought him a new data set correcting a prior set containing an important systematic error that Bob had already incorporated into an elegant theoretical formulation—expecting anger for having wasted his time. He smiled broadly, with that notable charm he usually reserved for the lady librarians he favored with frequent visits for Journal reviews, and reached into his lower right hand desk drawer for what he called his "only experimental equipment," a stack of lined yellow legal pads and a cup full of sharpened pencils. He set to work immediately with adjusting the "arithmetic" necessary to accommodate the new data set, casually dropping the prior pages of calculations into the wastebasket while thanking me for this new challenge.

Bob's self-effacing manner in the class room was legendary, often telling students that the "Phi factors" which he had famously introduced as the necessary coefficients relating theoretical contact angle values to those actually observed in real liquid/solid systems, were so-termed because Phi was the closest Greek letter—with implied scientific dignity—that would convey his real message: we needed "fudge factors"! He would then regale the Chemical Engineering students with similar stories about other terms in their equations,

“fugacity” being prominently mentioned on one occasion when I was there. But this jolly manner did not completely mask Bob Good’s continuous and utter seriousness about the role of Science in our World Society. Most of his scientific colleagues would not know of Bob’s published November 1972 Letter to the Editor of the Atlantic Monthly, contesting a July 1972 published negative essay by Theodore Roszak called “Science: A Technocratic Trap,” with this ringing defense: “*Rozzak, in his enthusiasm against the devil, science, is proposing that we exorcise it. But there is only one thing that is as futile as the worship of a false god, and that is to cast out a false devil. Both the worship and the exorcism give a person a sense of security, where none is warranted.*”

As has been the case with many great physical scientists, Bob Good did also crave to provide some lasting benefit to health and wellness by applying his theoretical rigor and practical insights to fundamental topics of bioadhesion – binding the “stuff of life.” He published, alone, an early and very important and influential paper on the “Theory of the Adhesion of Cells and the Spontaneous Sorting-out of Mixed Cell Aggregates” (*Journal of Theoretical Biology*, 1972, Vol 37, 413–434), offering a still-accepted explanation for the 10–20 nanometer gaps between adjacent cells (and also between cells and implant materials) that become filled with glycoproteinaceous “conditioning” films modulating the interphase forces. Still active, as Professor Emeritus, in 1998 he published (with colleagues) a new theory emphasizing the role of surface hydrogen bonding in these events and describing a need for addressing cell adhesion and growth phenomena in a more three-dimensional graphical space (*Journal of Dispersion Science and Technology*, Vol 19, 1163–1173).

Earlier in the month of his death, Bob Good’s academic department, renamed to the Department of Chemical and Biological Engineering by younger faculty he helped to recruit, was cited for its leadership in bringing approval for SUNY Buffalo’s newest Department of Biomedical Engineering—accepting its first formal class in 2010. Bob Good’s life well-lived provided the inspiration and tools needed for the next generation.

Respectfully submitted,

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