

I think it was Roger Blobaum who told us the story of the Third Pig. A series of experiments were made, feeding one pig normal food, feeding a second pig only on the undigested food passed through the first pig's system, feeding a third pig only on the unabsorbed food in the feces of the second pig, and so on. Amazingly, the third pig was always fattest! Enzymes in the digestive tracts of the first two pigs converted normally unavailable food into forms that could be absorbed by the third pig. The Third Pig is a useful image for a society that knows how to cleverly take advantage of the value remaining in cast-off wastes.

We've been a First Pig society—getting everything custom-made to our specifications, yet always poor because we have to pay the high costs of providing exactly what we demand, and again to get rid of our unwanted wastes. Such trash still has a lot of the value originally put into it—a discarded water heater may have just been too small, or the heater failed but the tank was still o.k. Junkyard autos still have many good parts, or at least are a resource of excellent alloy metals. It takes different skills and resourcefulness to match our dreams to what can be made from what's available, just as it takes different enzymes to release the food value remaining in our food wastes. But those skills allow a person or society to take advantage of work already done, and make living cheaper and easier. Looking back to growing up in smalltown America, I was always puzzled why the junkman drove the biggest Cadillac in town—now maybe I understand! —TB

THE THIRD PIG



THE THIRD PIG IS ALWAYS FATTEST: