

vp! Fromm-Festschrift

In this essay, I want to raise some questions about current attempts at educational reform in American universities. The source of many, perhaps most, of the still tentative reforms lies in a few avant-garde places which have become the pace-setter institutions for much of the academic world.¹ Closely

¹Both the sheer magnitude of change and the degree to which it may promote homogeneity are suggested by Harold L. Hodgkinson, Institutions in Transition: A Study of Change in Higher Education, a publication of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, 1970; for discussion of change in some pioneering liberal arts colleges see Morris Keeton and Conrad Hilberry, Struggle and Promise: A Future for Colleges, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1969).

intertwined with questions of curricular reform is the de-legitimation of authority, whether this be the authority of experts or professionals, of curricula and programs, or of traditions of scholarship and learning. In my opinion, the decline of authority makes educational reform--contrary to what is often believed--more, rather than less, difficult. For one thing, by increasing the number of participants, it reduces the leverage for change--although, of course, the proponents of participatory educational democracy contend that participation per se is a more important reform than any substantive change in styles of teaching and learning.

My own thinking about these problems has benefited enormously from Erich Fromm's work and his example. He has had a good deal to say about education in his books, but I believe that the implications of his thought are even more important than his direct discussion of educational issues. To give a pertinent example, the distinction he makes between rational and irrational authority, analogous to that which he draws between rational and irrational affects, helps clarify the whole battle over authority in higher education. When he first made his distinction between rational and irrational affects--thus, arguing that there



can be rational love and rational hate--the intellectual climate tended to regard rationality as affect-free (and therefore, as good and trustworthy); as we move unevenly into an era which regards irrationality as life-giving per se and rationality as merely a hang-up, the distinction retains its significance. Fromm's thought is syncretic, not only with respect to this ancient dualism of thought and feeling, but also with respect to the differences among the great world religions and such civil (or non-religious) religions as patriotism, socialism, or humanism. Characteristic also is his insistence that the past should not be junked (an almost impossible effort in any event) even while one tries to move toward a more hopeful future; thus he has recently written: "For many of the young generation who belittle the value of traditional thought, I should like to stress my conviction that even the most radical development must have its continuity with the past; that we cannot progress by throwing away the best achievements of the human mind--and that to be young is not enough!"²

² See Erich Fromm, The Revolution of Hope; Toward a Humanized Technology (New York: Harper and Row, 1968) Forword, p. xvii.

His influence as a mentor for my own ideas on education and teaching goes beyond such conceptual and programmatic clarifications. He has made me appreciate the importance of moral qualities in the scholar and teacher. Just as in scientific research he asks investigators to be open to observation and to impressions and to hunches while working within a framework of orientation or paradigms, so as a teacher and analyst he argues in favor of openness that lessens defensiveness, lessens the need to impress others. In contrast to the desire of many Americans, perhaps especially male Americans, to become invulnerable, he stresses the importance of vulnerability as one of the qualities of humaneness.³ While I know that

³ See The Revolution of Hope, p. 85 and elsewhere.

in dealing with sullen or actively hostile students my own resiliency leaves much to be desired and my good humor often deserts me, Fromm's model of unsentimental



vulnerability is something I try to attain. Generally speaking, I have learned more from his work than from any other's, that moral qualities such as this kind of vulnerability, as well as courage and faith, are as decisive in creative intellectual work as are qualities of intelligence or perseverance. In observing colleagues and students at the University of Chicago and at Harvard and elsewhere, I have concluded that it was the cultivation of these moral qualities which often made the difference between interesting and potentially significant work, and conventional academic gamesmanship. (Perhaps needless to say, gamesmanship can take many forms: increasingly it takes the form of desire to shock and to appear properly rebellious, a member of what Harold Rosenberg once termed "the herd of independent minds.") While I am not intending this to be an essay on the work of Erich Fromm,

it does reflect my reading and re-reading of what he has written and the conversations on educational issues we have had which go back ^{over the years} to our first meeting in 1939.⁴

⁴ This essay has also benefited from many discussions with Michael Maccoby (see his article in this same volume); of course, neither he nor Fromm are responsible for my interpretations of the latter's ideas.

STUDENT IDEAS OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM

During the academic year 1968-69, while on leave from Harvard, I had the opportunity to discuss ideas and ideals of educational change and reform with students and faculty at a number of places widely differing from each other: Stanford University (then engaged in a large self-study); the University of California at Davis and at San Diego; the University of North Carolina (where the first two undergraduate years were being examined by a student-faculty committee); the new College of the State University of New York at Old Westbury which had just opened that year; Oakland University in Michigan; and, more briefly, Pitzer College in the Claremont group of colleges. In addition, I perused the student press at



a number of colleges and followed the discussions of reform in the educational journals. Despite the great diversity of these academic settings, the litany of educational concerns espoused by many students (and faculty) seems quite similar from coast to coast. Everywhere, there is a battle against requirements: language requirements, science requirements, course prerequisites; quite often, students contend that there should be no grades, no courses, no credits--and no degrees. A second and related battle is being waged against the personal authority of faculty: a battle for egalitarian relations in which students and faculty would be disciples of each other, in which there would be no lectures (where faculty authority and expertness are assumed); and thirdly, this line of discourse frequently insists that encounter groups or sensitivity training sessions are the optimal situations for learning. Related to this on many campuses is a rejection of rationalism and of the search for objectivity in scholarship, an attitude which identifies spontaneity with irrationality and regards cognition as necessarily deadening, and the effort to categorize as a sign of necrophilic tendencies. Still another related theme is the belief that the campus is inevitably the seat of irrelevancy (if not of criminal support of the status quo) and that true learning occurs in field situations such as community organizing or experiments in communal living.⁵ If one asks students of this persuasion

⁵ Of course, I am not arguing in the text that learning could not occur in field settings! I do my best to encourage my own students to do manageable pieces of empirical work, for instance ^{enterprise of} some participant-observation or a small-scale interview study. However, many newly developed programs that boast of putting students out into the field do not provide the kind of preparation that a good anthropology ^{department} would before sending someone out to study a tribe, and the result for individual students can be traumatic or simply frustrating in the absence of responsible supervision or any effort to connect theoretical work with field experiences.



why they wish to be in the university at all, apart from the imperatives imposed by the draft, they will sometimes say that this is where their friends are, where they can be away from home, and where they can use the resources of the university as a base for their extramural activities. Finally, running all through these themes is an insistence on the democratization of the university itself in its management or governance, in its admissions policies, in its osmotic permeability to the "community" around it.⁶

⁶ The term "community" comes up constantly in these discussions: there is the academic community, the black community, the student community, etc. The term carries none of the tentativeness with which Erich Fromm speaks of the formation of Groups in the last chapter of The Revolution of Hope (pp. 158-162). There is instead in these discussions a naïveté in assuming that people who share contiguous turf will have anything in common and that they already form a community rather than a series of competing barrios or fractionated sects.

As remarked at the outset, these ideas of educational reform originate in the elite colleges and among articulate critics, including many student newspaper editors. But there are many campuses in what were once provincial parts of the country, campuses whose students are still in the main the first generation in their families to attend college, where these ideas can nevertheless be found.⁷

⁷ The same is true at the high school level. Thus, a recent collection from the high school underground press exhibits a similarity of rhetoric which seems nation-wide, even though the proportion of students who profess such ideas may be in some high schools only a tiny minority--but still sufficient to put out an underground paper. See How Old Will You Be In 1984: Expressions of Student Critique From the High School Free Press, edited by Diane Divoky (New York: Avon Books, 1969).

The vocal students who are the carriers of educational change are apt to be the



more affluent, to be majoring in the humanities or the "softer" social sciences, *and* (with notable exceptions) to be male and white.⁸ Naturally, there is some overlap

⁸ Black students on the white campus may come together to demand Black Studies programs and greater "relevance" to the urban scene or to the problems of blacks, but in general, in my observation, they do not favor radical educational reform, but feel more secure with traditional "collegiate" structures both in the curriculum and the extracurriculum; presently, they are often at odds with white radical students who, the blacks feel, can afford to dispense with universities whereas they as members of a previously deprived group need all the educational benefits they can acquire.

I know no campus where women have taken the leadership in educational reform, and I myself believe that they suffer *as* the blacks do from some of the current temptations of reformers, since the women need to make full use of their undergraduate years to establish quasi-professional competence if they are not to remain dependent on the chances and mischances of marriage and to have the opportunity to enter careers outside the prevailing range of "women's jobs."

between the political and the educational activists, and the latter tend to be more politically aware than the average student, but their interest in reform indicates their divergence from the more violent activists for whom the university is a symbol of "the corrupt society" and who want to strip it of its mystique but not to reform it.

Some of the reformers, with their interest in mysticism and the irrational, lean to the withdrawn and hippie side of student life; but they are not so despairing or drugged ^{those of} as their fellow students who regard all efforts to work with adults as necessarily leading to co-optation, and who often deride the reformers for what they look on as childish hopefulness. However, only in the rarest instances do the reformers have any detailed knowledge of the history of American higher education or of the nature of educational reforms in other industrial countries



(which are often aimed at approximating prevailing American conditions and opportunities), nor do they understand the logistical and technical problems of financing, faculty organization and morale.

Yet there is one note which might be thought of as historical which comes up again and again in these discussions and in the writings that flow from them: this is the belief that American higher education was once uncorrupted by commercialism, careerism, or other worldly constraints. (I cannot recall any instance of a student's having read Thorstein Veblen's corrosive book of fifty years ago, The Higher Learning in America.)⁹

⁹ See Veblen, The Higher Learning in America: A Memorandum on the Conduct of Universities by Businessmen (New York: Viking Press, 1918). To locate a Golden Age in the past seems to be an unnecessary obstacle to serious reform since it provides false models for change. As far as I have been able to determine from reading college histories, the American college in an earlier day was much more philistine than all but a few institutions at present, more subservient to convention, more deadening in its routines and far less alive intellectually. Here, as often elsewhere, the notion of a Golden Age is mythological.

Many students, however, do read. When I have asked them what books have influenced their ideas of educational change, they mention the writings of John Holt, George Leonard (Education and Ecstasy), Herbert Marcuse, Norman O. Brown, A.S. Neill, Edgar Friedenberg, Paul Goodman, and a number of others.¹⁰ The students draw from

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A few mention the writings of Judson Jerome, Professor of Literature at Antioch College; see for instance, "Portrait of Three Experiments," in Change (Vol. II, July-August, 1970), pp. 40-54, and other writings in that journal and Life. I am sometimes discomfited to find students drawing from my own writings on education what I would regard as overgeneralized or misapplied conclusions. Thus, they scan Christopher Jencks and David Riesman, The Academic Revolution (New York: Doubleday, 1968),



in order to find ammunition--and there is plenty there!--to throw against the graduate schools and the hegemony of academic departments. They seldom see in that book (or in Constraint and Variety in American Education [Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1956]) the caveats and qualifications with which we have surrounded tentative recommendations for change.

this body of literature a critique of prevailing educational practice and particularly an attack on the research-oriented university as run for the benefit of the faculty and not of the undergraduates. And their reading leads many to suppose that there are no problems of scarcity, either of talented teachers or of other human resources; the faculty are seen as willfully refusing to teach, and the society is sometimes seen as willfully insisting on dehydrated and irrelevant learning.¹¹

¹¹ There is a more somber note that occasionally crops up in the discussions I have had with students, especially on the more avant-garde campuses: this is an insistence that the heights of culture are in themselves an offence to the impoverished masses of the so-called Third World, and that the heights should be pulled down in the hope (a vain hope, in my judgment) of filling up the abysses. Sometimes the theme is explicit: if not everyone can share in the joys and illuminations of high culture, then no one should.

Many faculty members, and not only the younger products of the graduate schools, agree with these condemnations. Bored by their own research in many cases, excited by the cultural revolution, eager to identify with what seems to be youthful and energetic, they read into the student movement, support for their own educational ideals. Students can also find in Fromm's writings passages which support the way they view matters; consider the following passages from his contribution to a symposium on Summerhill School:

What is the student rebellion all about? The phenomenon is somewhat different within each country. In some, it represents socialist demands; in others, a fight for greater student participation in the deliberations and the



decision-making of the university establishment. In these struggles, some groups have rejected violence; in others, various degrees of force have been employed. In some cases, institutional methods have been attacked; in others, particular individuals have been damned. Yet behind all these apparent differences, all the marching, sitting, and shouting students have something in common: they are all experiencing a deep hunger for life. They feel that their education is being bureaucratized, and that at best, they are being sufficiently prepared to enable them to earn a good living. But paramountly, they also feel they are not being offered stimulating intellectual food in large enough portions to enhance their sense of aliveness. These students insist that they do not want to be dead in the midst of plenty; they insist that they do not want to study in institutions which, in their yielding to the vested interests of professors, administrators, and governmental forces, pay too little attention to their generation's need for a critical examination of today's conventional wisdom.

The campus rebels, even though sometimes misled through political naïveté and lack of realism, and even though sometimes motivated by destructive drives, at least draw attention to the fact that today's processes of higher education are deemed unsatisfactory by a large number of the young element.

The educational failure of our high schools is even worse. By his very action, each drop-out casts a vote against the education he has been receiving. Who would deny that juvenile delinquency is related to the failure of our educational system to provide stimulation and meaning for our adolescents.¹²

¹² See Summerhill: For and Against (New York: Hart Publishing Company, 1970), pp. 251-252

The passage just quoted exhibits only one aspect of Fromm's thought concerning students and education. However, taken out of its entire context as students are understandably apt to do, I think the views expressed are not supported by the studies that have been done of the student movement in the United States. For example, the Free Speech Movement rebels at Berkeley were more appreciative of their courses and their education and less critical, except for public relations purposes, than the inactive students; what originally led them into action was neither a demand for greater student participation in university affairs nor a



search for "stimulating intellectual food," but the civil rights movement in the Bay area and their desire to use the campus as a platform for it.¹³ When a

¹³ There is a large literature. See, e.g., Robert H. Somers, "The Mainsprings of the Rebellion: A Survey of Berkeley Students in November, 1964," in Seymour Martin Lipset and Sheldon S. Wolin, eds., The Berkeley Student Revolt: Facts and Interpretations (New York: Doubleday-Anchor Books, 1965), pp. 530-558.

new Acting Chancellor (Martin Meyerson) came in after the Movement began, who was quite open to change, and asked students for suggestions about educational reform, hardly any responded.

Similarly, I now regard it as an error to declare that each dropout can be seen principally as a vote against our high schools, although surely many are just that. Such a notion is likely in practice to lead the dedicated and idealistic high school teacher toward the pedagogic equivalent of therapeutic despair because it is ^a vast overestimation of the role of formal education vis-à-vis the more compelling influences of the home and the street. The famous Coleman Report on equality of educational opportunity suggests how little of the variance in educational outcomes can be explained in terms of school settings in comparison with home and family and peer settings.¹⁴

¹⁴ For a full discussion, see Christopher Jencks, "The Coleman Report and the Conventional Wisdom," prepared for On Equality of Educational Opportunity, edited by Frederick Mosteller and Daniel P. Moynihan, to be published by Random House.

Fromm's thought, though it has great continuity going back to his doctoral dissertation, is anything but static, and were he writing about the student movements today he might well put even greater emphasis on destructive drives than ^{appears} in the quotation above. Indeed, toward the close of his contribution to Summerhill: For and Against he writes:



And then there are many of the young who believe that freedom means absence of tradition, absence of structure, absence of plan: what is desirable is unstructured, spontaneous action. They often believe that "the old ideas" and values are of little or no use today, that to know tradition, not to speak of accepting some of it, is in itself an obstacle to freedom.¹

¹One can hear this expressed in a very primitive form by many young students; and also expressed in a veiled, highly sophisticated form, in the writings of H. Marcuse. [Cf. the critique of Herbert Marcuse in The Revolution of Hope, pp. 106-107, and the critique of relativism on pp. 87-88.]

Similarly, the Fromm who writes in The Revolution of Hope about the literacy campaigns of Professor Paolo Freire in Latin America would not be sympathetic to the affluent white student radicals who I have heard tell black underprivileged students that, since the latter had a great oral tradition, they should not bother with whitey's hang-up of writing and other academic binds. The students I have sometimes met who link Fromm indiscriminately with such critics of culture as Herbert Marcuse and Norman O. Brown have missed the dichotomy he draws in his contribution to the Summerhill compendium between order, which he regards as mechanical and dead, and structure, which he defines as the property of all living (and indeed, non-living) things and as essential for growth and creativity.¹⁵

¹⁵See Summerhill: For and Against, p. ; note also in Fromm's Foreword to A. S. Neill, Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing (New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1960), p. xvi, his emphasis on the importance of Neill's own extraordinary qualities as a caution against assuming that a school like Summerhill can be built anywhere, any day. On the peer pressures that may exist at Summerhill at the present time in the relative absence of adult controls, see the account by a visiting educator: Mary Keohane, "A. S. Neill: Latter-Day Dewey?," Elementary School Journal, (Vol. 70, 1970), pp. 401-410.



In a series of discussions I attended recently (Summer, 1970) with students elected to faculty-student committees as educational reformers at Harvard College, these very serious young people pretty consistently held to the ideology of educational reform I have been describing: degrees, credits, grades, requirements were hindrances to learning. So were lectures, which were authoritarian by definition. Some students recommended encounter groups as ways to free students from their inhibitions and faculty members from their pretentious and deadening erudition. I was one of several faculty members who argued that students could actually become more free by learning tangible skills and accomplishments, so that they might be able to do things and not just remain dependent. To counter this, one reflective student cited Summerhill, saying that it didn't matter if a student sat around for a year or so because eventually he might want to do something, and then he would do it under his own motivation and without pressure. Another student cited Erich Fromm to support his contention that contemporary social science consisted of a series of pigeon holes for compartmentalized disciplines which bear no relation to the problems of the great world.¹⁶

¹⁶ To be sure, Fromm is not always seen as an ally by students. An SDS leader at a state university, ^{on} being introduced to me, launched into a vehement attack on Fromm's "revisionism" of Karl Marx. This student said that Marx was lulling the bourgeoisie in his early humanistic writings, but was "really" always a pre-Leninist revolutionary; Fromm was robbing Marx of his toughness and turning him into a soft bourgeois romantic!

What was evident to me in this discussion was an idealism about the way learning should go on which can find some support in Fromm's work. It is an idealism that tempts us to believe that we can get rid of all the mixtures of motives by which most of us live, and that then we can find our way to a purity of humane experience unmediated by ordinariness or routine. For this particular group of zealous Harvard students, any education was worthless which was in any

degree compromised by imposed schedules or by the desire to win approval or to get into graduate school; and the fear of having a "corrupt" or impure motive seemed to lead these students to a great watchfulness^{rather} like that of the Puritans. But unlike the Puritans, work was not therapeutic or seen as indicative of election; it was apt to be seen as repressive. Thus, this idealism appeared in some students to lead to vacillation between self-contempt for not living up to the ideal and ^{a somewhat} passive waiting to be captured by some all-encompassing activity.

I don't know how Erich Fromm might have responded to this particular group of extremely critical students, though it is likely he would have warned them against an easy and comfortable despair. Probably I was more inclined than he would have been to reject their sharp distinction between self-motivated and contaminated education; thus, I remarked that I owned an alarm clock, that I arranged for deadlines (like the one then pressing me for this article!), and that I did not try to live at every moment on a self-actualizing peak without schedules and obligations. I said that most men's motives were mixed, and that mine certainly were, and argued that the search for purity and singleness of motive in an individual or in an organization leads to endless arguments over who or which group is more pure, less compromised. I recognize that in this outlook I am less hopeful than Fromm, more resigned if not more complacent. And having seen Fromm as a teacher in psychoanalytic seminars and lectures, I know that he can be extremely demanding vis-a-vis the self-indulgent even though he is also compassionate vis-a-vis the inept.

Of course, such an interpretation as to how Fromm might react to this particular group of students is speculative. What is not speculative is the impact popular psychoanalytic thought has had on the ways such students scrutinize themselves and each other. For them it has been one of the many precocious forms of debunking to which they have been exposed. They see psychoanalysis as demonstrating the primacy of the buried emotional life and the ways in which rationalizations masquerade as reason. Things are never what they seem. They



are always worse than they seem. One reason many students and faculty consider encounter groups as the ideal settings for education is that they supposedly get away from "excessive" cognitive emphases and formal relations and allow people of different ages and backgrounds to experience each other directly. These devotees are generally unfamiliar with Erich Fromm's insistence that what is repressed and what is evoked in a particular setting is not some pan-human flow of sex and aggression, but what a particular culture and a particular social character find no way to categorize or to use.¹⁷ Fromm is critical of the common notion that what is "real"--as

¹⁷ Cf. Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion: My Encounter with Marx and Freud (New York: Pocket Books, 1962) Chapter IX, "The Social Unconscious."

in the expression "the real me"--is the underlying aggression or racism or rampant sexuality; in encounter groups it often happens that people manipulate their aggressions or, indeed, their sexuality, ^{sometimes} in fake humility in order to establish a new moral hegemony in which the most apparently candid come out on top. What then may be repressed is sensitivity of feeling, delicacy (or snobbery) of reactions to other people, or one will be made to feel guilty for such reactions.¹⁸

¹⁸ I do not intend here to be making blanket statements about all encounter groups in all sorts of social strata and contexts. I am taking about liberal arts colleges where the manipulative tend to get involved with the shy. Consequences might be quite different among a group of older people of lower-middle class origin where everyone is inhibited, if not always shy. Furthermore, I do not speak out of personal experience with such groups, but out of observing instances on television, reading some of the literature, and talking with many devotees. The evangelism of some proponents of the movement reminds me of the similarities of some encounter groups, at the extreme, to Chinese thought reform sessions as described in Robert J. Lifton, Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism (New York, Norton, 1961).

Some current versions of existentialism also seem to support the encounter group movement. Whereas Freudian psychoanalysis teaches us the



degree to which we are conditioned by our past, existentialism (in Sartre's version) emphasizes the present moment and the spontaneity of impulse--another way of saying that anything goes, quite similar to the American emphasis on sincerity as a way of justifying any conduct that can be characterized as honest and spontaneous. Cf. the discussion of the combination of determinism and voluntarism in Sartre's existentialism, see Raymond Aron, Encounter (May, 1970).

It is evident from what I have said that the student educational reformers I have been meeting--and I include those at non-elite colleges--are on the whole of affluent backgrounds and reasonably well educated. This is not said in criticism of them; on the contrary, many have been generous in concerning themselves with reforms that can only benefit their successors when they themselves have managed to find a way through their undergraduate careers in which they have been relatively uncramped by requirements. Because they come from families that have arrived, and, indeed, at times from professional and intellectual families, they are apt to say of themselves that they want to "be" rather than to "do"; they believe that America and perhaps the whole Western world have been undone by an excessive emphasis on performance and achievement. Sometimes I have asked such students whether they believed that there are any skills at all that their culture is justified in asking them to acquire, or whether in their own development there is any point up to which they believe that they need the counsel of adults in the matter of their own further education. They don't think there is such a point. Summerhill is frequently cited in support of this position.

The analogy sometimes offered me is the finding that neonates will, like other animals, know how to feed themselves properly, to find the right amount of salt and other nutriment, when faced with a choice of possible edibles. Similarly, the students claim that they will know what it is they want and need and that in due course they will provide it for themselves. At the extreme to which these students often push the issue, there is implicit here a denial of the concept of culture itself.



a belief that people will grow up into some pan-human protoplasm able to communicate with other protoplasm without either the freedoms or the restraints of our cultural inheritance. The unanthropological and unhistorical nature of such a view is striking.¹⁹ The rejection of competition with peers and of the old-fashioned mania

¹⁹ In the discussion of educational constraints that harrass them, students quite commonly attack the language requirements in colleges and graduate schools, and everywhere these are being abandoned. My response has sometimes been to say to the students that their criticism of the inadequacy of most language requirements is quite correct and that they should insist on a language-immersion program in Peace Corps style in which they will be exposed to another culture so intensely that they will for a period not be able even to swear or to make love in their mother tongue, and in which all aspects of the non-American culture will be available to them from its high art to its vernacular slang or music. Students tend instantly to reject such a demanding alternative--including New Left students who talk a great deal about what they call the Third World but who, when pressed, claim that "everyone speaks English anyway"--a tacit imperialism.

I recall in this connection my experience a few years ago in trying to find a research assistant for I.F. Stone among recent Harvard College graduates.

I sent him several young men who apparently thought it sufficient to share a general antagonism to prevailing American values but who surprised Stone by not knowing French or German, or how to look up references in the Congressional Record or to do the kind of thorough research to which he is accustomed. Not a college graduate himself (though he now holds an honorary doctorate from Amherst), he had assumed that selective colleges turned out highly trained and disciplined students. (Eventually, he did find a suitable candidate.)

for success has admirable features, but it is a common fallacy of student and faculty critics to lump together rivalry with others and what might be called competition with the ding an sich----with the damned thingmanship of a violin, for example. Such students tend to wait to fall in love, as it were, with a topic or a vocation, just as Erich Fromm has noted in his writings that they wait to "fall" in love with another person, rather than making an active effort out of which a genuine relatedness might actually come.



SOURCES OF AUTHORITY IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

In pondering such discussions with students, I have kept looking for settings in which they are faced with an authority that cannot easily be personalized and, hence, where issues of fighting against fears of being dependent would be less likely to interfere with education. One example is the responsive reaction many students have to a coach of an athletic sport whom they see as their ally in improving their skill or pleasure in the sport, even if he may also be critical of them for indolence and failure to practice. Another is the responses of students performing in orchestras or chamber music groups, where the conductor may be seen as the transmitter of the imperatives imposed by the score, rather than as an authority in his own right (and, therefore, wrong). Indeed, in an orchestra or on a team, young people are willing to submit to ranking based on performance so that the first violinist or the baseball pitcher does not have to be elected or chosen by lot.²⁰

²⁰ To be sure, such settings also come under student attack for their competitiveness and their insistence on equality of opportunity rather than equality of outcome. Students tell me that in some schools which recently had active madrigal and chamber orchestra groups, the only performed music that ^{now} prevails is that of the guitar, idly plucked and sung to in an untrained way. And in some colleges of music and art, there are students who will insist that their creativity would be stunted if they had to submit to supervision--they declare that no one is entitled to evaluate them except themselves.

Such considerations have often reminded me of an exchange I had many years ago with Erich Fromm when we were talking about teaching machines, then in their infancy. I was defending experimentation with such machines against what I felt to be a certain anti-technological bias on his part by saying that such machines could take over the work of drill in an elementary language or in other subjects which, when human beings had to do the instructing, often became a sadistic process



(as I had often experienced in my own classical education)). Fromm's answer was quick: "Everyone is entitled to a certain quota of sadists in his education!" I thought then that assuring everyone such a quota would be no problem at all, even with a full supply of teaching machines, but today in 1970 I am less sure. I bring up this remark, made in passing ten years ago, not as evidence of Fromm's present view on a complex issue of pedagogy, but again to emphasize how often he is misread by Americans who link him with Marcuse, Maslow, Rogers, and other writers who deal with comparable issues of education.

The Cultural Revolution: Authority Delegitimized

When Christopher Jencks and I sent The Academic Revolution to press in 1967, we meant by that title, not the revolt of students or faculty against traditional curricular authority, but rather a much older and slower movement by which university faculties were becoming stronger and more powerful vis-a-vis donors, local communities, administrators, and students. We were writing in the era marked by the concern of many Americans to upgrade education at all levels, spreading the ideas of sophisticated physics and mathematics to the high schools and developing under federal sponsorship so-called "centers of excellence" in the more provincial parts of the United States. We wrote at a time when universities were moving away from "collegiate" fun and games toward a greater academic and also intellectual seriousness, and at the same time away from control by local philistines either on the faculty, the student body, or the church, the state, and the locale. Perhaps as late as 1968, one could still have said that students in the better colleges were seeking to perform well in regular academic terms because they did not really question the curriculum, and because even if they did, they wanted to be able to enter good graduate and professional schools. At Harvard College, for example, the "gentleman's C" of the insouciant aristocrat was no longer an admired goal but a deprecated legacy.²¹ Students were coming to a

²¹ For a picture of Harvard College in this period, critical of its complacencies while aware of its advances, see McGeorge Bundy, "Were Those the Days?" in Daedalus, 99, Summer, 1970, pp. 531-567.

growing number of avant-garde colleges with ever more precocious intellectual



equipment, in some cases quite as far along intellectually, if not in terms of preparation in a specialized subject, as the graduates of a British public school, a French lycée, or a German Gymnasium. In the middle-1960's, college presidents of such institutions saw their task as a struggle to recruit college professors in a market extremely favorable to the latter and to expand resources so as to improve qualitatively while growing quantitatively--student enrollments about doubled between 1958 and 1968. Few, if any, observers suspected that major institutions would by the end of the 1960's face financial bankruptcy, and more to the point here, moral delegitimation and loss of authority.

However, when in June, 1970, I attended the annual Institute for incoming college presidents run by the American Council on Education, most of the men and women in attendance were deeply troubled concerning the issue of legitimacy. They were aware that many state legislatures expect^{ed} them to act like other corporate executives (or, rather, as the latter are in fantasy supposed to act) and to be able to control campus turmoil and to fire dissident or destructive faculty and students. Inside the institution, in contrast, they are supposed to be egalitarian and infinitely accessible, and they are constantly being told that they must maintain "dialogue," or that "better communications" are the answer to all conflicts of interest. Most shrink from the accusation of being authoritarian or high-handed. The distinction Erich Fromm makes in Man for Himself between rational and irrational authority is almost impossible for them, as for many other Americans, to make--understandably, of course, when it involves their own conduct. And like most people, perhaps especially Americans, they consider it part of their job to be well-liked as well as to be respected.

If authority is not to lie in themselves and their own behavior, does it then perhaps lie in the curriculum which has been handed down to them? Can they defend the curriculum even while recognizing its undeniable biases and limitations? A handful of the men and women at the Institute were of this persuasion, believing that in the prevailing vogue of irrationalism, they had to defend the authority of scholarship and of cultural traditions, even if the particular carriers of these traditions on their campuses are all too human, fallible in their pedantry, their vanity, their rationalism, and all the other sins charged over the centuries against scholarship. In being prepared to make such a defense, these presidents are only too well aware that they can readily be defeated and ousted, and they know that they will be attacked as reactionaries and criticized as authoritarian. An increasing number of presidents is taking quite a different road, namely, to form an alliance with radical young faculty and



students in opposition to that segment of scholarly faculty who insist on the authority of the curriculum over students and of the academic professions and their standards over faculty. The convictions of such presidents in favor of participatory democracy outweigh such convictions as they have about the claims of scholarship or the importance of inherited cultural traditions. Indeed, many presidents, like many faculty, believe that to take any other position would be elitist--and the accusation of "elitism" has in many university circles become almost as damaging as the accusation of racism (the two are often interchangeable).

The vogue of encounter groups as a mode of learning, already referred to, is the stronger because such groups are seen as a way to reduce the authority of faculty members vis-a-vis students. Increasingly, students and many faculty vehemently insist that lectures are by definition authoritarian and that they compel the listeners to be passive receptacles. In contrast, encounter groups or rap sessions are praised as active and participative. What is completely overlooked in this ideology is the fact that in such sessions individuals may dominate who force others in the group into a much more oppressive form of passivity than any lecturer possibly could. Only a strong leader of the group can prevent such oppression because, in such groups, nobody can hide. Furthermore, it is a misjudgment to suppose that one can tell a priori what is active and what is passive. ^{The} assumption that listening to a lecture or a concert is necessarily passive, while "rapping" is active, seems to derive from an old-fashioned American judgment about muscularity and strenuousness: ironically, a judgment voiced by

many who regard themselves in politics and culture as "anti-American." In the absence of any effort to learn a skill or to discipline oneself in a cultural tradition, the new, more groovy forms of teaching and learning can become vehicles for that narcissism which, in The Heart of Man, Erich Fromm sees as endemic but

redeemable.²²

²² See Its Genius for Good and Evil
See The Heart of Man:(New York: Harper), 1964, Chapter Four. See also

for a penetrating account of many of the issues dealt with in this paper--an account which appeared after the text was written--Walter P. Metzger, "The Crisis of Academic Authority" in Daedalus, 99, Summer, 1970, pp. 568-608.

Implicit in what I have said thus far both about authority and about attempts at educational reform is my somewhat conservative belief that it is wrong to tear down given educational structures and curricula, no matter how inadequate, unless one has something better to put in their place. I am prepared to insist on the authority of tradition, even while I recognize that its legacies can be improved upon and may in certain cases be abolished. I am not prepared to follow the current fashion of abandoning courses in the history of Western Civilization on the ground--as I have often heard given--that this is the history of the white man and, hence, of racism and imperialism, although I quite accept the curriculum of Western Civilization plus--that is, plus other traditions which are to be taken seriously in their terms. In my first book on education published in 1956 I argued that it was a mistake for high-brow critics to assail secondary school teachers for not being geniuses of empathy and paragons of wisdom when the result was mainly to demoralize those who listened to the critique.²³

²³ This discussion was first published as "Teachers Amid Changing Expectations," Harvard Educational Review, Vol. 24, 1954, pp. 106-117; and then as "Secondary Education^{and} 'Counter-cyclical Policy'," in Constraint and Variety in American Education (University of Nebraska Press, 1956), Chapter Three.

Many academicians and critics grow up in the United States with the view that they live in a profoundly anti-intellectual country and are totally without influence; but



in fact, intellectual fads spread with extraordinary speed and, over time, have a cumulative impact on students. We see today both in our secondary schools and our colleges many demoralized instructors who realize that the reforms of which they are capable seem miniscule in the face of a cultural revolution whose sources lie in large measure outside the schools, and which has the support of the high-brow centers with their sympathy for Dionysian styles of life. That sympathy is now to some degree being carried into the secondary schools by young teachers who are themselves the products of permissive private or luxuriant public schools and for whom order and structure are not distinguishable from each other: they oppose both. Naturally, what has been said just now can readily become an alibi for complacency; one has to examine the social context before coming to a decision as to the appropriateness and the tone of criticisms. I take it for granted that a system of higher education with 300,000 faculty members and ^{seven} million students is not capable of making quantum jumps, but rather that the effort at ^{instant} radical transformation will bring chaos rather than creativity.

THE REVOLT AGAINST PRE-PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

Supporting the unsatisfactory status quo where one must, one then supports experimentation where one can. One builds enclaves, recruiting a small number of faculty who are willing to devote themselves to a serious effort of learning more about learning than most faculty have the opportunity to learn in their skimpy preparation as teachers. I am not talking here primarily about founding new colleges (which in the present climate are apt to attract both faculty and students who are educational visionaries with competing sectarian visions), but rather of enclaves within ongoing, more conventional institutions which can serve as pilot models of new possibilities. Any such venture is apt to be extremely modest, especially when compared with the trumpet calls for educational change. Furthermore, it is likely to be tied to its particular base of faculty and students



and cultural context, and thus (unlike pilot models in industry) not readily transferred to diverse educational settings. What¹⁴ may be transferred at best is a mode of thinking about education and, possibly, a mode of organization.

One very interesting such enclave is the one created at Berkeley by Joseph Tussman, Professor of Philosophy, in an effort to provide a structured and manageable curriculum for 150 freshmen and sophomores in a setting of humane scale. Recruiting five colleagues from different parts of the University and some teaching assistants, Tussman set out in 1965 to present students in the first year with an intensive introduction to Greek (largely Athenian) civilization in its cultural, political, aesthetic, and religious aspects; the second year was to be devoted similarly to American civilization. The pattern here was taken from the short-lived but influential Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin founded by Alexander Meiklejohn in the 1930's, of which Tussman had been a member. His book describing what came to be called the "Tussman College" can be read as a small treatise on the problems of authority in higher education.^{14a} Joseph Tussman, Experiment at Berkeley, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969). What is said in the text concerning the Tussman College is my interpretation and should not be attributed to him.

Vis-a-vis a good many faculty members, Tussman was felt not to have authority to develop a curriculum on Greek culture since he and his colleagues did not know the language and were not themselves professors of classics. Mixing together materials on Greek politics, art, and styles of life, was thought by many to be unprofessional. More vocal were the objections from many students and teaching assistants. For them, the very idea of a prescribed curriculum was authoritarian, and interference with their academic freedom to "do their own thing." A curriculum could be arrived at, if at all, only through participatory democracy; and while Tussman was willing to discuss and argue indefinitely with students, he was not prepared to submit to their decision as to what they should learn. And, of course, many felt that Greece was "irrelevant," and that carefully prepared lectures by the senior faculty were too formal and inherently authoritarian.



After the College had gone through two two-year sequences, its founder worried about the battle over authority and temporarily abandoned efforts to keep going. The teaching assistants who argued on behalf of the undergraduates that "relevance" must mean teaching about the ghetto or American racism and war and certainly not teaching about Greece, pressed the claims of some of the more vocal and intemperate undergraduates against Tussman himself and other senior faculty. The noise of this political-cultural struggle tended to conceal what the College actually accomplished for many of its students, fewer of whom dropped out of Berkeley than the general lower-division norm. The visibility of the cultural revolution often overshadows the serious and even scholarly students who, because they are that, are not organized and who sometimes feel that to side with faculty against their fellow students would be a form of generational betrayal.

Tussman seems to have lost out at Berkeley, a University with a highly mobile faculty which pays less attention to its undergraduates, especially its freshmen and sophomores, than do otherwise comparable great state universities such as Michigan or Illinois. But what he sought to do is the essence of the program at the two St. John's colleges in Annapolis and Santa Fe where the entire curriculum confers on the individual instructor an authority he might be unwilling to accept on his own behalf. Recently I had a visit from an educational researcher who was seeking to discover innovations in liberal arts colleges; I remarked to him that these two colleges were in a sense among the most experimental because they had had the courage to stay the same during all the changes of academic fashion. Beginning at Annapolis in 1937, St. John's developed a totally required curriculum consisting of music, languages, mathematics, and science, and the famous seminars on the Great Books.²⁴ Faculty and students

²⁴ In The Revolution of Hope, p. 115, Erich Fromm has a passing comment on such

a program, speaking of "our college students [who] are literally 'fed up' because they are fed, not stimulated." He continues, "They are dissatisfied with the intellectual fare they get in most--although fortunately not in all--instances, and, in this mood, tend to discard all traditional writings, values, and ideas. It is futile simply to complain about this fact. One has to change its conditions, and this change can occur only if the split between emotional experience and thought is replaced by a new unity of heart and mind. This is not done by the method of reading the hundred great books--which is conventional and unimaginative. It can only be accomplished if the teachers themselves cease being bureaucrats hiding their own lack of aliveness behind their role of bureaucratic dispensers of knowledge; if they become--in a word, by Tolstoy--'the co-disciples of their students.'" As suggested later in the text above, I think that indeed there are problems in the Great Books formula and that the textual analysis that colleges^{have} built on that formula can become routinized. In discussions at both St. John's Colleges, I have made similar criticisms. Nevertheless, the seriousness, even solemnity, with which students and faculty do bow to the authority of the text can be a refreshing contrast to the many other small, experimental liberal arts colleges where the students principally spend their time on pot and each other. We have in American higher education today--and Erich Fromm repeatedly recognizes this in his writings--very few instances of success. I am hesitant to surrender even those, like the two St. John's Colleges, of which I have a good many criticisms, until I see a number of better models around.

alike consider themselves subordinate to the classics they teach and learn: these are "the authorities" which can be criticized but not dismissed out of hand. Whereas in most small classes today teachers try to reduce their authority by



getting on a first-name basis with students and by sharing the dress and manners of the young, classroom relations at St. John's are formal, but nonetheless intense for that. Graduates of St. John's College can be counted on for skill in reading closely--a skill that the graduates of other elite institutions by no means are sure to possess.

All virtues have their corresponding limitations, and those of St. John's are evident to the visitor. The Great Books are ^{sometimes} read in an almost Talmudic way, with little sense for context. This is almost inevitable given the lack of specialization on which faculty members pride themselves. For example, I remember one seminar I attended on a passage from Karl Marx's "Critique of the Gotha Program" where the text was the only authority, discussed in an unhistorical way without reference to the polemical situation in which Marx found himself at the time of the essay, or to the competing canons of his socialist and anarchist rivals. Some of the students become excellent dialecticians and poor historians. Correspondingly, while St. John's College in Santa Fe sits in the midst of a fascinating tri-cultural area (Spanish-Americans, Anglos, and Indians) it provides its students and faculty with only an amateur sense of the locale because of the absence of field work.

Shimer College in Mt. Carroll, Illinois, is another college that is experimental because it has stayed the same, and resembles St. John's in its insistence on a required curriculum. Its faculty are somewhat more specialized, being divided up into areas of the social sciences, the humanities, and the natural sciences, and there is a bit more flexibility in a student's program so that, for example, it is possible for a student to get a teaching certificate through practice teaching in Illinois schools and still graduate in four years.²⁵

²⁵ For a discussion of Shimer at a somewhat earlier point, see Christopher Jencks



and David Riesman, "Shimer College," Phi Delta Kappan, April, 1966, pp. 415-420. Since that article was written, Shimer seems to have suffered from the schisms and vendettas that seem endemic among small experimental colleges, or are perhaps only more visible and damaging there than in larger institutions which can contain similar vicissitudes within tighter bulkheads.

Shimer graduates (the student body ranges between four and five hundred) have compiled remarkable records in post-baccalaureate work, suggesting that much undergraduate specialization is dysfunctional in terms of future contribution to the specialty.

The notion of the Great Books or the Shimer College insistence on a required curriculum reflects the tradition of "formation" in the French or Catholic use of the term: students are to have an upbringing or a formation in a tradition, though without any idea that they be limited thereafter in the directions they take. Probably the majority of American undergraduate students are in fairly standard and required curricula today, but these are curricula preparing them for specific professions or sub-professions such as engineering, accounting, school teaching, nursing, agriculture, and so on, with "formation" in terms of liberal arts seen by many of these students as a rite of passage they reluctantly undergo. They are willing to submit to the authority of their presumptive professional futures and to the men and women already in the field who represent those futures. Their college years are a necessary way station to be got through as painlessly and expeditiously as possible. In the major elite professional schools, in the older professions of medicine, law, and theology, there is in contrast enormous ferment among both faculty and students. In the more liberal

divinity schools, the traditional curriculum has virtually been routed, and it is sometimes hard to distinguish these schools from undergraduate centers of activism in the humanities and the social sciences. Many of the more distinguished medical schools have turned in the direction of community health and community psychiatry; similarly, law schools are concerned with poverty law, civil rights, and related fields. This has meant a turn away from the authority of the professionals now in the field, if they represent traditional approaches and traditional patterns of success. Much the same thing has happened in many of the graduate schools of arts and sciences, especially in the social sciences and humanities, although such changes are still unknown in some fields of biology and physics. In these schools, the graduate students have frequently turned against competition for status in the discipline and, in many instances, against specialized research as such. Thus paradoxically, while Shimer College and the two St. John's Colleges seem reactionary in their insistence on a required curriculum, they are no longer out of step with contemporary trends in the deprecation of specialized research and in the new concern with undergraduate teaching which is to be found among those graduate students who now seek out positions in liberal arts colleges where they can devote themselves wholeheartedly to their students.

This development promises to alter considerably the status of teaching, or rather the status of teaching nonprofessional undergraduates as against teaching graduate students or post-doctoral fellows. Given the devaluation of such teaching in many major academic centers, this seems to me a blessing. But, like the products of other social movements, it is not an unmixed blessing. I believe that for many undergraduates, whatever they plan to do with themselves later, the experience of involving themselves in a piece of specialized research is enlivening and liberating.



It helps them realize that they can accomplish something in a new territory; it cultivates the art of what Gregory Bateson terms deuterio-learning, or learning to learn. Thus I have sometimes thought that students who have never tackled anything difficult in secondary schools, or who are so glib that what they have done has not been difficult for them, would be best advised in college to concentrate a large part of their work in the natural sciences, or in some systematic project where they could work with colleagues and learn how research is done and thus become better judges of it--whatever careers they may later pursue. (If they were in fact to become natural scientists, I would rather be inclined to suggest that they do other things as undergraduates, though I know this goes against the experience that mathematicians and physicists develop their powers at extremely young ages.) Correspondingly, I do not think it a good idea for a college to focus entirely on broad interdisciplinary courses or indeed for a faculty to pride itself on its totally humanistic bent, where "humanistic" becomes a voguish term with Luddite connotations.

Furthermore, once college teachers abandon any concern with an audience or constituency other than their undergraduate students, the problems that psychoanalysts term issues of transference become even more grave than they generally are. Faculty may engage in a competition to show themselves more pure, more devoted, "than thou." This very dedication is one source of the factionalism and schismatic tendency in the small liberal arts college. And where such faculty do not have the authority of a curriculum, but reject both formal authority and requirements, they are then apt to fall back on their charisma as a way of maintaining a constituency among students. Yet such men will not grow any younger as they continue teaching. They are seldom celibate, and they lack the (never wholly sufficient) protections against zealotry and against failure built into the rules of some religious orders.

I have sometimes suggested that the college president needs to protect his institution against the temptation of becoming missionaries that some faculty



have by forcing sabbaticals on them so they they can not remain indefinitely totally involved with undergraduates. However, when I have suggested something like this to people at experimental liberal arts colleges, the more missionary faculty have reacted almost violently, contending that no president has the authority to interfere with their decision to make a complete commitment to undergraduate teaching. Like the young people attempting to develop new styles of life in communes, these faculty members see themselves as building an intentional community, uncorrupted by pressures to publish or otherwise to maintain visibility in the larger world. However, those experimental colleges seem to have fared best over a considerable period of time whose administrations have encouraged faculty members not to limit themselves to the single flock of undergraduates but to add to their teaching other sources of stimulation which need not necessarily take the form of professional academic work. Thus, both Bennington and Sarah Lawrence have made places for faculty who are involved in the arts or in community and political work or have other ties to adult society. The late William Fels, former President of Bennington College, once reported to me that on the whole those faculty who had such connections were also regarded by students as better teachers than those who were confined to their teaching.²⁶

²⁶ Fels' judgment was based on student reports of the quality of teaching which he then compared with faculty performance in extramural work of all sorts. In general, the dichotomy fiercely urged by radical teachers between publishing (bad) and teaching (good) is false, not only because there are many other activities in addition to teaching in which faculty members can engage to their own refreshment and their students' benefit, but also because there is some evidence that those who publish are apt to be better teachers as judged by students than those who



do not. For further discussion, cf. David Riesman, Joseph Gusfield, and Zelda Gamson, Academic Values and Mass Education: The Early Years of Oakland and Monteith (New York: Doubleday, 1970), Chapters 12 and 13.

Most faculty members, of course, even in major research-oriented universities, appreciate being liked and admired by their undergraduate students.²⁷ American

²⁷ Thorstein Veblen was an oddity who wanted to put students off, perhaps not to be bothered and possibly not to be tested by them. See David Riesman, Thorstein Veblen: A Critical Interpretation (New York: Charles Scribners, 1953), Chapter 1.

teachers are almost certainly, however, more vulnerable than for example, equally able teachers in a French lycée or a German Gymnasium where there has been a long tradition of brilliant men entering secondary school teaching (corresponding in some respects to our first two years of college), where there have been fewer university places, and where the secondary school curriculum has until very recently been regarded as unassailable by students. No doubt, the relative lack of prestige of secondary school teaching in the United States (the prestige is rising as more men enter the field) is regrettable, as are the many other ways in which prestige skews occupational choice and placement in society. But it is unrealistic for administrators not to take account of the status of "mere" teaching in creating the institutional forms in which experiment will have a chance.

These considerations are important in turning from the experimental colleges to the experimental programs within major universities. Daniel Bell in The Reforming of General Education discusses the vicissitudes of the two-class faculties that developed at Columbia and at the University of Chicago, one oriented to the



General Education College courses, and the other to the specialized post-baccalaureate programs; the former faculty tended to feel infra dig and unhappy--second-class academic citizens in their own milieu.²⁸ I can testify to that schism from my

²⁸ See Bell, The Reforming of General Education: The Columbia College Experience in its Natural Setting (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966); also Martin Trow, "Notes on Undergraduate Teaching at Large State Universities," (Berkeley Mimeograph, 1966.)

own experience at Chicago. I was fortunate in being able to teach both in the undergraduate and the graduate programs, although this exposed me to some criticism from a number of my College colleagues who maintained that the only worthwhile teaching was of undergraduates.²⁹ The responsibility I was early given at Chicago

²⁹ As it happens, I do in fact prefer to teach undergraduates where I do not feel responsible for preparing them for a professional career and where they are not looking to me for sponsorship in such a career, but come to me principally out of interest in the intellectual issues that are of concern to me. However, I also enjoy association with post-baccalaureate students, particularly in settings where I am not their chief patron; and at Chicago I felt that my membership in the Graduate Division of the Social Sciences was of benefit to the College and to my undergraduate students, especially when relations between the College and the Division became extremely strained with students ^{sometimes} caught in the warfare between College sectarians and departmental oligarchs.

for developing one of the large required interdisciplinary courses was an exceptionally rewarding opportunity. This occurred at the time immediately after the Second World War when the congruence of psychoanalytic psychology with cultural anthropology and sociology was proving a heady mixture, so that all of us had a feeling of discovery and intellectual enthusiasm. Erich Fromm's Escape From Freedom (1941) was one of the key books on which we drew, linking as it does the psychoanalytic with the social and historical; we went back to the "founders"--Marx, Weber, Durkheim,



Malthus--and added contemporary books (such as The Authoritarian Personality which sought to apply the approaches of these authors to the American case).

The undergraduate programs in the College at Chicago, at the time they were developed (and as I understand it, even to this day) are in varying measures illustrations of the best sort of undergraduate teaching for, *when done well*, such teaching allows the creation of a group of colleagues who share an interest in common problems but bring to them diverse intellectual traditions and non-academic experiences. In the Chicago group of which I was part from 1946^{to} 1958, we had the benefit of students who were very rarely Philistine or resistant to intellectual concerns. When I faced the second-year class whom it was my obligation to teach, I had the not entirely fallacious sense that half of them wanted to become psychiatrists and the other half wanted my job. This was as true of the serious post-World War II veterans who eliminated the fun and games characteristic of an earlier collegiate era as of the precocious early entrants of 16 or 17 who were hurrying on to their medical or doctoral degrees. What the students brought was curiosity, the belief that ideas mattered--and sometimes an almost excessive focus on the verbal arts at the expense of physical grace and aesthetic concern.

The faculty's chief problem lay with itself, not with the students. We were never able to induce an economist or a regulation psychologist to take part in our program--both these disciplines seemed too advanced to have any truck with our looser methods and apparently less focused topics.³⁰ Indeed, as already indicated,

³⁰ Cf. for a contemporary discussion, David Riesman, "Some Problems of a Course in 'Culture and Personality,'" Journal of General Education V., (1951) pp. 122-136.

a number of our undergraduates, when they entered graduate school, came under attack for their cockiness and the occasional pretentiousness of their claims. For indeed, an interdisciplinary program can become a foray in sloppy subsumesmanship in which the difficulties of bringing together concepts and methods from diverse fields are glossed over by faculty members who claim to be interdisciplinary when, in fact,



they are incapable of mastering any discipline; of course, in such a situation, students will exaggerate the vices--claimed as virtues--of their mentors. Some of the College faculty believed that the Socratic method was the only proper form of teaching, opposing lectures and in some cases field work as well. Eventually, divided within and under attack from without, the College lost its short-run élan, and under new management a series of programs was instituted that preserved some of the older interdisciplinary courses while establishing closer links with the graduate Divisions. Yet longevity is not the only test of ^{the success of} an academic experiment. In terms both of the faculty it helped educate and the students who went through it, the College at Chicago during the Robert Hutchins years was unusually fertile.³¹

³¹ See for a sympathetic summary, Robert Nisbet, "Hutchins of Chicago," Commentary (1964), 38, pp. 52-55.

Furthermore, the legacy continues in altered form at Chicago and, in some measure, at Shimer College and elsewhere.

Neither the Chicago nor the earlier Columbia experiments with General Education came about through academic laissez-faire. Both took it for granted that some books were more worth reading than others, that some ideas were more important than others, that there were themes to which all students should be exposed, and that strong-willed academic leaders should impose a curriculum. Many programs termed "General Education" are much looser. The General Education program at Harvard College, for instance, like that at many institutions, offers students a great variety of ways to meet the requirement that they expose themselves to a course or two in the Humanities, the Social Sciences, or the Natural Sciences. Such an arrangement provides for the faculty a treaty of competitive co-existence among different departments and areas, while not demanding what today would be almost impossible, namely, agreement as to what an educated American ought to know before finishing an undergraduate program. On the student level, what frequently happens is an effort to meet the requirements on a minimal level. Thus, a student with an interest in literature who is hostile to science may cast around for that introductory Natural Science course--is it Astronomy this year, or Geology?--that



is least taxing and least threatening. Or a prospective engineer will look for a "gut" Humanities course where the professor is said to put on a good show. Such a program nevertheless operates on the assumption that, in choosing a Natural Science, a Social Science, and a Humanities course, an undergraduate will correspondingly be introduced to different ways of thought and different modes of inquiry. But if one looks more analytically at the cognitive and emotional styles to be found in a university, it then may become evident that, even if the students take distribution requirements seriously, they may still go through their four years of college with limited exposure to the variety of styles that exist in the world from which they as individuals could profit. However, the notion of taking any requirements seriously is beginning to sound out of date, for in ~~the~~ liberal arts colleges all requirements may be on the verge of disappearing. Thus, not only pre-professional education--intended, as many students see it, to fit them into slots in a world they disparage--but also liberal or General Education suffer from the crisis of legitimacy.

SOME PERSONAL (PERHAPS QUIXOTIC) STRATEGIES IN UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

Let me begin by returning to Erich Fromm's comment in The Revolution of Hope (p. 115) concerning the futility of complaining about student dissatisfaction and the need for faculty members to become, in his fine term, "vulnerable," responsive to student interests. A college which took this mandate seriously might also ask itself how students ^{also} might be helped to become more vulnerable, open to an awareness of their limitations as well as their strengths. Is it conceivable that students would pay more attention to an advisor in a one-to-one discussion of their educational opportunities and problems than to the impersonal authority of a curriculum? Might it make sense to shift educational resources in some measure away from teaching and in the direction of advising? Ideally, I would like to ask a student on entering college to take part in an assessment of his strengths and limitations in a variety of areas of cognitive and emotional functioning. He would then receive, as it were, a ticket for the nutritional fare he needed in order to recoup vitamin deficiencies based



on his earlier experience, and indeed, on his personal temperament, taking into account the allergies developed in his previous education as well as the appetites. He would be encouraged to play from areas of previous strength in order to sustain himself while he explored areas of previous weakness, and he would be taunted and tempted to surrender the narcissism by which he had previously protected himself from exploring approaches where he felt awkward or where he did not dare discover the limits of his capacities.³²

³² A number of colleges have abandoned or minimized their traditional grading systems so as to minimize the inhibition to educational experiment of this sort based on students' fear of not making the grade and, hence, penalizing themselves in terms of further work. For one of the best empirical dissections of the ways in which grading policy influences student choice of course, levels of work and of effort, see Howard Becker, Blanche Geer, and Everett Hughes, Making the Grade: The Academic Side of College Life (New York: John Wiley, 1968).

Furthermore, the advisor might help the student discover ways in which he or she could learn even from less than optimal educational settings--from teachers described as "boring," for example. (Recall in this connection Erich Fromm's offhand comment about everyone being entitled to his quota of sadistic teachers.) In many discussions with students, I have maintained that they could do more to improve their own educations quickly by seeing what they could learn from teachers they dislike or regard as pedantic, ^{rather} than by agitating to fill their institution with geniuses of empathy who are concededly rare and of whom there will never be enough to go round. Many students today need to learn ^{how} to listen to lectures with what Erich Fromm terms "activeness" in The Revolution of Hope, mixing their own thought with that of the lecturer and attending to what the anthropologist Edward Hall calls "the silent language" as well to the spoken words. I believe that all human encounters profit from such attentiveness.³³



³³ In the large lecture course I give at Harvard College and which I shall describe in a moment, I try to discourage students from taking notes during the lecture, (which they needn't do for examination purposes since there is no exam) but suggest that they keep a diary or that they stay in the lecture hall briefly after the hour is over (which is the free lunch hour) making notes of their own reactions and free associations to what I have said or raising questions which they could ask me orally or deliver in writing next time. Not many take advantage of this suggestion, and many continue to take notes--perhaps this is strategy for keeping awake.

A handful of colleges such as Sarah Lawrence approach the model here sketched. There, the personal authority of the don or counsellor takes the place of the complete absence of formal curricular requirements. The don seeks to encourage students to explore the curriculum and to abandon self-protectiveness. Since until just now Sarah Lawrence has been a woman's college, and since a great number of the faculty have been lively and talented young men, the dons have had a certain authority; they have only rarely met students whose mask of independence truculently declares: "You can't make me..." In my own observation of coeducational settings, women students have been more responsive and responsible--though these qualities sometimes are disadvantageous to their education and development, and frequently are too easily dismissed as mere docility.

Most colleges, of course, have both systems of advising and more or less required curricula; however, most college presidents would admit that the advising which goes on is pretty perfunctory. In large universities, advising tends to be left to a para-academic category of counsellors, often trained in Rogerian methods of sympathetic reassurance. During the post-Sputnick decade when academic men had a rare brief period of hegemony on many campuses, the men and women who served as counsellors were sometimes able to protect the self-esteem of ^{shy} undergraduates against the neglect or contempt of the best academic gamesmen among their fellow students who were braced by newly triumphant faculty. For the academically weaker students, such counsellors found



routes through the curriculum that were less punitive--perhaps less illuminating also. Yet, because it was clear that the counsellors were not academic, they could only at best bind up the wounds, not change the rules of the game or give their counsellees more resilient ways of playing the game.³⁴ Nor could many

³⁴ Cf. Michael Maccoby, "The Game Attitude," Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Social Relations, (Harvard University: 1960).

counsellors deal with the subtle problems of ethics and personal destiny created by students who took seriously the ideological issues implicit in their academic work.

I can illustrate this by the experience of a student of mine two decades ago in the College at the University of Chicago. This was a woman of 17 who had since the age of 11 belonged to a Zionist youth movement whose aim was to prepare people to go to Israel as dedicated workers in a kibbutz. When she had expressed her desire to come to college, her fellows had argued that Israel had no need of college-trained people and that, if she did attend college, she would be lost to the Movement. She begged to be allowed to attend for a single year, promising that after that she would expatriate herself to Israel. By chance she came into my section of the "Culture and Personality" course at a time when we were focusing on the problems of multi-ethnic societies. We read Gunnar Myrdal's book, An American Dilemma, and talked about race and ethnic nationalism in comparative perspective. I made evident my own pluralist, anti-nationalist bias.³⁵ We discussed in a common vocabulary

³⁵ For illustration, cf. my essay, "Some Observations Concerning Marginality," Phylon (1951), Vol. 12, No. 2., reprinted in Individualism Reconsidered (New York: Free Press Paperback edition, 1964) pp. 153-165.

Black Muslims, Zionists, French-Canadian nationalists, and so on. The young woman in question found that she could not study and went first to consult a psychiatrist. According to her later report, he told her that she was suffering from an Oedipal

conflict--no doubt true, but only part of the truth. Dissatisfied with this diagnosis, she went then to the Counselling Center; there, a young woman counsellor listened to her talk in a non-directive way, reflecting back the strength of her feelings, but unable to interpret them. Finally, the student came to talk with me. When I heard her story, I realized that neither the psychiatrist nor the counsellors seemed to have ^{understood} the intensity of the ideological issues within the Zionist group, nor within our College setting; both were interested, of course, in affects--and ^{apparently} assumed that affects could have nothing to do with ideas and ideologies. I found it not incomprehensible that the young woman was unable to study where the prediction that she would betray the group was in fact being borne out by her own increasing misgivings about indoctrinating quite young children into a movement that had some totalitarian aspects. To help her, a psychiatrist or counsellor would have had to believe that ideas can have consequences, something which I as an analysand of Erich Fromm, knew very well in theory, even if I could not always use that knowledge in practice.

For me, this episode supported the view I already held, namely, that advising should be done by faculty so that they would get feedback on their own impact on students (which they are often inclined to underestimate, and sometimes to overestimate). Most counsellors, however, believe that faculty will neither take the time that advising requires nor learn enough about adolescence and its hazards to become any good at it. Counsellors rightly point out that faculty members are generally unaware, even in a small college, how their colleagues perform as teachers--that is, how they look from below. In most colleges, the privacy of the classroom protects faculty members from each other's scrutiny. And even if this were not the case, faculty members might be hesitant to be candid in talking with students about other faculty, since this power could so easily be exploited in a vindictive or self-serving way. Yet I believe that the improvement of undergraduate education requires breaking down the privacy of the classroom and encouraging mutual visiting and criticism. Harvard offers its faculty through the Bureau of Study Counsel



opportunities to become better teachers as well as helping students through this agency learn better how to learn. Instructors can have their sections recorded in order to see what it is they do. They may listen to recordings of tutorials or take part in group discussions of the strategies of teaching in which they discover that they are not the only ones to be anxious about teaching--college teaching being one of the very few professional activities into which one is plunged without any specific training or even a modicum of guidance.

Strategies of teaching and advising, as of therapy, must change as the cultural context changes, and my own experience over the last dozen years at Harvard suggests how difficult the readjustments can be. In the academic year 1958-1959, I inaugurated a course in the Harvard General Education Program on "American Character and Society" (in which I had the assistance of Michael Maccoby who was then a graduate student); I built on my Chicago experience in recruiting an experimentally-minded staff of some ten younger colleagues who came from sociology, political science, history, clinical psychology, and comparative literature. We asked of each student that, with the guidance of a staff member, he write a long paper, and both the staff member and I responded to these papers with extensive commentaries. It was at that time extraordinarily difficult to persuade Harvard undergraduates that they could make any contribution at all to a faculty member's understanding of a problem. A large number had had the disheartening experience of finding themselves no longer the brightest stars of their respective high schools, but surrounded with hundreds of fellow valedictorians--little fish in a big, opaque pond. Many came to doubt their own powers, and reacted guardedly to their work and to each other; their curiosity about the world was dimmed by the fear of revealing their inadequacies. In those years I published three volumes of student papers in order to suggest that it was possible for ^aneophyte to make a contribution, especially if he can draw on his own access to a particular world of school or job or locale.³⁶

³⁶ In an experimental freshman seminar which I led in one year concurrently with the course, my colleagues and I sought to go beyond the social sciences and to



acquaint students with the beauty and intellectual excitement of the natural sciences when practiced at their best. We took account of the fact that many of these students in high school had been exposed to the lifeless formulae of science and not to the peaks of discovery, let alone the discoverers themselves. Hence, I invited colleagues in the sciences to come and talk with students about what the life of a scientist is like, how they got into the work they were doing now, and how, if at all, this was related to their childhood ambitions. Often the ensuing conversations would go on for hours as students recognized the personal and affective and even poetic aspects of science. I was less successful in giving them a sympathetic sense of other post-baccalaureate careers such as journalism, intricate managerial business, or government service. Those were the days when students were snobbish about what they saw as bureaucratic or commercial careers. Today, in contrast, there has been a decline in snobbery, as among many students there develops a derogation of any careers which require advanced training and which can be regarded as in any sense "careerist."

The reading list of the course reflects the continuing interest I have had in psychoanalytic approaches to history and the other social sciences. The concept of social character, as Erich Fromm and others have developed it, has been central for us in seeking to understand American society in comparative and historical perspective. In giving students what for many will be their only exposure to the social sciences, we have sought to illustrate how a meticulous clinician works, but also how a great generalizing writer like Tocqueville or Veblen works. But the political and cultural revolutions on the campus have in the last few years altered what students bring to such a course and what they expect from it. I would say that whereas our principal problem was once to encourage student self-confidence, today our principal problem is to evoke student curiosity about society. Paradoxically, too much self-confidence inhibits curiosity: many extraordinarily precocious students arrive at college believing that they already know what society is like--and that it is utterly vicious. To spend any energy exploring the details



appears to them a delaying tactic at best, at worst a kind of counter-insurgency. Many of these students have been exposed to ideas of liberation from very early on; some have been taught in secondary school by young radicals avoiding the draft or by young anti-careerists avoiding what they regard as the rat race of university life. They may not actually have read Nietzsche, Sartre, Camus, Fromm, Fanon, but they have been exposed to the ideas of such writers osmotically in a kind of post-McLuhan way. And they have almost undoubtedly read Soul on Ice, some of Norman Mailer's journalism if not his novels, and perhaps the Autobiography of Malcolm X and Manchild in the Promised Land--I am speaking here about affluent white students. Discoveries and debunkings once made in college by a few students are now made in the ninth grade by a great many. They arrive at college believing themselves sophisticated; one of the problems we face as teachers is the deep provincialism of young men and women who regard themselves as fully cosmopolitan. Because their emotional and, hence, intellectual interest is so largely focused upon America's underclass, and principally the black minority of this underclass, it is difficult to evoke their interest in the full range of human experience within the United States, even among blacks. Many say that they want to share "the black experience," assuming that there is only a single experience and that in any case it is only of suffering and debasement on the one side and joyful naturalness on the other. It is hard to get such students to extend their empathy to the experience of being old, or to being what they would regard as bigoted and small-minded (though the tiny minority of revolutionaries among them talk about contacts with the "working class").³⁷

³⁷ Michael Lerner, a former Harvard College student, describes such elite student snobberies in "Respectable Bigotry," The American Scholar, Vol. 38, Autumn, 1969, pp. 606-617.

Furthermore, such students, many of whom regard themselves as vehemently anti-American, have very little interest in anything that happens outside



the borders of the United States. For example, though some use the phrase "Third World" a good deal, few are curious about the extraordinary diversities of this world, its ethnic conflicts and religious forms, its many roads toward industrialization, and the drama of the struggles between nationalism and tribalism. Even after four years of college, few of the students I see have any concrete knowledge of Vietnamese society, and very few any concern with Biafra's attempted secession. Though such students regard themselves, as I have said, as pan-human, they inescapably remain American; their lack of curiosity^{or perplexity} about hierarchical societies, whether in medieval Europe or in the contemporary world, is like an inheritance from Mark Twain.

No longer do we have a problem persuading students to do some piece of empirical work outside the library--our problem now is the opposite, of getting students to look at books at all, if they do not fall within the current canon. Reactions to Alexis de Tocqueville's Democracy in America are especially revealing. Many students and some staff members tend to dismiss him as a French aristocrat, a liberal-conservative, who is abstract and out of another century. They cannot identify with this young Frenchman and his remarkable experience of America. Some resent his detachment, not seeing that he was passionately arguing with his fellow French aristocrats and conservatives as to how they might respond creatively to the coming democratic world rather than dig in their heels for rear-guard action.

Tocqueville would not be astonished at some aspects of the cultural revolution insofar as it is a reaction against hierarchy, tradition, and elites. Because egalitarianism has always been stronger in America than in other industrial societies, ^{the} cultural revolution forces faculty members not only to confront resistant students, but also ambivalence within themselves to the degree that they identify with students. Indeed, if one looks around the world at the student movement elsewhere, one might surmise that the cultural revolution is strongest in the once mainly Protestant countries: in the United States first of all, in West Germany and in Holland, and in Scandinavia. In terms of alienation from family and from established forms, this revolution seems to me less stressful in the United Kingdom which is only partly a post-Protestant country if one regards the Anglican Church as quasi-Catholic.³⁸ This is a tentative hypothesis, and I am not sure what it proves, even

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One limitation of the notion advanced in the text lies in the evident fact that Dutch Catholic students are at least as radical as ones of Protestant background; and of course in the United States some of the leaders have been radical Catholics, although not many of the followers. Through a visit in 1961 and through many

friends, I know more about the Japanese student movement than about any^{other} non-American student movement. It is violence-prone, split into several Communist and a great many splinter factions, and tied only loosely to adult groups such as the Socialist Party factions. Yet even now there are virtually no Japanese dropouts from the universities; and when students are through the "pink shower" of their four student years, most go readily enough to work for Mitsubishi or the Foreign Office or the great newspaper chains; even in their student days, they are not cut off from their families. Cf. for an early account and discussion, David and Evelyn Thompson Riesman, Conversations in Japan: Modernization, Politics and Culture (New York: Basic Books, 1967).

if it turns out to be so. But even if the cultural revolution is not post-Protestant in any specific sense, it is post-industrial in a quite concrete sense that affluent students believe that hard scientific and technical work, or work in organizational harness, is no longer necessary in the affluent society. Here they share very much Herbert Marcuse's view of surplus repression. In my judgment, all these countries have begun to become post-industrial before any of them can afford it.

Not only can our societies not afford to turn away from rationality if we are not to condemn millions to starvation, but we ourselves as individuals cannot find freedom by espousing group-induced irrationality as therapy for character-conditioned defects. In Escape From Freedom, Erich Fromm pointed to the anxieties that freedom brings, and to the way in which people seek to avoid freedom by clinging to ancestral legacies, by joining mass movements which promise to bring order out of chaos, or in less dramatic ways, through automaton conformity. Again and again, from Escape From Freedom in 1941 to The Revolution of Hope in 1968, Fromm contends that there are no^{easy} formulae by which an individual can live his life. His reason is a frail but essential resource; this is because the human situation is concrete and authoritative: in every society and in every stratum of a differentiated society, it imposes its own requirements on all men who need to assimilate in order to survive and to relate to others in order to preserve their



sanity. These requirements are not responded to in a random way, but by the formation of a social character which provides for its possessors a temporary and necessarily more or less truncated solution to life. The potential wholeness of man is only adumbrated in any extant society: in some groups, rationalism (as distinguished from reason) conquers all; in others, ^{irrational} hatred or masochism.³⁹

³⁹ For a discussion of the various kinds of violence which, in the animal world, are species-specific to man, see Fromm, The Heart of Man: Its Genius for Good and Evil, Chapter 2.

In this view of man, Fromm distinguishes not only between rational and irrational authority--the former based on competence, the latter on charisma--but also between rational and irrational love, hatred, and other affects. Fromm does not believe that man is either good or evil intrinsically, whole or alienated, but that many possibilities are in principle open for less inharmonious relations between man and his own powers, man and nature, man and other men. It is the ambitious task of education to help men explore these possibilities as represented in history and biography, in the great world religions, and in the extant cultures around the world.

Ambitious tasks can become frustrating and self-defeating if pursued with fanaticism and without attention to concrete possibilities. I believe that in working toward visionary but still conceivable goals, one has to work with what already exists in small, incremental, and hence, extremely patient ways. The current mood of many cultural as well as political revolutionaries is, of course, antagonistic to such an attitude; many believe in the strategy of "the worse, the better": if structures can be destroyed and if anarchy occurs, then there is a chance that the Revolution may triumph. Under American conditions, such a prospect is so unlikely that it seems to me often presented as a rationalization for impatience and despair. In my judgment it is necessary to protect experiments from attack by those who insist on an all-or-nothing approach to education: if



a remedy does not cure all the defects for all levels of students--if, for example, it only deals with a few well-prepared students from elite backgrounds--it is not worth doing at all. I find this a very common attitude today among educational reformers.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ To give one example among many out of my own experience as an educational reformer, I have thought for a long time that there ought to be some experimental boarding schools for (mainly) Negro males, schools that would concentrate on the hard sciences, engineering, navigation, and other outdoor pursuits. I would envisage such schools dealing with the "macho" problem by a program similar to that of Outward Bound, the survival training program that originated in England and has been used with some success in this country. I would hope such a program could widen the orbit of Negro careers beyond the present spectrum of the talk professions such as education, the ministry, politics, sociology, etc.--opening areas where there are enormous opportunities for Negro and white people of high competence. But when I have suggested such a possibility, and only that it be tried on a small experimental basis, I have been attacked by white and black militants--mainly the former--on the ground that it would "do nothing" for the mass of ghetto youngsters, that it would be elitist, and that it would succeed by taking these favored Negro students out of the ghetto and into careers in science and engineering all over the world. These critics do not see that they may be condemning other people with fewer opportunities than themselves to the task of "making the revolution" on behalf of the militant manipulators. Cf. Michael Walzer, "The Obligation of Oppressed Minorities," Chapter 3 in Walzer: Obligations: Essays on Disobedience, War, and Citizenship (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970). I would prefer to leave the choice of what he wants to do with his life to the well-trained Negro before whom many opportunities unfold.

It is possible that the cultural revolution will attain such momentum as to sweep before it any efforts at small-scale experimentation of the type indicated



in what I have written here. I do not think this is likely. But in any case I do not think that it is the duty of educators to succumb to the tide. They need to have what I have sometimes called the nerve of failure. I am not asking that they be heroes or martyrs; that is more than I ask of ordinary men and women. I am asking that they see straight and think straight, whether or not life and history give them a chance to act straight. What we can hope for is that what is learned about teaching and learning will become cumulative, and that even our failures, if we do not deceive ourselves as to why they occurred, may help our successors to avoid our errors before they invent their own.

