



"Hybrid with Projection #1"
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Authority, Authoritarianism, and Education

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The achievement of political freedom in a democratic system results from the conscious plans and actions of a human community. Once political freedom is identified as an aim, the true task inheres in developing social structures and institutional frameworks which create, nurture, and sustain that end. These structures and frameworks themselves are in need of care and support if the democracy they nourish is not to wither and atrophy from neglect. Yet desiring political freedom, accomplishing it, and maintaining it do not come with instructions. Modern history provides many examples of societies that lost their way and slipped into the darkness and despair of political oppression.

This essay examines the concept of authoritarianism and the ways it is reflected and fostered in school life and school structure. While there are other socializing forces which account for a population's levels of authoritarianism (e.g. family influences, nature of an economic order, impact of religious control, etc.), the public school is in the unique social position of gathering almost all the nation's young together for an extended common experience.* Primary among the reasons for having public schools is education for democracy; their impact therefore cannot be overlooked. This foray begins with a consideration of the nature of authoritarianism and the descriptions and definitions provided by various scholars accompanied by a portrait of the authoritarian personality type. It then turns attention to an examination of those aspects of school life and structure which are reflective of authoritarian practices and orientations and can in important respects be tied to the development of authoritarian perspectives. Authoritarianism is a complex phenomenon and it is not my intent to treat it in all its detail but rather to unpack it and point to educational matters which should concern us all.

Observing the rise of right wing extremism in Europe as well as the United States gives one pause to consider the potential present threat to democratic institutions and a democratic way of life. The rise of fascism earlier in the century did not result from single cataclysmic events. Instead it took the form of a slow accumulating avalanche that eventually overwhelmed any resistance or opposition. Historians, psychologists and other scholars have debated at length about the elements which account for these political occurrences. An equally important consideration resides in the question of the social forces and phenomena which

produced populations desirous of and supportive of such political leadership since various environmental causes are as significant in explaining authoritarianism as are psychological predispositions.¹ This issue has been addressed as well in terms of personality development, family influences, and from the standpoint of the effects of religions and religious movements, but scant attention has been paid to the school's role as a shaper of patterns of belief, conduct, and ways of thinking in relationship to authoritarianism.

If schools exhibit democratic characteristics, that may reflect democratic features of the larger social order or the schools are making a contribution to society's movement in that direction. Conversely, an authoritarian experience in school life suggests either a broader cultural authoritarianism or reveals an institution contributing to the future advance of authoritarianism. It is possible for schools to reflect political values incongruent with the larger social order but the symbiotic nature of schools and society make it unlikely.

A basic assumption in what follows is that if public schools are to be in some sense a life line for political democracy they should in turn exhibit characteristics and behaviors which point in that direction. Schools must go beyond platitudes about literacy and democracy by giving evidence they are conscious of the political implications of the way they are organized, the way power is exercised within schools, ways in which the young are classified, categorized, and controlled, etc. The Axis powers in WWII spent enormous sums of money and vast energies developing the minds of their young. Additionally, before the collapse of the Soviet Union, they boasted of 'eradicating illiteracy' as part of their revolution.² Surely the tyrants lacked any fear of a literate population. It is clear that literacy for democratic living requires a form and character that differ dramatically from the often popularized notion of basic reading and writing skills of the kind required for employment applications.

Authoritarianism Considered

In its most simple terms authoritarianism is authority that has been abused.³ By what yardstick can misuse be measured? Of primary importance is the matter of the power and force that lie at the disposal of legitimate authority. Is it a question of having power that is restricted to specific uses,

or is it a matter of whether an authority should have a particular power at all? For instance, democratically elected governments by virtue of their legitimate authority may be authorized to establish policing forces for purposes of preserving domestic peace and investigating violators of democratically created laws. But that same government would be restricted from using its power to investigate citizens who were not suspected of illegal acts or from using its police power to suppress citizens who might peaceably assemble on behalf of political causes. This is an example of authority in possession of power that is restricted to specific uses. To take a different example, one can argue that parenting carries with it the legitimate authority to rear the young. Yet as Sweden and others have demonstrated, it is possible to have legitimate parenting authority yet be prohibited from using any physical force or punishment in the name of that authority.

"Authoritarianism, then, has to do not with authority, but with the misuse of authority; not with authority appropriately justified, but with authority exceeded or abused."⁴ Yet focusing on legitimate versus illegitimate forms and uses of authority merely outlines the definitional issue which is not the central query at hand. Instead, the purpose is to determine how groups arrive at authoritarian orientations and what role the school may play in that development.

Authoritarianism is best illustrated by examining the behavior and personality features of authoritarian individuals and institutions. The original F (fascism) scale focused on the fascist personality in Hitler's Germany. More recently Altemeyer's research connects authoritarianism to a rightist ideology and he developed an inventory which reliably assesses individual levels of authoritarianism.⁵ The question of left versus right is one that remains unsettled in terms of where authoritarianism is most at home. While the preponderance of evidence on the subject connects it most closely to the right politically, I will not resolve the issue in this piece. Suffice it to say that from either ideological bent, authoritarianism consistently emanates from the top in hierarchically arranged systems.

Authoritarianism favors absolute obedience and stands against individual freedom. It has been described as the most conspicuous political fact of modern times and survives politically with the helpful assistance of parallel and auxiliary structures designed to propagandize the citizenry.⁶ This implies an overt structure dedicated to the task of shaping the thoughts and beliefs of a populace. Yet an overarching structure implies the creation of an official means of inculcating a people whereas one can point to a host of authoritarian agencies in place prior to the crowning of any authoritarian political system. In other words a chicken/egg dilemma does not appear to exist. Authoritarian political systems do not create oppressive settings out of whole cloth but instead rise in the context of authoritarian seedbeds sown by various social and cultural institutions and practices.

Alice Miller's insightful exploration into the roots of fascism in Germany points to both child rearing and the educational system as primary in this regard. In both one sees what Miller terms 'poisonous pedagogy' whereby the child is silenced and taught obedience to authority by whatever means necessary. To survive, individuals repress their pain and rage only to have these surface later in life either through oppression of others, or through the support of regimes or forces engaged in oppression.⁷ In essence the requirements for obedience and other forms of compliance create anger and since the young in such circumstances have no acceptable outlets, it is swallowed—to be released later.

The horrible example of Nazi Germany showed what hate and frustration do to people, but especially to the young who have little or no experience with gentleness, with caring . . . Misinformation about anyone who was different was easily accepted. Education for unquestioning obedience was widespread and led to disaster.⁸

Paul Nash echoes this observation by stating that "Children brought up under authoritarian influences are liable to suffer from many of the defects of the authoritarian personality, to which can be attributed some of the world's most serious ills."⁹

It is important to consider the meaning of authoritarianism and what the authoritarian is like. The authors of *The Authoritarian Personality* who were the first to focus on the phenomenon in the aftermath of W.W.II meant the following regarding the concept:

Authoritarianism characterizes the basically weak and dependent person who has sacrificed his [sic] capacity for genuine experience of self and others so as to maintain a precarious sense of order and safety that is psychologically necessary for him...the authoritarian confronts with a facade of spurious strengths a world in which rigidly stereotyped categories are substituted for the affectionate and individualized experience of which he is incapable. Such a person is estranged from inner values and lacks self-awareness. His judgments are governed by a punitive conventional moralism, reflecting external standards towards which he remains insecure since he has failed to make them really his own. His relations with others depend on considerations of power, success, and adjustment, in which people figure as means rather than ends, and achievement is valued competitively rather than for its own sake. In his world, the good, the powerful, and the in-group merge to stand in fundamental opposition to the immoral, the weak, the out-group. For all that he seeks to align himself with the former, his underlying feelings of weakness and self-contempt commit him to a constant and embittered struggle to prove to himself and others that he really belongs to the strong and good, and that his ego-alien impulses, which he represses, belong to the weak and bad.¹⁰

Nash's description of the authoritarian personality asserts it is one tormented by outer ambiguities and variations, tending instead to favor conformity, dogmatic beliefs and absolute doctrines. The authoritarian admires strength, power, and aggressiveness and is willing to impose the rigidities of an orthodoxy on others through the use of cruelty. There is a tendency to prefer dualistic perspectives to things, favoring sharp dichotomies to the doubt, uncertainty or paradox that life often suggests. Instead of coping with ambiguities, there is an inclination to suppress them below a conscious level where they fester and cause inner chaos and fear.¹¹

When fear is used to control individuals, full human capacities are prevented from developing; or those capacities can take perverse forms. The use of fear reduces these capacities to desires for pleasure and the avoidance of pain.¹² Preventing people from acting freely means to arbitrarily restrain them which in turn equally restrains their choices and decisions.

The longer action is restrained in this way, the less likely it is that people will even think about choices or decisions. From this point it is but a short step to the cessation of thinking altogether. People who cannot act freely may busy themselves doing efficiently the tasks they have been assigned, and they may also engage in fantasies over the entertainments they have been given. In this way entire societies can acquire the mentality of slaves—and at the same time enjoy the world's highest standard of living!¹³

It was Plato who defined a slave as

one who accepts from another the purposes which control his conduct. This condition obtains even where there is no slavery in the legal sense. It is found wherever men are engaged in activity which is socially serviceable, but whose service they do not understand and have no personal interest in.¹⁴

The effect is to seek obedience under a condition of control supported by fear. But if these externally imposed features are removed, so has the basis for the prescribed conduct. Examples of this are seen by marauding soldiers in times of war when on one hand, while under the training and direction of superiors, they demonstrate desired military behaviors but removed from that set of conditions they are often given to plundering and other forms of outrageous conduct.¹⁵ On a less extreme scale is the example of students in oppressive school circumstances who receive a substitute teacher and who then engage in behavior they otherwise would not consider.

Further the authoritarian believes that those in authority should be trusted and that others are obligated to follow their commands and give their respect as well. Being highly submissive to established authority is a central, though not exclusive, characteristic of the authoritarian. Since authority

figures are to be obeyed and trusted the authoritarian opposes rights that would enable criticism of leaders and those with power. Criticism of one's leaders is seen as destructive and divisive because it is judged to be motivated by a desire to cause trouble or a disturbance. In essence, established authorities are viewed to have an almost inherent right to decide for themselves even if it means violating established procedures or breaking rules and laws.¹⁶ From this one can detect a primary motivation for the incessant waves of censorship which visit our society, namely the fear that exposure to contrary perspectives threatens existing belief structures.

In order to achieve unquestioning obedience, the authoritarian "is prepared to implant fear and to punish severely in order to produce it."¹⁷ Authoritarians

advocate physical punishment in childhood and beyond. They deplore leniency in the courts and believe penal reform just encourages criminals to continue being lawless. They are strong advocates of capital punishment. All in all, there is an 'Old Testament harshness' in their approach to human conduct.¹⁸

Authoritarians equate freedom with chaos. An authoritarian system relies heavily on irrational fears as a means of control. Under such conditions one can find double-speak at work in the political understandings employed. Individuals will be capable of citing a 'fight for freedom' as the justification for foreign military ventures when indeed economic reasons may be paramount. Individuals will pledge allegiance citing the language of freedom, yet the same people are often better equipped to argue on behalf of restricting political freedoms than they are able to articulate a defense of them. Since true freedom is taken to be a synonym for chaos and since chaos has few defenders, the net effect is that freedom has few as well. Democracy is seen as patriotism, and patriotism can become a synonym for militarism. Freedom is restricted to abstract references during political debates and otherwise meets resistance in its liberatory form such as empowering the young or assuring equal rights for women.

Modern authoritarianism does not necessarily seek to reduce individuals to mere passive subjects but tends rather to seek politicization on behalf of a specific ideology. This makes it possible for individuals to have political convictions of sorts so long as they correspond to official ideology and are in keeping with what they have been expected to believe.¹⁹ In this way a cognitive style can be associated with authoritarianism, namely, a close minded cognitive functioning.²⁰ This is explained in part by the fact that agencies of power sustain control by eliciting consent more than by means of repression.²¹

Conformity is highly valued in authoritarian systems and the natural social norms which rely upon wide conformity assist the system's control. Totalitarian systems must invest

great energy in generating and channeling conformity. Democratic systems, however, face the issue of a natural desire to belong which can breed its own kind of conforming pressures. The central differences occur in the sources that feed the conformity, the intensity of the conformity, and the purposes served by the conformity.²² A common misconception in democratic societies is that conformity and social control are features of non-democratic systems when in fact the differences can better be described in degree rather than kind. Unless a concerted effort is made to educate a population in the ways of democratic living, almost as a counterbalance to the forces of authoritarianism inherent in a range of social activities and enterprises, there exists the danger of a natural drift towards anti-democratic conditions. Such inertia, if assisted by social calamity or economic dislocation, can ignite political extremism and pose an ultimate threat to democratic and constitutional freedoms.

In the end we are left with a picture of what can be termed the universal ethnocentric person: authoritarian, conforming, uncritical of cultural values, conservative, and intolerant of ambiguity. This description is the result of psychological predispositions as well as the experiences provided by one's environment.²³ Thus the need to turn attention to the schools.

The Educational Context

The school's contributions to authoritarian orientations cannot be overlooked or in some instances overstated, even if its function is often more one of reinforcement than creation. While many youngsters experience authoritarianism prior to entering school, the school nonetheless introduces different forms and adds a social sanction to previous experiences. As Philip Jackson averred, "We must recognize... that children are in school for a long time, that the settings in which they perform are highly uniform, and that they are there whether they want to be or not."²⁴ From this we can see an early and powerful lesson derived from school and that is that the young person has no choice in the matter. One's obligation to comply with the dictates of attendance requires no understanding, not unlike saying the pledge to the flag as a first grader. The important thing is to conform to the mandate. This is not to suggest that a strong rationale for compulsory attendance cannot exist; rather it is to underline the ways in which expectations for compliance begin early and are, in the main, beyond discussion or question from the learner's vantage point. The pattern of having little say or choice in school is one that continues for an entire education.

Recall that the authoritarian values order for order's sake. In classrooms order is generally claimed as a condition for pursuing the intellectual development of the young. But if this means having ownership over one's mind and moving in the direction of becoming an independent being, then schools

are obligated to provide learning settings and experiences which make these desired ends possible and visible. The misplaced focus of the 'open' movement of the 70's helped bring to light the understanding that openness is first and foremost an intellectual notion rather than a problem of school architecture. In a reaction against the often controlling, boring, and authoritarian nature of schools, the open concept became associated with unleashing the young by removing structural barriers seen as too restraining.

The rearrangement of desks and the absence of walls may speak to a dimension of openness, but it is entirely possible to have a traditional setting with desks in rows that is nonetheless genuinely intellectually open as well as intellectually opening in its effects. But order in the classroom, while offered as a prerequisite to learning, is too often for the benefit of the teacher and the system. There is a constant danger in schools that authority will degenerate into authoritarianism, because a good portion of those attracted to teaching and school administration consciously or (more commonly) unconsciously wish to exercise authority in order to satisfy some unfulfilled need within themselves.²⁵ It brings to mind the story of the high school principal showing his school to parents newly arrived in town. As they approached a long corridor of classrooms, at the far end sounds of students could be heard emanating into the hallway. Somewhat irritated the principal excused himself to inspect the situation and find out what was happening in the classroom. But to reach the room that displayed signs of life, he had to pass thirteen others from which not a peep could be heard. The likelihood is far less that quiet classrooms will be questioned for what may or may not be occurring in them than classrooms that depart from the desired institutional norm of tranquility. Recently an assistant principal at Horace Mann Middle School in Denver suspended 100 of the 750 students in part to send a message that lack of obedience to authority will not be tolerated. This occurred in a school which didn't experience problem students out of the norm, yet the principal had broad support among the teachers.²⁶ Another principal in a school touting itself as "site-based" has a poster hanging in her office titled 'The Evolution of Authority'. It has a bear paw print, a man's footprint, a man's shoe print, and finally the print of a high heeled shoe.²⁷

Once order is established, however, it is often difficult to find any indication that orderliness is a primary means to loftier ends. That is, silence is rarely a vehicle for opening young minds. Students are 'put in their place' intellectually in part because they are put in their place behaviorally. This grows from the assumption previously cited that a certain orderliness is necessary for learning to occur. While this makes perfect sense in a particular context, it reflects a series of subsidiary assumptions among which include learning as an

essentially passive act, learning equates with knowledge acquisition and transfer, and sounds are disruptive to learning unless the sounds are voices of experts and authority.

Further, achieving order through repression presents no moral dilemma to the authoritarian. The often held view that children are evil (original sin) or are the enemy removes any moral restraints to their intellectual mistreatment. To truly own one's thoughts requires the intellectual freedom to interrogate one's experiences and this is not possible in settings characterized by distrust of those who are to be intellectually empowered.

The roots of modern western education are considerably connected to notions of the child as naturally evil who can be saved by control, denial, and authority. It is this view of the young which explains why education has been regarded as a moral discipline.²⁸ But for Dewey, "Since a democratic society repudiates the principle of external authority, it must find a substitute in voluntary disposition and interest; these can be created only by education."²⁹ Avoidance of anything smacking of authority is at the heart of the age old child centered versus subject centered debate. The avoidance of imposition in the name of freedom frames the issue incorrectly at the outset. In Dewey's view freedom was first and foremost an intellectual consideration rather than the sheer absence of external authority.³⁰ Freedom was something to be achieved, an accomplishment of the educational process. Implicit is the belief that much of what constituted the traditional curriculum, albeit in differing forms and methods, was necessary along the path to Dewey's concept of intellectual freedom. Freedom was not achieved by merely discarding existing forms of external authority. Embedded in this realization is the obligation of schools to actively promote intellectual independence in democratic settings.

There is a danger in relativizing authority when opposing authoritarianism that in itself may invite a collapse into authoritarianism:

It is not that alternative free schools promote authoritarianism; it is more a question whether values of freedom, equality, and individual centeredness, when made the starting point of the educational process, are allowed to overpower curricular and pedagogical practices that develop the intellectual discipline necessary for resisting authoritarianism in its more modern forms.³¹

Dewey's view held that since the world is constantly changing and at a very rapid rate, no child should be educated for any fixed end. Instead schools have to educate so as to give the learner all that is necessary both to adapt to change and have power to shape and give direction to those changes. The absence of control was not Dewey's aim. He saw it being situated in a social context where individual and collective control were worked out in experiences which were to

contribute to democratic understandings and undertakings.³² For Dewey the matter could not be reduced to a simple choice between absolute freedom on one hand or complete control on the other.

The purpose in underlining the point that authority and control cannot be expunged from social settings is to eliminate the implication that by somehow obliterating any form of authority, ala Summerhill, a utopia of freedom will instantly appear. It is not the absence of controls or authority that gives us freedom. In the school environment it is how the sources of authority are defined, to what ends the group aspires, what means are employed to establish authority and desired ends, and finally who has a voice and role in governing all of it. It is not a question of whether a social system will organize itself but one of who participates in the construction of that system and vision—since they also then participate in any change in vision that may be desired—and to what extent that vision is characterized as democratic.

It is almost axiomatic to assert that students are essentially silent in their educational roles. They subsist in a system where the transmission of subject content into their waiting containers remains the dominant educational form. Recent trends obligate students to give performances as evidence they acquired ascribed knowledge and skills. The 'outcomes based' approaches or the more current term 'results oriented' education are further examples of the students' alienated position in the system since these newer schemes are imposed by bureaucrats residing at great distances from where youngsters experience their daily tutelage. There is no need to quibble about the efficacy of this or that educational approach. From the student's perch they all have certain elements in common: someone else decided these were good educational approaches, important pieces of knowledge, vital subjects of study, etc. In each instance the student is to once again demonstrate the capacity to comply with the mandates or suffer the institutional consequences. The system appropriates the language of individualized instruction yet contemporary reforms are driven primarily from state departments of education acting as extensions of legislatures desperate to make the system more economically efficient and productive. The result is a school program devised without any knowledge of any single student yet is termed individualized education. A more apt description is individually paced, but paced toward the same ends and outcomes for all.

Missing are ends which have democratic experiences at the center. There are occasional references to citizenship education along with the dispositions required of the good citizen. But this is a view of citizenship that is primarily passive and lacks an articulated concept of the active, participatory citizen and citizenry. Even the most repressive

political systems have expectations of good citizenship. To be realized democratic learning must be something more than an academic exercise, important as that may be. There must be experiences that are truly democratic in their character and they in turn must permeate the school culture. If absent the young will be prone to confuse democracy with simply exercising the right to vote—something enjoyed by citizens under Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini but not to be confused with democratic citizenship.

This illustrates how far today's school encounters are from what Dewey desired. To a large extent the system has simply become more efficient and top heavy in carrying out what Dewey saw as a major problem to begin with, namely that the traditional school imposed its agenda on the young and in the process missed important educational and democratic opportunities: "Since the subject matter as well as standards of proper conduct are handed down from the past, the attitude of pupils must, upon the whole, be one of docility, receptivity, and obedience."³³

Kirscht and Dillehay explain how the authoritarian individual views relationships in terms of power and success and where others are seen as means rather than ends; where achievement is valued in competitive terms rather than for its own purposes.³⁴ Schools too often reflect these characteristics. For instance, hierarchical power differentials define relationships and can be observed by the differences in teacher-student interaction versus teacher-teacher exchanges. Teachers additionally relate differently to principals who in turn respond with their own observable deference to their superiors. While principals may be respectful towards teachers, it is with a different set of dynamics than when a principal is deferential to a superintendent. The point is that when power and authority are arranged in this way it should be no surprise to see achievement valued in competitive terms and have students viewed as means rather than ends.

The child learns that the teacher is the authoritative person in the classroom, but that she is subordinate to the principal. Thus the structure of society can be learned through understanding the hierarchy of power within the structure of the school.³⁵

Students are commonly referred to as a "valuable resource" or "our nation's most precious possession." Typically these are offered in connection with what the adult community is expecting from the next generation in terms of solving problems created by their predecessors. They are also termed the "product" in the educational vernacular which reflects both the industrial vocabulary that permeates education (as a further reflection of the industrial paradigm embedded in the educational system**) as well as the notion that there are waiting consumers of this resource in the

global economy.

Students are expected to see themselves as means to others' ends. As students internalize the purposes of their education, they readily offer 'employment' as the reason they are in school, including the university level. When the view of their own role and station is so completely tied to productivity outside school, they convey the unexamined assumptions that have been woven into their education. To the extent they understand things in terms of the now ubiquitous "global market place," being a means to an end does not appear on most of their radars. And why should it? How has their education suggested otherwise?

People in modern institutions are conditioned to accept being an object to others and a subject to themselves. The very processes we use to inscribe our self to our self put us at the disposition of others. The task of creating rational, autonomous persons falls initially to pedagogical institutions. Their goal is to produce young bodies and minds that are self-governing; failing that, they try to make their graduates governable.³⁶

This is reflected in the differing treatment different categories of students receive. Those expected to belong to the managing class have opportunities to think in creative and other ways, though they represent a very small portion of students. The remainder are expected to follow orders and directions, a formula for being governable.³⁷

It can be argued that in far too many places educational institutions move immediately to the task of making the future citizenry governable. Not only do students have little or no say in the life of the school, they have next to none in their own academic experience. Further, the nature of the cognitive encounter is marked by varying degrees of authoritarianism. Knowledge comes in preshaped forms absent any suggestion that hosts of epistemological assumptions are present. Students must absorb the curriculum which is presented in an almost fixed and final form. Lost are the debates which attend so much of what is handed to students as complete, homogenized, pasteurized. Since knowledge is something that filters down through various layers of expertise until it reaches the students, it implicitly carries an authoritarian dimension but more disturbingly, inculcates students to the belief that answers and meaning are to be found only from those with expertise. Discovering answers for oneself or developing the capacity to generate meaning from learning encounters is foreign to the experience.

The means of the encounter are predominantly teacher centered, with the teacher presumed to be an authoritative source. Students do not develop the dispositions to question teachers and texts, the foremost authorities on intellectual matters. Too often teachers themselves do not question the texts which in turn constitute the essence of the curriculum.

This hierarchy of expertise places students at the bottom. Knowing little, they become accustomed to not being entitled to examine the content of their schooling. Though there are examples which counter this general pattern, they are rare.³⁸ Overall, most students receive a steady diet of what can be described as a lifeless intellectual experience. As a pattern it does not bode well for a society engaged in an experiment with democracy.

Added to the nature of their intellectual preparation are the controlling elements of the school's organization. While not qualifying for Goffman's descriptor of the 'total institution' schools nevertheless reflect the characteristics of extremely controlled settings. I recently asked a group of future teachers to gather at random a host of student handbooks from public secondary schools. They were dismayed at the preoccupation with student conduct and behavior displayed almost universally in these booklets. Academic missions were secondary or were absent entirely. The message students take from these documents is that their conduct, demeanor, and capacity to comply are a much higher institutional priority than their intellectual cultivation. But these artifacts only serve to highlight the general issue. When asked whether the student who repeatedly arrives late for class or the student who consistently performs at "d" academic levels in secondary schools will receive the greater amount of institutional attention and energy, teachers respond instantly and in unison: the student who arrives late for class. This is how schools invest in making future citizens governable as opposed to self governing.

Space does not allow for a fuller description of how schools engage in subtle as well as overt means of socialization which has significant political implications. The broad literature on the hidden curriculum has treated this subject extensively and serves as further evidence of how students are expected to absorb and adopt, unquestioningly, the agenda and teachings of the system. The relationship between the student educational experience and a high level of comfort for authoritarian practices in so many aspects of life cannot be drawn as readily as that between smoking and lung cancer. And clearly, nothing approaching that research investment will ever be made. It should be evident, however, that there is a connection, and a strong one, between the lessons of youth which socialize them into patterns of passivity and obedience on one hand and a tendency toward rapid erosion of democratic possibilities on the other.

When those in authority are always right, when they have the power to enforce their claim of right, there becomes little need for the young to rack their brains to ask whether what is demanded of them is right or wrong, good or bad. As preparation for adult living, they will be at the mercy of authorities for better or worse. Saying no will always seem too threat-

ening.³⁹ Adolf Eichman, the powerful mass murderer, said at his trial, "All my life I was used to obedience, since my earliest childhood till May 8th, 1945. What profit would disobedience have brought to me, in which way would it have been useful to me?"⁴⁰

Drawing parallels between Germany and the U.S. is not simply for effect, for it was after the war that the allies sought to democratize and internationalize German attitudes, opinions, and behavior through a restructuring of German education. The aim was to "establish a greater degree of equality of opportunity, to render the school administration more democratic," and to move the curriculum in the direction of humanization.⁴¹ The victorious powers were concerned about a German return to authoritarianism and therefore desired institutions which would feed democracy.

Oddly, they were considerably deterred in the effort owing to the intervention of those seeking to restore old education policy. Actions of the church and clergy were accepted, for instance, which meant that influential forces from the past were able to thwart a genuine overhaul of German education. A christian education, separated by denomination, was connected to moral and ethical codes. Private schools were preferred to secularized progressive schools. Elitism was protected and christian political parties supported the return to the ways of old seeing it as a means to assure christian norms and values.⁴² The extent to which the current rise of extreme rightist ideology and neo-fascist movements can be tied to educational features is difficult to pinpoint. Nonetheless, educational reform in post-war Germany did not depart significantly from its pre-war form and new nazi movements are taking root.

Since it was clear the Allies believed that school organization and structure are directly related to social aspirations for democracy, one must wonder why so little attention has been devoted to the same ends in the U.S. Even the current wave of reform which seeks school "restructuring" and employs concepts such as 'site-based management' does so with rhetoric that rarely gestures in the direction of the democratic. The driving force derives its energy instead from the language, metaphors and rationales of business and industry.

Freedom in a democracy does not accompany the birth process. It is an acquired status not easily achieved. If the schools do not give evidence that they are consciously and actively engaged on behalf of the kind of education required for active democratic citizenship, then by definition they are contributing to its demise. "People who are kept in a state of infantile dependence, in which all major decisions are taken for them, fail to develop the strength of personality that would enable them to exercise freedom if they were offered."⁴³

With the technological revolution at hand, it becomes

increasingly possible to provide education that doesn't require schools as we've known them. Public schools must invest in the creation of genuinely democratic experiences for the young if their continued existence is to be justified. Educators have become adept at employing the rhetoric of democratic education. There is an urgency to give those words life and meaning. It is something to be ignored at democracy's peril.

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Notes

*Public schools account for approximately 90% of K-12 enrollment nationwide, a figure which remains relatively constant over time.

**Educational discourse is infused with factory and production descriptors: efficiency, effectiveness, production, quality, quality control (Lily Tomlin asks if they want to control it so it doesn't get out of hand!), subordinates, superordinates, management versus labor, accountability; we've had MBO's, CBE, OBE, TQM, etc.

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