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THE MODERN ROMANTIC CRITICS
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DISSERTATION
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
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1972

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INTRODUCTION

The American system of public education has been criticized intensely for the past two decades by a group of writers who have been called neo-romantic critics. Their writing has been continuous, yet somewhat isolated, in that though within the work of each critic there exist assumptions which link him with the others, as a group they seem to possess no sense of unity or common identity. The writing of these modern romantic critics has not been viewed as representing an ideological or historical movement, nor has it been dealt with critically as the outgrowth of philosophical romanticism. The purpose of this dissertation is to locate these critics in history and to examine their views in the light of faithfulness to the romantic tradition as well as to subject their ideas to critical analysis.

Romanticism is fundamentally a view of man. The romantic sees man as naturally and essentially good. He accounts for evil by attributing it to the corrupting influence of society and its institutions. Thus man learns, or is taught, to deny or suppress his natural, good self in favor of an unnatural evil self that is the product of the imperfection of social forces. The romantic view implies belief that man can transcend evil through ethical choice and that he can create social arrangements in greater consonance with his natural
goodness. Romanticism implies a belief in the educability of all men and in democratic access to the means by which education can be obtained. Education, however, must follow natural growth, and it cannot ignore the freedom and humanity of its subject in favor of intrinsic pedagogical methods or motives. Education, for the romantic, is an ethical enterprise because it gives direction to natural growth in preparation for social life. The ultimate morality of a society depends upon the education of its members; and a moral society must have moral education, that is, education which protects and enhances the natural goodness of man.

The writing of Rousseau establishes a background against which the modern romantic movement can be considered. Rousseau developed the foundation of romantic philosophy upon which the modern critics have built. These critics seldom acknowledge their debt to Rousseau, nor do they seem to reflect a sense of continuity of thought and experience that would include Rousseau. Yet his ideas are implicit in all of modern romantic criticism; in fact, much of what seems to us novel or radical in contemporary educational criticism is merely an updating of Rousseau's thought. One of the consequences of our modern disease of rootlessness and our belief that we are free of history and thus need not examine the past is that our vision is the same as the unsuspecting farmer who buys a bottle of tonic water thinking it will grow hair, remove warts, cure headaches and increase the life span. Because of his isolation in time and space, he cannot be critical, he cannot avail himself of the experience of others who have bought the
tonic before him. Modern man differs in that the information necessary to avoid repeating the past is available to him, but he rejects it out of a belief that to take history seriously is to come under its spell, to be bound by its imperatives, to become deterministic. Thus the modern romantic critics have often paraphrased Rousseau without knowing it. For that reason, the first chapter is an examination of Rousseau and the roots of romanticism.

The short history of modern romantic criticism of American education reveals the development of several identifiable positions with respect to education and public schooling. The first of these is anarchism and is represented here by a consideration of the work of Paul Goodman. Other critics, such as Ivan Illich, take essentially the same position on education as does Goodman, but Goodman has been included as a kind of archetype who has written more extensively, more deeply, and over a longer period of time. His ideology is fully developed and articulately stated and has for nearly twenty years influenced the tone and range of all romantic criticism.

The second such attitude toward public schools is reflected by the writing of Edgar Z. Friedenberg and can best be described as "elitist." Friedenberg's analysis of the effects of schooling, especially on adolescents, is particularly relevant to an understanding of the ensuing critics. His criticism of compulsory education mirrors that of Goodman but bears separate consideration because the conclusions he draws from his analysis and the recommendations that he makes for the reorganization of education are radically different from those
of Goodman and the other critics.

A third position with respect to education is that educational problems are methodological or technical in nature. This view, here represented by a consideration of John Holt, does not attack the right of the institution of schools to survive, nor does it deal with moral and political questions as such. Holt's position is that schools can be saved by a revolution of technique, that the evils of the system can be cured when proper teaching methods are employed.

This transition to the realm of technique warrants serious examination in an increasingly technological society.

The final ideology to be presented is that of the advocacy of free schools. Jonathan Kozol has been selected to represent this school of thought because he has written both on public-school and free-school experience. Many good works exist which describe free schools in great detail and with intense sympathy and understanding. The work of George Dennison is outstanding in this respect. Kozol has been selected for inclusion, however, primarily because he deals with free schools philosophically and politically rather than descriptively.

These four writers represent the most powerful critical streams within the modern romantic movement in America today. The views of each will be presented, examined, and criticized, in order to better understand the meaning and direction of modern romantic criticism. The author's bias is to present, where relevant, a defense of public education as a worthy institution with noble purposes which has both failed and succeeded throughout history to help man understand the meaning of his experience.
I. ROUSSEAU AND ROMANTICISM

Jean Jacques Rousseau lived as an embodiment of the conflicts and contradictions of his age and eventually suffered persecution at the hands of a culture which could not bear the reflection of its own weakness and division. Though he lived at odds with his society and times, he was never consciously divided within himself in a moral sense; and perhaps this was his greatest strength—his refusal to internalize doubts which would have driven a weaker man into madness.

The eighteenth century, in its desire to find order in a chaotic world, found its philosophical spokesmen in the Encyclopaedists, particularly Voltaire, Diderot and Grimm. Their world-view was based solely upon reason, which, to the Enlightenment mind, represented the fresh and novel powers of man's intellect to discover within chaos the human dignity and human will to create order. Western man had begun to abandon mysticism and faith as a basis for knowing and had come to accept as knowable only that which is rationally proveable. Out of a desire to escape the authority of religion, he had turned to reason as a basis for order, knowledge, and truth.

Rousseau, too, was interested in order, but where the philosophes had found it in the rational process, Rousseau discovered
order in nature. Rousseau's truth was organic, not exclusively rational, and depended more on introspection and candor than on any system or process. He interpreted the refusal of the rationalists to believe in anything that could not be proven through reason as a betrayal of the fullness of life. He was unwilling to submit to the limits of process, though he did accept reason as useful. He states, for example, at the outset of his Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, that while his thesis may be internally rational and consistent, what follows is merely a conjecture, unproveable and unrelated to actual historic developments. He says,

Let us begin, therefore, by laying aside facts, for they do not affect the question. The researches, in which we may engage on this occasion, are not to be taken for historical truths, but merely as hypothetical and conditional reasonings, fitter to illustrate the nature of things than to show their true origin.

We see that Rousseau is not, as his critics most often portray him for their own purposes, against reason; he merely refuses to acknowledge it as the boundary for perception and discourse. "Though it may be the peculiar happiness of Socrates and other geniuses of his stamp to reason themselves into virtue, the human species would long ago have ceased to exist had it depended entirely for its preservation on the reasonings of the individuals that compose it."\(1\)


\(2\)Ibid., p. 204.
Reason has no conscience, and it was a moral order derived from human will that Rousseau was seeking. Reason serves only itself, and the knowledge derived from rational process has no ethical or moral character. Cassirer writes that for Rousseau, "Knowledge . . . is without danger as long as it does not try to raise itself above life and to tear itself away from it, as long as it serves the order of life itself."3 Out of this belief comes Rousseau's attempt to legitimize the realm of feeling in its relation to human life and as a response to his own experience.

Never before in modern literature had feeling, passion, and romantic love received so detailed and eloquent an exposition and defense. Reacting against the adoration of reason from Boileau to Voltaire, Rousseau proclaimed the primacy of feeling and its right to be heard in the interpretation of life and the evaluation of creeds.4

Reason alone did not seem to him an adequate basis for responding to the problems and conditions of humanity and seemed, at times, to necessitate the sacrifice of justice to order.

It is reason that engenders self-love, and reflection that strengthens it; it is reason that makes man shrink into himself; it is reason that makes him keep aloof from everything that can trouble or afflict him; it is philosophy that destroys his connections with other men; it is in consequence of her dictates that he mutters to himself at the sight of another in distress, You may perish for aught I care, I am safe. Nothing less than those evils, which


threaten the whole community, can disturb the calm sleep of the philosopher, and force him from his bed. One man may with impunity murder another under his windows; he has nothing to do but clasp his hands to his ears, argue a little with himself to hinder nature, that startles within him, from identifying him with the unhappy sufferer. Savage man lacks this admirable talent; and for want of wisdom and reason, is always ready foolishly to obey the first whispers of humanity. In riots and street brawls the populace flock together, the prudent man sneaks off. It is the dregs of the people, the market women, that part the combatants, and hinder gentlefolks from cutting one another's throats.5

The reasoning men of the eighteenth century appeared satisfied to exist within a wholly rational framework, while outside this world injustice and inequality were rampant. Rousseau's struggle involved an outrage with a system that saw moral issues as rational questions. The suffering of man is not meat for debate.

The true principles of morality are based neither on authority, be it divine or human, nor on the power of syllogistic proof. They are truths that cannot be comprehended in any but an intuitive way; but this very intuition is denied to no one, because it constitutes the fundamental power and the essence of man himself. To attain this "inborn" understanding we need not follow the laborious paths of abstract analysis, education, or learning. To comprehend it in all its clarity and immediately-persuasive certainty, we need only remove the hindrances that lie between us and it.6

For Rousseau, reason alone was insufficient for morality, and he sought its basis in nature and ethical will. This shift in the access to moral principles and fundamental truth is a kind of democratization of thought. Here Rousseau takes the right of moral

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5Rousseau, Discourse, p. 203.
6Cassirer, Question, p. 107.
speculation from the hands of philosophers and theologians and returns it to each man. In a sense this is the secular equivalent of Protestantism, opening the world of moral awareness to all men in a significant way.

The removal of all obstacles between a man and his natural self was necessary, according to Rousseau, in order to develop true self-consciousness and discover natural truth. If reason stands in the path of self-knowledge, then reason must yield. To Rousseau, a man's feelings were his most faithful and articulate guide, and the risk of entering the world of feeling is taken through an act of will. It is a major paradox in Rousseau's life that he was seldom able to abandon himself to his feelings or to nature. While being a passionate admirer and lover of women, he was almost never able to establish or consummate relationships with them. He indulged, throughout his life, in almost frenzied adulation of many women, abandoning himself to his feelings to the point of collapse; yet he was seldom able to approach the physical being of any woman. "My lack of success with women has always come from loving them too much."\(^7\) This is overwhelmingly true—the more ardently he felt his love for any woman, the more overcome with feeling, the less capable he was of approaching her. He even failed, when given the opportunity on several occasions, to make love

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to women he adored. He seems to have transformed his "natural" lovers into abstractions which he found impossible to relate to in a "natural" way.

There exists a broader and more significant paradox in relation to Rousseau's attack on the rationalists and his advocacy of nature and feeling, for Rousseau is best characterized as a rational-romantic. This seems a contradiction in terms; however it remains the most worthy description of a man who spent his life using reason to advocate the primacy of feeling. The contradictory tendencies of his age were given human form in the character and thought of Rousseau. The differences between the rationalists and Rousseau,

... were real, they were picturesquely expressed, and they are worth studying. Romanticism was a revolt from rationalism. But it is more important for us to note that the revolt was the revolt of a child from its parent—a child that greatly resembled the parent.8

This is not to minimize the effect of Rousseau's revolt, for it had significance beyond the intellectual temper-tantrum. Rousseau's work legitimated the realm of feeling and nature and placed it on a level of acceptability beside reason as a source of knowledge.

The specifically and characteristically new contribution that Rousseau made to his time seems to have been his act of freeing it from the domination of intellectualism. To the forces of rationalist understanding, on which rested the culture of the eighteenth century, he opposed the force of feeling. Challenging the power of reflective and analytical reason, he became the discoverer of passion and of its irresistible primitive force.9


9Cassirer, Question, p. 83.
In effect, this constitutes a broadening of culture, an extension of its limits of acceptability, an opening of its doors to a new and now legitimate impulse.

Rousseau underwent often cruel and vehement attack at the hands of the rationalists during his lifetime. His persecution enjoyed the animated support of European "society"; yet after his death the western capitals ironically indulged in a bathos of romanticism in philosophy, literature and politics, thus revealing the contradictory forces at work there even during his lifetime. Consider, for example, the influence of Rousseau and romanticism in the works of Wordsworth, Byron, Keats, Shelley, Thoreau, Kant, Goethe, Schiller, Tolstoi, Jefferson, and others. European thought was in conflict with itself in a subconscious and schizophrenic sense, and Rousseau's persecution provided a release from that submerged tension. The fact that he internalized the paradoxes of his age and provided an answer to its need is the source of both his personal tragedy and his greatness. In the face of harsh and destructive criticism, Rousseau remained surprisingly restrained. He must have wished to indulge in passionate and self-indulgent attacks on his critics and enemies, yet he did not. He retreated ever further into nature and found there what little peace and serenity there was left to him. The additional irony is that he was forced to leave society in order to create the works of intellect that were needed in order to free it from itself.

From the outset he stood in a paradoxical relation to society: he had to flee from it in order to serve it and to give it what he was capable of giving. In his hermitage he reflected...
upon the duties of citizenship, and only there did he become the author of the Social Contract. In the Emile he also retained the same trait: he requires that Emile be educated outside society, because in this way alone can he be educated for society in the only true sense.10

Rousseau's affinity to nature was not self-indulgent, even though it does, in some sense, cut him off from other men. Although he did retreat from society, he also realized that nature isolates, and in the Social Contract he conceives of the general will as that force which reunites men who are individuated in nature. Rousseau would not have supported a theory that glorified the selfish pursuit of happiness through nature and glorification of narcissistic feeling states.

His tendency to assign to happiness itself a purely "intel­ligible" purpose instead of a purely sensual one became increasingly marked. Only that which leads man to this purpose and which strengthens him in it can truly and essentially be called happiness. Thus it is not by allowing our instincts to flow freely but by restraining and mastering them that we can secure the highest happiness--the happiness of the free personality.11

Thus Rousseau is not primarily concerned even with happiness, but with virtue and with the attainment of personal freedom and growth. Whatever serves these ends is sure to bring happiness. He takes "feeling" and "happiness" out of the realm of the mystical, psychological and narcissistic, and gives them a meaning related to moral and ethical will. Because Rousseau was not only an advocate of the legitimacy of feeling


11Cassirer, Question, p. 116.
as a worthy source of insight and interpretation but was a living embodiment of intense feeling as revealed in his *Confessions*, he was naturally opposed both philosophically and physically by those who were distrustful of feeling and who tried to protect themselves from it.

Rousseau set himself against his age in other ways:

Now he could pour out his heart [in his first Discours] against all the artificiality of Paris, the corruption of its morals, the insincerity of its fine manners, the licentiousness of its literature, the sensuality of its art, the snobbishness of class divisions, the callous extravagance of the rich financed by exactions from the poor, the dessication of the soul by the replacement of religion with science, of feeling with logic. By declaring war on this degeneration he could vindicate his own simplicity of culture, his village manners, his discomfort in society, his disgust with malicious gossip and irreverent wit, his defiant retention of religious faith amid the atheism of his friends.12

This clever overstatement reveals more about the way in which his enemies perceived his work than it does the spirit of Rousseau's intent; yet it does demonstrate his unwillingness to accept the corruption of form that he saw around him. He was not attempting to destroy civilization and culture, but rather to attack the hypocrisy of empty convention.

Form, which had originally been regarded by the Greeks as a means of discipline and control, had now become a mask for license. It did not seem to matter what was done so long as it was done correctly, so long as the proper social formalities were observed. Rousseau's prescription for the remaking of French society was, therefore, simply the abolition of form. People were to respond to situations from the spontaneity of the heart, and conduct was to be restrained.

and regulated by reason rather than custom. In his many fulminations against the excesses and overrefinement of civilization, he was protesting always against form, not civilization as such. Form itself serves to provide security in human relationships, and without form, man exists in perpetual anxiety with respect to others. Rousseau knew this and opposed the forms which no longer served men but which had begun to thwart human purposes. He knew also that men often tend to seek the security of form as a means of refusing to deal with questioning and with substance. He resisted those who retreated into logical formality as a means of escaping his questions, and his alternative was again to turn inward, toward the natural self. This rejection of form is an affirmation of his search for the dignity of each man.

The true knowledge of man cannot be found in ethnography or ethnology. There is only one living source for this knowledge—the source of self-knowledge and genuine self-examination. And it is to this alone that Rousseau appeals; from it he seeks to derive all proofs of his principles and hypotheses.

Cassirer sees Rousseau's questioning of form as one of his most significant contributions: "The incomparable power which Rousseau the thinker and writer exercised over his time was ultimately founded in the fact that in a century that had raised the cultivation of form to unprecedented heights, bringing it to perfection and organic completion, he

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14 Cassirer, Question, p. 50.
brought once more to the fore the inherent uncertainty of the very
concept of form." Once the rigid and definite concept of a world
circumscribed by carefully-constructed forms comes into question, the
threat of a collapse into chaos arises. Rousseau accepted the risk
of chaos in order to reconstruct reality on his own terms. His
reconstruction was to be based upon introspection and a desire to
discover natural truth and the sources of natural relationships between
men. He sought to substitute organic truth for formal truth.

Contradictions within the personality and life of Rousseau
abound, though none were strong enough to shake his faith in the
wisdom of human nature. Rousseau was aware of these contradictory
tendencies; yet he viewed them as a product of his natural being:

It is a very strange thing that my imagination never
works more delightfully than when my situation is the
reverse of delightful, and that, on the other hand, it is
never less cheerful than when all is cheerful around me.
My poor head can never submit itself to facts. It cannot
beautify; it must create. It can depict real objects only
more or less as they are, reserving its embellishments for
the things of the imagination. If I want to describe the
spring it must be in winter; if I want to describe a fine
landscape I must be within doors; and as I have said a
hundred times, if ever I were confined in the Bastille,
there I would draw the picture of liberty.

He admits freely and with apparent enthusiasm that the nature of his
own character, not external pressures or antipathy, divides him.

"... And thus there began to form in me, or to display itself for the
first time, a heart at once proud and affectionate, a character at

15Ibid., pp. 35-36.

16Rousseau, Confessions, p. 166.
once effeminate and inflexible, which by always wavering between weakness and courage, between self-indulgence and virtue, has throughout my life set me in conflict with myself, to such effect that abstinence and enjoyment, pleasure and prudence have alike eluded me. He seemed unable to live in accordance with his principles at crucial moments in his life. His failures with women are remarkable testament to this, as is his willingness to abandon five children to a foundling home in the light of his theory of child-rearing and his stated sentiment with regard to children. His urge to dominate and his abhorrence of oppression find theoretical reconciliation in his theory of the social contract and general will, and it is perhaps there that the link between his internal conflicts and philosophical beliefs is most visible. This dichotomy represents forces present in all men, however, and Rousseau's willingness to derive social theory out of the character, however flawed, of man, further legitimates his determination to base his philosophy on self-knowledge. Rousseau was willing to reveal his apparent weaknesses and to expose them even to a critical public. Yet even contradiction and weakness appear greater in a man of Rousseau's stature, and his flaws sometimes assume proportions beyond their true importance.

Rousseau could oppose his age, but he could not escape it. While his Confessions often reveal self-chastisement and humorous self-ridicule, we know that Rousseau was hurt by criticism and by

17 Ibid., p. 23.
neglect. He argued with the Encyclopaedists, but he treasured their discourse and debate so that when they turned away from him, he was greatly pained. Horace Walpole, in unwittingly contrasting Voltaire and Rousseau, remarked that "This world is a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel." 

The Social and Political Views of Rousseau

Rousseau, while on one of his many walking journeys in 1732, stopped at the cottage of a peasant to beg for something to eat. He was willing to pay for his dinner, but the peasant offered him only coarse bread and milk. After Rousseau had hungrily devoured the meagre offering and the peasant could see that he was truly hungry and not a spy, the farmer disappeared into his cellar and brought back ham, wheat bread, and wine, then culminated this second meal with an omelette. He again refused Rousseau's offer of payment, since he was fearful of appearing to be anything but poor. This event seems to have been Rousseau's first personal experience with the cruel effects of class division in France.

All that he said to me on this subject, which was entirely strange to me, made an impression on me which will never grow dim. It was the germ of that inextinguishable hatred which afterwards grew in my heart against the oppression to which the unhappy people are subject, and against their oppressors. That man [the farmer], although in easy circumstances, dared not eat the bread he had earned by the sweat of his brow, and could only evade ruin by displaying the same misery which prevailed all around him.  

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18 Durrant, Rousseau and Revolution, p. 201.
19 Rousseau, Confessions, pp. 159-160.
Rousseau admired the farmer's natural and productive relationship with the land and decried the social and political relationships that interfered with and exploited this relationship.

The most significant factor in explaining the transition from natural freedom to fear and oppression was, to Rousseau, the concept of property:

The first man, who after enclosing a piece of ground, took it into his head to say, **this is mine**, and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. How many crimes, how many wars, how many murders, how many misfortunes and horrors, would that man have saved the human species, who pulling up the stakes or filling up the ditches should have cried to his fellows: *Beware of listening to this impostor; you are lost, if you forget that the fruits of the earth belong equally to us all, and the earth itself to nobody!*^20^  

Property, as Rousseau sees it here, is an intermediary evil leading to the establishment of society, which is the true source of exploitative relationships. Society is a corruption of the natural order, destroying man's autonomy and freedom, leading him into a multitude of crimes against his fellow man. Rousseau believed that natural man was sympathetic rather than cruel:

There is besides another principle that has escaped Hobbes, and which, having been given to man to moderate, on certain occasions, the ferocity of self-love, or the desire of self-preservation previous to the appearance of that love tempers the ardor, with which he naturally pursues his private welfare, by an innate abhorrence to see beings suffer that resemble him. I shall not surely be contradicted, in granting to man the only natural virtue, which the most passionate detractor of human virtues could not deny him, I mean that of pity, a disposition suitable to creatures weak as we are, and

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^20^Rousseau, *Discourse*, p. 212.
liable to so many evils; a virtue so much the more universal, and withal useful to man, as it takes place in him before all manner of reflection . . .

Rousseau here reverses the common assumption that society is the agent of civilization, that which tames and pacifies a cruel, violent and ignorant primitive. He believes that man is naturally gentle and that "he is withheld by natural compassion from doing any injury to others, so far from being led even to return that which he has received; for according to the axiom of the wise Lock, Where there is no property, there can be no injury."22

While Rousseau may here be incorrectly interpreting the true relations between pre-historic men in a strict anthropological sense, he is forcing a philosophical reconsideration of the effects and functions of the establishment of civil society. Even if we know from the evidence that early man was violent toward other men, we must question whether his means of exploitation were less sophisticated and less cruel. Rousseau seems to say that civil society increased man's capacity for exploitation and inhumanity toward his fellows by creating a relationship between them based on property. His ideal seems to have been an independent, tribal existence wherein each family group supported itself and created all that was necessary for its material subsistence. " . . . But from the moment one man began to stand in need of another's assistance; from the moment it appeared an advan-

21Ibid., pp. 201-202.
22Ibid., p. 219.
tage for one man to possess enough provisions for two, equality vanished; property was introduced; labor became necessary; and boundless forests became smiling fields, which had to be watered with human sweat, and in which slavery and misery were soon seen to sprout out and grow with the harvests. Technology provided the means with which one man could acquire more than he needed, and Rousseau accurately perceived the relation between technology, the rise of agriculture, and an increasingly well-defined concept of property.

Rousseau's efforts to trace the decline from grace, the transition from the natural to the social state, was a hypothetical reasoning engaged in as an attempt to discover the sources of evil in his own society. As his reaction to the incident involving the farmer shows, he was outraged by inequality and oppression, particularly since he saw them in opposition to his romantic conception of man in the state of nature. He believed that social evil, as opposed to physical evil, "could not be borne because it robs man not of his happiness but of his essence and his destiny... What Voltaire, D'Alembert, Diderot, regarded as mere defects of society, as mere mistakes in organization which must be gradually eliminated, Rousseau saw rather as the guilt of society, and with flaming words, again and again, he reproached society with this guilt and called for atonement."

Rousseau sought always to transform social problems into moral and ethical terms, depending for their resolution upon the goodness of man,

23 Ibid., p. 220.

24 Cassirer, Question, p. 71.
not the imagination of philosophers and social scientists. What gives
dignity is the ethical will to eliminate injustice and oppression.

Rousseau realized that the problems and inequalities of
civil society would not disappear through discourse, nor was a return
to the natural state possible or, at this point, even desirable. He
had to search for a way, through reason and will, to reconcile what
exists and what should exist in such a way as to make the desirable
become evidently necessary. What he needed to explain was that there
would be a basis for civil society other than property, one which
could eliminate inequality, oppression, and exploitation, one which
was more consonant with the natural qualities of man, one which
enhanced man's goodness rather than inducing him to evil, and within
which the dignity resulting from willing one's condition was the
benefit to each man. His need to reconcile society and nature led
him to the concepts of the social contract and the general will.
Given the facts that government seems inevitable and most governments
reduced the natural dignity of man, Rousseau's thought inevitably led
to a search for the best possible form of government, one which would
produce the least evil.

I had seen that everything is rooted in politics and that,
whatever might be attempted, no people would ever be other
than the nature of their government made them. So the
question of the best possible government seemed to me to
reduce itself to this: "What is the nature of the govern­
ment best fitted to create the most virtuous, the most
enlightened, the wisest, and, in fact, the best people,
taking the word 'best' in its highest sense?"25

He saw an intimate connection between this sort of government and the nature and function of law, for such a good government could not be capricious; it would of necessity be based on adherence to law. His reflections on society had taken him quite far from naive surprise at finding injustice in the world. He was now prepared to form a theory of the state and of man's relation to society:

"To find a form of association which may defend and protect with the whole force of the community the person and property of every associate, and by means of which each, coalescing with all, may nevertheless obey only himself, and remain as free as before." Such is the fundamental problem of which the social contract furnishes the solution.26

Rousseau's ideal expresses his desire to relinquish natural liberty only if a commensurate political liberty can be attained. He thus organizes the theory of the social contract in such a way that what each man gives up does not place him in unequal relation to others. He advocates "... the total alienation to the whole community of each associate with all his rights; for, in the first place, since each gives himself up entirely, the conditions are equal for all; and, the conditions being equal for all, no one has any interest in making them burdensome to others."27

The act of surrendering to the whole, to the welfare of the community, the right to act in self-interest against the welfare of the community is an equal abdication by each member and contributes to the

27Ibid., p. 18.
advantage of each member equally. Rousseau here is attempting to advocate the pre-eminence of the community over the self-interest of the individual, a theory that has not been overlooked by socialist analysts and historians. He goes on to explain the benefits to the individual of willingly entering into the social contract: "In short, each giving himself to all, gives himself to nobody; and as there is not one associate over whom we do not acquire the same rights as we concede to him over ourselves, we gain the equivalent of all that we lose, and more to preserve what we have."

Without the social contract we are at the mercy of the stronger, and Rousseau had seen to what injustice this could lead. The inequalities of the state of nature, rather than being mitigated by the establishment of civil society, had merely been intensified. Even law had become an instrument for providing justification for the domination of the weak by the strong. "... We shall easily conceive how much the difference between man and man in the state of nature must be less than in the state of society, and how greatly every social inequality must increase the natural inequalities of mankind."

Rousseau seeks to avoid social inequality through the social contract by creating a condition within which the act of choosing citizenship does not create comparative disadvantage or establish the institutional framework for oppression. Once the individual members of the community have surrendered themselves to the welfare of the

28Ibid., p. 18.
29Rousseau, Discourse, p. 209.
entire community, however, they must still possess a means of governing that will not restore imbalance. The guiding principle of the established community is the general will. "Each of us puts in common his person and his whole power under the supreme direction of the general will; and in turn we receive every member as an indivisible part of the whole." The general will then becomes the means for moral governance and the ethical force of the entire community freely entered into and established through the social contract. The social contract was, to Rousseau, a more desirable solution to the problem of order than the existing chaos of the oppressive social order of his times. The social contract represents order arising from within the individual, not imposed from outside, which makes it more natural, more desirable, and results in a more stable society. This attempt to internalize order or to find a natural order yields a closer and more valued bond of community, through the transcendence of individual will and the creation of general will.

"The passage from the state of nature to the civil state produces in man a very remarkable change, by substituting in his conduct justice for instinct, and by giving his actions the moral quality that they previously lacked." The transition from the instinctual life to the moral life is accomplished through the act of moral choosing. Having abandoned the conditions of nature where the free flow of natural goodness is possible, man in the social state

31Ibid., p. 22.
must choose the good course and involve himself in the exercise of ethical will.

Man cannot be relieved of the task of ordering his world; and in shaping and guiding it, he neither can nor ought to rely on help from above, on supernatural assistance. The task has been put to him—and he must solve it with his own, purely human means. But precisely as he penetrates into the character of the problem before him, he acquires the certainty that his self is not confined to the world of sense. From immanence and from ethical autonomy, man now pushes forward into the core of "intelligible" being. By giving the law to himself he proves that he is not completely subject to the control of natural necessity.\(^{32}\)

The spontaneity of nature is no longer possible as a determinant of right action, for man has lost unfettered contact with his natural self, and the context of social life prevents instinctual action. What is lost in natural terms leads to a moral possibility, an opportunity for ennobling action and ethical decision. In the social state, the goodness of man "is grounded not in some instinctive inclination of sympathy but in man's capacity for self-determination. Its real proof lies, accordingly, not in the impulses of the natural good will but in the recognition of an ethical law to which the individual will surrenders voluntarily."\(^{33}\)

This ethical law of which Cassirer speaks is Rousseau's general will. Man in society abandons free will to a higher ethical imperative, which is the general will. The general will finds its expression in just law, obedience to which is freedom. "... The

\(^{32}\text{Cassirer, Question, pp. 114-115.}\)

\(^{33}\text{Ibid., p. 104.}\)
The impulse of mere appetite is slavery, while obedience to a self-prescribed law is liberty. The general will, since it is a will to right action, can never be wrong even though the particular wills of particular men can be mistaken. For that reason, "In order, then, that the social pact may not be a vain formulary, it tacitly includes this engagement, which can alone give force to the others--that whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be constrained to do so by the whole body; which means nothing else than that he shall be forced to be free." This apparently shocking and paradoxical statement makes sense only in the total context of Rousseau's thought, for both freedom and general will have an ethical connotation with respect to right action. What Rousseau means is that one can be free only by doing what is right, that is, by obeying the laws which are, for him, standards of moral conduct.

The tendency of Rousseau's political and social theory can be fully understood only from the perspective of this fundamental idea: its essential purpose, it is true, is to place the individual under a law that is universally binding, but this law is to be shaped in such a manner that every shadow of caprice and arbitrariness disappears from it. We should learn to submit to the law of the community just as we now submit to the law of nature; we are not to acquiesce in it as in an alien dictate but must follow it because we recognize its necessity. This is possible when--and only when--we understand that this law is of such a nature that we must assent to it freely when we assimilate its meaning and can absorb this meaning into our own will.

34Rousseau, Social Contract, p. 23.
35Ibid., p. 22.
36Cassirer, Question, p. 62.
The common interest of all of the members of the community generalizes the will; yet each particular will must align itself in complete consonance with the general will.

The state claims the individual completely and without reservations. However, in doing so it does not act as a coercive institution but only puts the individual under an obligation which he himself recognizes as valid and necessary, and to which he therefore assents for its sake as well as for his own.37

Rousseau has attempted to solve, with the general will, the problem of order versus chaos. He sought freedom in community, rather than in opposition to community, and attempted to approach a kind of community that protected all men equally so that no man enslaved himself by belonging to that community. If each man unites with his fellows in a relationship of equality and mutual benefit, he is not placing his will under control of any other individual will and hence still obeys only himself—or rather, the extension of himself that is the general will.

Rousseau's theory of general will involves concepts necessary for the establishment of free society; yet he has often been viewed as a totalitarian. Crane Brinton, for example, states,

But that Rousseau should have pushed his analysis to the point where he makes his general will sovereign and unimpeachable is an interesting example of where the human mind can go along the track of abstract thought. Rousseau as a person was an eccentric, an individualist, a man whose basis emotional objections to the pressure of organization of any kind on the individual remind one of Thoreau's; and yet here he is ... one of the prophets of modern collectivist society.38

37Ibid., p. 55.
38Brinton, Shaping of Modern Thought, p. 129.
Brinton’s criticism is interesting in that it is representative of those who call Rousseau an absolutist, believing that this, in itself, is sufficient criticism. We have seen that what Rousseau was struggling to overcome was the capricious nature of government and its tendency to result in oppression and injustice. The only possible solution is a social order that binds all men totally and equally to the idea of right action; yet for this Rousseau is called a totalitarian. In the second argument Brinton mistakenly accuses Rousseau of trading freedom or organization. Rousseau’s theory was that of internal restraint rather than external compulsion. He says very little about social control or conformity in the Social Contract. If Rousseau is totalitarian, it is not in Brinton’s sense; it is in the sense that internal controls may be more effective and totalitarian than external force. There are many passages in Rousseau’s writing that seem to advocate a subtle form of conditioning in the Skinnerian sense, but few that reveal classic totalitarian impulses.

Rousseau’s political and social thought, as a whole, remains consistent with his general distrust of institutions and forms. The general will and social contract represent a continuing attempt to escape structure through the internalization of order, rather than its external imposition. He constantly seeks to harmonize his notions of the natural impulses of man with human existence in the social state. A constant faith in man’s goodness and will to justice and right action is essential to the social order envisioned by Rousseau. And his historical legacy seems to have been more on the side of liberation than
Politically we are only now emerging from the age of Rousseau. The first sign of his political influence was in the wave of public sympathy that supported active French aid to the American Revolution. Jefferson derived the Declaration of Independence from Rousseau as well as from Locke and Montesquieu... The success of the American Revolution raised the prestige of Rousseau's political philosophy... Throughout France orators quoted Rousseau in preaching the sovereignty of the people; it was partly the ecstatic welcome given to this doctrine that enabled the Revolution to survive for a decade despite its enemies and its excesses... Because of his contradictions, and because of the force and passion with which he proclaimed them, he served as prophet and saint to anarchists and socialists alike; for both these opposed gospels found nourishment in his condemnation of the rich and his sympathy for the poor.39

Rousseau's belief in the natural goodness of man led him to deal with the problems of social and political order in a way that would reflect the ability of man to will for himself that which was to the mutual benefit of all. Through volition man gains freedom in society, and this act of human will forms the source and continual confirmation of his dignity. The social system rests not primarily on institutional or structural prerequisites, but on man's most ennobling and human qualities.

Rousseau and Education

Rousseau's educational thought is founded on his romantic philosophy and on his social and political theory. He begins The Emile with two ideas that are fully expressed in his other works, namely that man is naturally good and that the influence of society is a corrupting

39Durrant, Rousseau and Revolution, pp. 890-892.
one. The synthesis of these two ideas leads to the development of a radical and utopian approach to education. The first question that must be answered, however, is whether it is desirable (and possible) to educate a man so that he does not reflect in himself what is least desirable in his culture. Is education, in anthropological terms, merely a process of acculturation—that is, a method by which a society seeks to perpetuate itself through its youth? Can children be educated by a society in such a way as to be able to transcend its weaknesses and its evils?

The consideration of such questions raises deep problems of a political nature of which Rousseau was clearly aware. He saw a conflict between natural and individual needs and social demands:

If we have to combat either nature or society, we must choose between making a man or making a citizen. We cannot make both. There is an inevitable conflict of aims, from which come two opposing forms of education: the one communal and public, the other individual and domestic.40

Rousseau admits that where true community exists, communal education is acceptable, but he rejects the contention that his own society is a community in Plato's sense as outlined in The Republic. Having seen the influence of society as evil and man's nature as essentially good, Rousseau is willing to support only the sort of education that enhances, rather than destroys, man's natural qualities. Such education seeks to prepare a man for life in terms of personal fulfillment.

rather than for a vocation. "In the natural order, where all men are equal, manhood is the common vocation."41

Rousseau is advocating the education of a man in such a way that his own fullness and dignity will be served, not social needs, which are artificial and constantly changing. To force the human mind and spirit to conform to the needs of society is a perversion of nature and an assault on the natural potential of the individual. The individual should learn independence, so that he serves himself rather than the purposes of others. Rousseau says,

When he leaves my hands, I admit he will not be a magistrate, or a soldier, or a priest. First and foremost, he will be a man. All that a man must be he will be when the need arises, as well as anyone else. Whatever the changes of fortune, he will always be able to find a place for himself.42

Rousseau's faith is that if a man comes to understand himself and his own powers—intellectual, physical, and moral—he will possess the wisdom necessary to undertake life with a fuller understanding.

The important thing is not to ward off death, but to make sure they really live. Life is not just breathing: it is action, the functioning of organs, senses, faculties, every part of us that gives the consciousness of existence. The man who gets most out of life is not the one who has lived the longest, but the one who has felt life most deeply.43

This "consciousness of existence" is obscured when society ignores the nature of the individual while forcing its prejudices and purposes on the young mind, and thus the experience of life's depth and fullness

41Ibid., p. 14.
42Ibid., p. 15.
43Ibid., p. 15.
is denied. Since man is naturally good, evil must be learned, and society is therefore, as the socializing agent, responsible for the perpetuation of its own evil. "There is no original perversity in the human heart," Rousseau says; it is acquired through exposure to the wickedness of society.

One of the primary purposes of a good education is, then, to prevent the individual from learning evil. This is the negative function of education accomplished by merely preventing the acquisition of traits harmful to the student, by permitting him to grow and learn for himself without exposure to the corrupting influences of society. In order to make this possible, Rousseau, in *The Emile*, removes his pupil from society, isolating him in bucolic innocence. His physical isolation is obviously metaphorical, since to generalize from Emile's experience in terms of proscription for an entire system of education is impossible. Rousseau can be interpreted to mean, by Emile's isolation from society, that we should seek to protect children from involvement in the society in their youth, remove them from the compromising nature of adult social life, permit them to be children. In *The New Heloise* Rousseau argues that,

Nature . . . wants children to be children before they are men. If we deliberately pervert this order, we shall get premature fruits which are neither ripe nor well-flavored, and which soon decay. We shall have youthful sages and grown-up children.44

In his world apart from society, the child Emile is permitted to grow and develop free from the burdens, injustices and evils of society, feeling only the physical limits of his humanity. Rousseau fails to confront the possibility of the child's becoming aware of his mortality and the existential doubts and fears which might arise out of such an awareness. He seems to be somewhat selective in his perceptions of what is "natural" and sometimes rejects the educational validity of disturbing, though real, experience.

A teacher need not be trained in pedagogy in order to serve Rousseau's aims. He must, however, be willing to study the child, observe his needs, his growth, and to supervise his development. The teacher must be totally committed to the child; Rousseau says, in fact, that the child's father makes the best teacher. "A child will be better brought up by a wise father, however limited, than by the cleverest teacher in the world. Zeal makes up for lack of talent—better than talent does for lack of zeal." As long as the primary educative function is negative, merely protecting the child from outside influence and permitting him to develop without interference, the teacher need possess no expertise; yet Rousseau does expect the teacher to be wise enough to discern the broad outline of human growth and to refrain from pushing the child into preconceived patterns of cognition and reasoning.

Reason, according to Rousseau, is the last faculty that develops in the growth of a child and should not be forced upon him.

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before he has passed through the earlier stages of learning. The first of these stages includes the period of time within which the body grows into health. The young child should be allowed freedom of movement and energy, the teacher merely keeping him out of physically dangerous situations. Rousseau wants the child to test himself against the world of objects without having to confront the opposition of adult will. This sort of experience should lead to a healthy body and a happy disposition.

The second learning stage involves the education of the character to the acceptance of discipline. Rousseau is here most authoritarian; he believes that it is futile to reason with a child at a young age, causing him to become argumentative and obstinate rather than perceptive. The teacher should express his will and force obedience to it without explanation. This is accomplished by arranging situations so that the pupil gains the natural reward of obedience while he gains failure from disobedience. The will of the tutor should not be arbitrary and misleading but should accord itself with the natural world and with the best interests of the student.

The final stage in education is the training of the intellect to reason and should be undertaken only when the pupil has had an opportunity to develop his body and character and possesses the need and desire for reason. Rousseau uses reason somewhat loosely to define what we think of as academic pursuit, since one must obviously use reason to walk and talk. But he suggests keeping the student away from scholastic activities and rational debate until he is physically mature.
The experience of childhood is an exploration of the physical limits of the self and an opportunity to find within the self a source of happiness. This process seems inefficient and it is, for Rousseau implores, "May I set forth at this point the most important and useful rule in all education? It is not to save time but to waste it." The influence of the teacher is felt only in order to prevent the child from developing prejudices and poor habits before he is prepared to reason. If each mind is unique, then it must be permitted to develop in its own way, not fitted to any program of education before it is prepared to accept or reject what it considers reasonable and useful. Rousseau does not want the pupil's head crowded with facts and opinions that can merely be learned, but not comprehended in the true sense. After the child is able to reason, he has the capacity truly to learn and to know, and only then does he undertake academic study. This more traditional education in adolescence takes place alongside training for a useful trade. This teaches the value of real labor and prevents the development of elitism so common to academics.

More important than the stages of growth and learning is the moral awareness which is infused at all levels of development in Rousseau's educational writing. In relation to the teacher, Rousseau instructs, "Your first duty is to be humane. Love childhood." He opposes the teacher who thinks of his work as a duty and an imposition.

46Ibid., p. 41.
47Ibid., p. 33.
He must enjoy being with children, but his personal obligations are deeper: "Remember that before you undertake the making of a man, you must be a man yourself." The education of youth, however restricted, cannot be entrusted to the weak of intellect or spirit. A man cannot reflect what he is not, nor can he teach what he does not know. Rousseau believes that a man teaches more by being what he is than he does through outright instruction. This philosophy is in direct opposition to the traditional view, which sees the teacher as servant to the subject matter and as, therefore, an interchangeable part in the educational process.

For Rousseau, what a man knows becomes a natural part of his being upon which he lives, for true knowledge is ethical and leads to action. He rejects an abstract application of knowledge, believing that the relationship between wisdom and action is reciprocal.

It is by doing good that we become good. Keep your pupil occupied with all the good deeds within his power. Let him help poor people with money and service, and get justice for the oppressed... By putting his kindly feelings into action in this way and drawing his own conclusions from the outcome of his efforts, he will get a great deal of useful knowledge.

Knowledge comes out of action and action out of knowledge, but in both relationships there exists a moral framework and an ethical imperative.

Rousseau looked to the community to provide an atmosphere within which moral education is possible. He understood the power of

48 Ibid., p. 42.
49 Ibid., p. 113.
the community to shape the individual, and it was his fear of social or cultural determinism which led him to remove his pupil from the social milieu. He also saw the potential for good in a social environment that was not corrupt, in the possibility of exposure to men of wisdom, talent, and conscience.

Those who think it is enough to read ... books are mistaken. There is more to be learned from the conversation of the authors than from their books; and it is not from the authors themselves that one learns most. It is the spirit of the community which develops a mind of power and widens the vision.50

With this statement, Rousseau begins to envision the relationship between education and politics; where the social order is founded on the general will, education is a necessary force in the life of the state. It becomes the social process through which citizens become conscious of their relationship to the general will as well as one mechanism through which the general will can be strengthened in the service of all men. This relationship can be viewed as totalitarian if one sees it as an instrument for aligning the individual will with the will of the state, or as democratic and socialistic if interpreted as meaning that educated citizens are better able to make correct moral choices. Both views seem intermixed in Rousseau's own mind:

Public education ... is therefore one of the fundamental requirements of popular government. If children are educated on a footing of equality, if they are imbued with the laws of the state and the maxims of the general will, and taught to respect them above all else, if they are surrounded by examples

50Ibid., p. 124.
of and by objects that unceasingly remind them of the tender mother that fosters them, of the love she bears them, of the inestimable benefits they receive from her, and of the return they owe her, it cannot be doubted that they will learn in this way to cherish each other as brothers and wish only what the community wishes.

This passage, depicting the force of the community and its educational functions, is somewhat fearful in its description of the moral power of the state. Yet it comes close to expressing the wish of all who seek both the morality of citizens and the survival of the state. The sole justification of the state, for Rousseau, is its ability to provide and protect those who seek to live under the framework of ethical will. Cassirer holds that,

From this kind of ethical idealism, Rousseau was firmly convinced, there will grow a genuine social-political idealism. Men will no longer regard the mere gratification of instincts as the goal of the community, nor will he judge the community by the degree to which it succeeds in securing such gratification. He will look upon it rather as the founder and guardian of the law—and he will understand that in the fulfillment of this task it secures, if not the happiness, then certainly the dignity of man.

The question of whether education exists in order to serve the state or the state to educate its citizens, requires a solution more clear than the one Rousseau seems to provide. He begins the *Emile* by asserting that the man must be educated for himself, not for the state; but he believes, at the same time, that in the good state, where the general will prevails, education serves the best interests of the state. Rousseau provides no reconciliation between the ideal

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51Rousseau, *Minor Writings*, p. 45.

52Cassirer, *Question*, p. 127.
and the real, and offers no suggestion of an intermediate stage of compromise. He provides the philosophical seeds of both authoritarian and anarchist models for education, if the rest of his writing is ignored. If, however, his educational theory is placed in the context of his other works, it seems apparent that in an imperfect world, Rousseau would not abandon education to totalitarian subservience. The state can command such power only when it is a reflection of the general will which is in a basic sense democratic and in all respects moral.

Rousseau's critics argue that he is the father of permissiveness in education, though permissiveness is elusive of definition and has become more ideological than descriptive in modern times. His educational thought, on close inspection, seems quite the opposite of permissive; he opposes, in fact, the satisfaction of all of the child's desires and acquiescence to the totalitarian impulses of children. Rousseau say,

Satisfy his desires, not because of his demands but because of his needs. He should have no consciousness of obedience when he acts, nor of mastery when someone acts for him. Let him experience liberty equally in his actions and in yours.53

The meaning implied is twofold: first, since desire is often capricious and authoritarian, it should be ignored in favor of true need, which should never be resisted; second, the child should be prevented from harm and from wrong-doing rather than punished for it. He should

53Rousseau, The Emile, p. 35.
come to depend on his own experience and judgment rather than on acceptance or rejection by others. Rousseau is not afraid of authority and encourages it for young children:

Once they are sure we love them, they know we do not want to do them hurt; children rarely err in that. Consequently, when I refuse anything to my children, I never argue with them. Instead of telling them why I refuse, I act in such a way that they understand it as far as they can. In this way they get to understand that I never refuse them anything without good reason, though they cannot always see what the reason is.54

Rousseau will not permit the child to put his hand on the stove in order to learn to fear the flame, nor will he reason with him before he is capable of understanding; he simply prevents the injury through the authority of knowledge, an authority that must be respected before it can be understood. He does not fear that he will psychologically damage the child, for a trust has been established that leads to emotional acceptance of the refusal. This is not permissiveness, nor is it authoritarianism; it is merely human love and concern in action. In a society in which all knowledge was tentative and dependent upon proof, Rousseau introduced a concept of natural wisdom that possessed an intrinsic authority that was not arbitrary.

Rousseau, because he was an absolutist concerning the ethical dimension of knowledge and experience, has often been seen as an advocate of conditioning. Rousseau teaches his pupil a lesson on the meaning of property by allowing him to plant a garden of beans on the

54 Rousseau, Minor Writings, p. 81.
gardener's land, which the gardener subsequently digs up and destroys.55 After breaking the window in his room, Emile is left to suffer the cold, and the window goes unrepaired.56 These lessons are calculated to result in a specific understanding about the nature of property. In one sense, they can be seen as cruel and manipulative; yet the small hurt caused by refraining from interference here may prevent greater problems later in Emile's life.

The question of conditioning through punishment is not clearly resolved in these famous incidents, for the pupil is not forced to engage in the behavior that leads to the punishment. If Rousseau advocates conditioning, it is in his establishment of a total atmosphere of control, in separating Emile from urban society, in attempting to isolate him from books at a young age, in permitting him to experience only an approved reality at a given time. Yet does an environment that is consciously chosen isolate more than one that is the result of chance or circumstance? Does a desire to prevent "unnatural" behavior and a reluctance to force a child to become a miniature adult mean that one is conditioning, or is it an attempt to prevent conditioning? These questions are not readily answered in Rousseau's case or in any other. A more significant basis for attack might be that Rousseau first seeks to isolate his pupil from the evils of society and later utilizes the social reality of the outside world.

56Ibid., p. 45.
in the making of lessons. He uses the reality he has rejected to
serve his own educational purposes. An exposure to the reality of
the outside world is necessary for Emile, however, since he cannot
remain in isolation; and perhaps these pedagogical tricks or inconsis-
tencies in method and philosophy are necessary to that end. "Emile
is not a savage to be banished to the deserts: he is a savage made to
live in a town. He must know how to get a living in towns, and how
to get on with their inhabitants, and to live with them, if not to
live like them."

After constructing his philosophical work on natural edu-
cation, Rousseau did turn to the social and political implications
of what he had said. In his Considerations on the Government of
Poland, Rousseau establishes his support of equal, low-cost education
for the population. He says there,

I do not like the distinction between colleges and
academies, that leads to the rich nobles and the poor nobles
being educated separately and on different lines. Since by
the constitution of the state they are equal, they should be
educated together and in the same way; and even if it is
impossible to establish a completely gratuitous system of
public education, the fees in any case should be made so low
that the poorest can pay them.

The true function of education is to make a man free, according to
Rousseau, and only when he is free should he enter society. In this
way he becomes valuable to the state, for "only the free man is the
true citizen."

57 Ibid., p. 92.
58 Rousseau, Minor Writings, pp. 143-144.
59 Cassirer, Rousseau, Kant, and Goethe, p. 33.
Rousseau saw his society as an outsider, as an anthropologist, not only rejecting it, but being rejected by it. As an outcast and a prophet, he attempted to create a vision of the future that attracted optimism, as opposed to the bored pessimism of an age that had destroyed the legitimacy of its foundations through rationalist overkill. His enthusiasm for nature was the result of an inability to perceive and connect with things through dense and impenetrable forms and manifestations of the inward decay of the prevailing social order. Rousseau searched for and found a philosophical basis for a society that balanced the freedom of the individual against the need for social order. The means by which man can establish such order is the exercise of ethical will—which is an alternative to compulsion or force.

The concept of natural man and natural rights represents an attempt to universalize freedom, will, and dignity. The function of education is to preserve these natural rights and qualities and to encourage their development without undue restraint. The second function of education is to nurture the development of ethical will in order to assure social continuity and survival, for its expression in its relation to politics and society is essentially the acting out of the dignity of man.
II. PAUL GOODMAN

Paul Goodman perceives the central conflict of modern America to be the struggle between the organized system and decentralization, between alienation and community, between totalitarianism and anarchism. He believes that life in America has become increasingly alienating as individual citizens have lost control over their political, social, and economic institutions, and that, in fact, the most intimate and important conditions under which men live are beyond the human scale. Power has become overcentralized, while, at the same time, responsibility has been diffused so that institutional reform on a broad scale is no longer possible. The fact of powerlessness is not new, but the sense and feeling of powerlessness within a theoretically democratic society is a modern phenomenon. Relatedly, the pervasive nature of alienating forces, their influence on the whole range of human activity, even the most minute and inconsequential areas of life, is a modern condition.

Historically, economic, social and political oppression of human beings and communities has been a fact of life for most of mankind; yet oppression and control had limits within nearly every
social system. The feudal lord, for example, could demand a portion of the farmer's produce and enlist his service in military ventures; but the serf retained an area of freedom within his bondage. That is, the lord and the serf knew what could be demanded and what could not. The education of children, the conduct of activity within the home, the disposal of income, et cetera, were activities over which the manorial lord had no control. In the final analysis, even loyalty was the prerogative of the serf, who could leave the land and go to the city or take up residence in another place. The point is that while such a social order, as an example, was more powerful in its control over some aspects of life and significantly more harsh at times, the individual's freedom in other areas of life was nearly absolute.

Modern man, in contrast, has begun to feel that no area of life is safe from outside influence and control, from the number of children he should (may) have to the synthetic demands on the disposal of his income. Labor and the conditions of work are not within the control of the worker, nor are the decisions regarding what is produced and its usefulness. Children must be given over to the state for education and military service until such age as the economy is able to absorb them into the work force. Even the most intimate and personal decisions of life cannot be made in the absence of external pressure, coercion, and oppression. The state, economic institutions, and the media have assumed the functions of the Church in modern society, regulating and influencing human behavior on an unprecedented
scale. The educational arm of the state seeks to extract children from the family at an ever younger age; the economy now "integrates" workers on its own terms; family planning is "the American way," and cans of deodorant are hung on everyone's doorknobs.

A growing awareness of this relentless pursuit of integrity and autonomy in America is beginning to develop, and Paul Goodman has devoted much of his energy to creating a form of resistance to these encroaching forces. Goodman calls for decentralization, reestablishment of a sense of community, syndicalist control of the economy, and an end to compulsory education. He calls himself an anarchist, a Jeffersonian democrat, an anarcho-syndicalist, a populist, and a progressive. This is less a sign of confusion than it is an indication of direction, of Goodman's view of where America ought to be going as well as a highly developed sense of what is wrong with the society.

Goodman's analysis of the development of the current malaise is fundamentally Marxist, though he refuses the socialist alternative, detecting within it many of the same problems produced by capitalist democracy. For Goodman, neither socialism nor capitalist democracy has found either the means or the internal logic to resist the tendency toward centralism and technological aggrandizement. Anarchic decentralization is, for him, the only alternative to the inherently centralist economic, political and social imperatives of state capitalism and state socialism. The individual loss of self-determination is progressive under both systems as a result of their centralist tendencies. Anarchic decentralization of both capitalist and socialist
societies is necessary for the reassertion of self-determination. Goodman says,

The drive to local liberty has become the strongest revolutionary political movement of our times, both in this country and internationally. As I have been pointing out in this book, it is a protest against galloping centralization, oligarchy, military and cultural imperialism, bureaucracy, top-down administration, and mandarinism, all of which are regarded as illegitimate authority. And the slogans of liberty have been community control, decentralization, participatory democracy, national liberation, Black Power, Student Power, neighborhood city halls, "maximum feasible participation." People want to control their own place.¹

Goodman understands the impossibility of people controlling their own place in the face of the power of modern institutions to expand their influence, and he rejects the possibility of a Bakunin-type revolutionary anarchism. Instead he advocates a constant chipping away of the authority and power of centralized institutions, a relentless pressure toward local power and decision-making, seizure of small areas of self-determination whenever possible. The energy of citizens should be directed toward a limitation and division of centralized power as opposed to a class struggle to control that power.² The idea of authenticity is, to Goodman, implicit in community-control and self-determination, for it is assumed to be an instance of people uniting to act in their own best interests.


Paul Goodman believes that centralist tendencies have promoted the destruction of community life and the sense of community identity in America. He feels that only when people exercise significant control over their important social institutions is community possible. The excessive predefinition and prearrangement of cultural alternatives by central authority makes freedom absurd.

A society cannot have decided all possibilities beforehand and have structured them. If society becomes too tightly integrated and pre-empts all the available space, materials, and methods, then it is failing to provide for just the margin of formlessness, real risk, novelty, spontaneity, that makes growth possible.

Here Goodman is talking about human growth, the growth of community, and the structural forces inherent in expanding centralism that thwart its development.

"A man has only one life and if during it he has no great environment, no community, he has been irreparably robbed of a human right." The only alternative, for Goodman, to "growing up absurd" is to grow up into a rich and full community life—a life that is within the power of the individual to control. The Jeffersonian notion of community based upon small-scale land ownership and emphasizing personal skills and enterprise appeals to Goodman. The town meeting and the neighborhood commune provide for expression of the individual will and direct impact on decision-making. Communities of workers


4Ibid., p. 97.
controlling their own jobs or owning the means of production yield a sense of purpose and meaning to a man's work. It is easy to recognize what Goodman is opposing in these propositions—namely, the strongest and most spiritually-crushing forces in modern society, the loss of power and the feeling of powerlessness in most areas of human life. This ineffectuality results in a further retreat from life and from the community as well as a total distrust of politics. What Goodman feels is essential to community is a sense of citizenship, not in chauvinistic terms, but rather as participation. As this participation as citizens has declined, the emphasis on political science and civics courses has increased, revealing a national tendency to obscure the meaning of history and of societal trends. Goodman advocates a return to democracy, what he calls a "missed revolution," rather than its further abandonment. "... If people had the opportunity to initiate community actions, they would be political; they would know that finally the way to accomplish something great is to get together with the like-minded and directly do it."5

Recently community groups have done just what Goodman advocated in 1956; however the issues around which community enterprise has grown have been astonishingly disintegrative, with the exception of attempts to gain community control of schools by Blacks in New York City. We find middle-class college students forming food co-ops on campuses, holding arts and crafts fairs, and starting

5Ibid., p. 107.
organic gardens, all in an attempt to gain a sense of "community." These are the people who have been least betrayed by the organized system and who possess almost no geographic stability around which to build community. The student-based community unions are structurally designed around organizational models provided by the corporations that they are resisting, because this is the only stability possible when individuals are totally transient.

In New York City block associations have begun to develop, based almost solely on self-protection. These groups hire private police forces to protect their property and create "whistle alerts" to defend themselves against mugging. A few plant trees and arrange block parties and picnics, but these merely provide relief from the general atmosphere of fear and paranoia around which their membership has grown. This resembles a last-ditch stand against fear of cultural collapse more than genuine community spirit in Goodman's sense of the term. The New York Times reports, for example, that not only do adjacent block associations compete and fight one another, but some even complain that a good private police force drives muggers and robbers into nearby unprotected blocks.\(^6\) We may come to the point when war breaks out between blocks because protection in some areas against crime is too good! This is the absurd condition faced by those who seek to create community out of mutual distrust and fear.

Yet Goodman is right when he says that man is robbed of a basic right if the community into which he is born and grows is not worthy of the human spirit. He admires the Populist movement as an historical attempt to escape the closing jaws of centralism. "In my opinion, this [Populism] was the last American political movement to face squarely the crucial dilemma of modern society: how to preserve practical democracy in high industrial conditions." Yet while it was decentralist, the Populist movement was fundamentally paranoic. It refused to unite with the labor movement and after a brief flirtation with the Black populists, lapsed into bitter racism. Ultimately, perhaps the Populists saw their movement as an inroad to capitalist money, not as a reaction to it. This experience points up one of the dangers of populism and decentralization, namely that what one gains in terms of local control and resistance to central authority may degenerate into sectional, racial, or inter-community strife. This in itself is not grounds for a rejection of the anarchist or populist alternative to totalitarian destruction of all values is possibly an affirmation of values that bring one group into conflict with another. The choice may be between a world in which conflict and values are both outlawed for the sake of civil peace and a world in which values are permitted and conflict is inevitable.

A further objection to Goodman's theory of community is possible. He advocates the conscious establishment of decentralized

7Goodman, *People or Personnel*, p. 40.
communities having local authority and permitting the individual to have a say in controlling his own life. How is this possible, however, in a society which systematically and persistently emphasizes that there is nothing to believe in, that no values really count, that dogmatism is disruptive and evil, that relativism is the only legitimate position? The historical basis of community is a belief in something other than community itself; that is to say that community is ethnic, religious, national, tribal, and so on. Community has a purpose beyond its own enhancement. To advocate deliberate establishment of community for its own sake is novel and untested, with the exception of literary propositions on the order of *Walden Two*, and it may be impossible. The commitment to community seems essential, given the degenerative effects of centralism; however conscious creation of community as an end in itself may be illusory. In some sense this represents unity and purpose in a purely negative sense, or, at best, in an extremely abstract positive one.

A final question, alluded to earlier, is whether or not community development on a decentralized basis is possible only for those least dependent on the organized system for economic survival. Black efforts at community organization on a decentralized scale, for example, reveal the thoroughness and intensity with which the organized system limits and controls self-determinant groups. The teachers' union in New York City did not hesitate to use its centralist power and political influence to resist community control of schools in Oceanhill-Brownsville. What is eventually gained by the local community in its
struggle for independence tends to be a diluted compromise. Self-
determination and local control is granted in peripheral and non-
essential areas while control of budget, teacher selection, et cetera,
remain ultimately in the hands of the organized system and its attend-
ant unions. The very powerless are most at the mercy of the central
authority, for they have neither the economic means nor the political
influence to carry out their desires.

The economic forces within the country have increasingly
made it more profitable to work for "the man" than to organize on
one's own. This is, in part, the explanation for the lack of class-
consciousness on the part of the working man in this country, and it
remains an effective deterrent to withdrawal from the system. In
addition, those who are poorest rarely have the education, skill, or
craft necessary to break away. Middle-class Americans are more likely
to have such assets, but again, it is a case of those who most need
more control over their lives having the most remote chance of achiev-
ing it. If decentralism, community control, and self-determination
were to become the established trend in America, one could easily
predict that the last group to remain trapped and powerless against
the organized system would be the poor and the Blacks. It is doubtful
that this group could ever gain the means necessary to free itself.
Decentralization cannot be condemned for its middle-class bias and
appeal, but this characteristic must not be ignored.
Goodman says that in the light of the gradual loss of liberty and control by the individual, the establishment of community and local control seems to be the most promising direction for the future. Better techniques of socializing are constantly being sought, but this is not what is needed. Attempts to resocialize and condition human beings to comply with the ongoing ideology and system of organization make the possibility of achieving an honest world more remote.

For it can be shown . . . that with all the harmonious belonging and all the tidying up of background conditions that you please, our abundant society is at present simply deficient in many of the most elementary objective opportunities and worthwhile goals that could make growing up possible. It is lacking in the opportunity to be useful. It thwarts aptitude and creates stupidity. It corrupts ingenuous patriotism. It corrupts the fine arts. It shackles science. It dampens animal ardor. It discourages the religious convictions of justicia­tion and Vocation and it dims the sense that there is a Crea­tion. It has no Honor. It has no Community.

The establishment of community and the education of youth are inseparable in Goodman's mind. For him, the most crucial element in education is providing the children with a "worthwhile adult world in which to grow up." This means relaxing or abandoning the conscious and direct forms of instruction in schoolhouses in favor of creating a total social environment worthy of children. Goodman has consistently opposed compulsory education on the basis of two principles, one Rousseauian and one anti-Rousseauian. His first objection to compulsory education is that it is coercive and conformist, as well as

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8Goodman, Growing Up Absurd, p. 12.

generally inapt. The schools do not provide the necessary opportunities for human growth; rather they thwart that growth through oppression and mindless insistence on conformity. Schools serve unquestioningly the extrinsic goals and values of the culture and fail to provide adequate means to transcend or deal with the failing milieu.

The school presents the student with two choices: either conform to the expectations of the organized system, or engage in ineffectual and absurd rebellion. If the student holds out for the possibility of true rebellion, he must face an army of social workers, psychologists, and cops, all of whom will attempt to force him to "adjust."

In any event, transcendence and rebellion are an unfair and impossible burden to place on youth. The culture should instead provide legitimate (not manufactured) outlets for youthful energy, curiosity, and ambition.

Secondly, since the schools have assumed total responsibility for the education of youth, the various other cultural agencies have not only lost their educative function, but the schools have come to absolutely preempt their right to act as educative enterprises. Here Goodman believes that in a humane society the economic, political, and social institutions could and should participate in the education of youth by providing them with real and engaging experiences and the frequent company of adults at work. The total assumption of the right and responsibility to educate youth by the schools is historically recent and culturally limited, and Goodman believes not only that much has been lost in the transition but also that a reversal of this
tendency toward centralist control of education should take place.

In his emphasis on the role of social agencies other than the schools in the education of youth, Goodman would rely on what he calls "incidental education." His concept of incidental education resembles the Greek notion of the educative function of life in the total community.

But in all societies, both primitive and highly civilized, until quite recently, most education of most children has occurred incidentally, not in schools set aside for the purpose. Adults did their economic work and other social tasks; children were not excluded, were paid attention to, and learned to be included. The children were not formally "taught." In many adult institutions, incidental education has always been taken for granted as an essential part of the functioning, e.g. in families and age peer groups, community labor, master-apprentice arrangements, games and play, prostitution and other sexual initiation, and religious rites.10

Goodman believes that this is both a more effective and less oppressive method of educating youth while it is also more conducive to community identity and cohesiveness.

The argument that the school as a social institution is a negative and harmful influence on youth is consonant with Rousseau's romanticism. Yet when Goodman proposes to turn youth over to the remaining social institutions for education, he breaks sharply with Rousseau, who wished to separate young people from all social institutions while they were most vulnerable to harmful influence. Rousseau did not make a distinction between the institutions of schooling and the other institutions of society in terms of their harmful and

10Goodman, New Reformation, p. 69.
corrupting influence. Where Goodman seems to believe that the school is more harmful, Rousseau would deny that this is so. Perhaps Goodman believes that the educative function of the community itself is good; yet he attacks schooling in the present and presses for an immediate end to "compulsory miseducation." To take youth out of the schools and turn them over to economic, political and social institutions, which Goodman himself has attacked previously as inhumane, seem hardly a romantic proposal. Goodman says at one point, "Yet it is likely that by far the greatest waste of ability, including intellectual and creative ability, occurs because a playful, hunting, sexy, dreamy, combative, passionate, artistic, manipulative and destructive, jealous and magnanimous, selfish and disinterested animal is continually thwarted by social organization and perhaps especially by schooling."\(^\text{1\textsuperscript{1}}\)

This is pure Rousseau. It seems that, in the light of Goodman's previous criticism of society as a whole, he would reject leaving the educative functions up to its other institutions; yet that is what he seems to propose when he describes incidental education. Perhaps Goodman is pushed by the intentional quality of schooling into opposition of the educational system as a conscious agent of socialization. Nonetheless, he makes a very good case for the effectiveness of the more casual or "incidental" forms of education. The central problem remains: the non-educational institutions of society dictate educational values and goals for the educational system; and these

\(^{1\text{1}}\text{Ibid.}, p. 77.\)
institutions, if given direct educative functions, would continue to press for internalization of the same goals and values. The argument is circular because the problem is circular, and Goodman gives us no way to break the cycle. To use Goodman's own argument, one must advocate providing youth with a culture worthy of their goodness before releasing them to live within it.

One might also consider the possibility that intentional, conscious, systematic socialization (as in schools) is easier to resist because of its obvious structural clarity and lack of guile than are the more incidental forms of socialization. That is to say that a youth may have a better chance of revolt against a cruel or oppressive teacher than he does against kindly guidance counselors, social workers, or, even more difficult, television and advertising. As teachers become ad-men, their values become more subtly inconspicuous and more difficult to refuse. The battle of coercion is almost over with the advent of behavioral conditioning and counseling psychology. The school is now becoming less brutal and less open in its repression than many other social agencies. Schools have, in America, never been much of an intentional refuge from the outside world, but rather a force designed to reflect and intensify its values. Part of Goodman's criticism has been that schools are destructively competitive, over-centralized and administered on a top-down bureaucratic model. The bureaucracy of schools mirrors the government and civil service; the economy of schools is a reflection of Wall Street and business, and the pedagogy of schools has come to resemble a mixture of Madison
Avenue, television, and army-training films. To escape from schools into the outside world is like being trapped in a hall of mirrors. However, while they do not provide a refuge from the oppressive institutions of the culture, schools do present the prevailing ideology in a more systematic, obvious, and sometimes grotesque fashion. They are lacking in the subtleties of adult institutions and are more transparent in their coercion. For this reason, children stand a better chance of resisting the influence of schools than they do of resisting the more totalitarian and highly-sophisticated outside world. Adults know this to be true, and this is why social critics find the schools to be such an easy target.

The argument against Goodman's concept of incidental education is that within the existing social framework, the schools are at least no more destructive of romantic innocence and beauty than is the surrounding culture. Incidental education works only in a community that can provide worthwhile experiences having some clear meaning, value, and attachment to moral enterprise. Compulsory education laws originally sought to free youth from the tyranny and exploitation of a hostile economic world, which used the cheap labor of children to its competitive advantage. While economic conditions have changed in such a way that cheap, youthful labor is no longer needed or wanted in the economy, these same conditions militate against providing worthwhile and real experience of a non-exploitative nature for youth. Only a vastly decentralized society could provide personal, intimate, caring contact and experience for youth in the work of the community.
Such a rearrangement of society would necessarily have to precede the end of compulsory education or the deschooling of culture. The educative value of society as it is, differs little from the educative value of schooling; yet one can agree to limit schooling at a time when the community is united in ethical purpose.

Goodman realizes that an end to compulsory education does not seem to be approaching, and he advocates (for now) a broadening of alternatives and a return to the principles of the progressive movement. He feels that the soul of progressivism was betrayed as instrumental values won out in the society:

Dewey's pragmatic and social-minded conceptions have ended up as the service university, technocracy, labor bureaucracy, suburban togetherness. But Dewey was thinking of workers' management; and like Frank Lloyd Wright, he wanted a functional culture of materials and industrial processes, not glossy Industrial Design and the consumer standard of living.12

What he does not mention is that the ideal of pluralism, which was a central concept in progressivism, gradually evolved from a respect for and a valuing of differences to an almost mandatory moral relativism. We have travelled the road from Democracy and Education to the mindlessness of I'm O.K., You're O.K. Where Dewey sought a way to provide people with the means of escaping poverty, ignorance and political oppression, Goodman is forced to deal with the results of large-scale deliverance from these social ills. The poor are now a minority without power, and those who have made it out of poverty did so, to a great extent, at the expense of sacrificing solidarity and identity.

12Ibid., p. 84.
Progressive doctrines of education for this newly-affluent group "that have made headway in the public schools are precisely learning to get along with people, tolerance, and 'real life problems' such as auto driving and social dancing. They are not those that pertain to passionately testing the environment rather than 'adjusting' to it." What Goodman likes best in the progressive program are the ideas of experimenting, involvement in the community, participation and limited adult authority.

Progressive education derived its faith in the natural goodness and educability of youth from Rousseau and romanticism. Its strong emphasis on community involvement, however, is a Greek ideal, non-Rousseauean and non-romantic. This combination of the ideals of the Greek city-state and the romanticism of the Enlightenment in a new educational philosophy is beginning to find its limits. The Enlightenment lent its emphasis on the goodness and dignity of the individual and its commitment to the person as opposed to the state. The Greek ideal contributed to progressivism a belief in the great educative value of life within the culture, somewhat to the neglect of formal schooling in our sense. Yet with the Greeks, the individual was not separate from or superior to the state; and in fact, life and culture were precious gifts of the state. Progressivism succeeded in uniting the positive elements of the two philosophies and in suppressing and avoiding the conflicts between them. Only recently have we begun to

13Goodman, Growing Up Absurd, p. 86.
face these problems, which is one reason why a naive return to progressivism may now be impossible.

Recent thinking and writing in the field of education and society has emphasized the concepts of identity and authenticity. America has faced less and less the problems of poverty and oppression and turned its attention toward the child-oriented suburban issues of alienation and identity. This is not to say that the country, or the young, are not concerned with war and peace, poverty and affluence, work and play, but merely that in their concern for these things and in their struggle to deal with them, they have been forced to a crisis of identity that, according to Goodman, takes on a religious quality. This religious moment of doubt and doom has roots in the society and the educational system.

It is said that our schools are geared to "middle-class values," but this is a false and misleading use of terms. The schools less and less represent any human values, but simply adjustment to a mechanical system.\(^\text{14}\)

Youth who compulsorily attend a school system, which operates according to this line of thinking, either adopt the instrumental values or drop-out, physically or mentally. The system itself does not recognize authentic revolt, for it has no values other than its own smooth functioning and possible expansion. Revolt and reform are disruptive of organizational harmony and thus cannot be permitted. This also explains the reluctance of the system to admit the validity of external or alternative experience, since such

\(^\text{14}\)Goodman, *Compulsory Mis-education*, p. 21.
would diminish or at least question the omnipotence of the system and its unquestioned authority in the realm of education. The school becomes more than a surrogate world; it pre-empts reality so that it becomes the real world, and places external realities in the position of having to bag legitimacy. "... Our society weakens the growing youth's conviction that there is a Creation of the Six Days, a real world rather than a system of social rules that indeed are often arbitrary."\textsuperscript{15}

In the world of work for which the student is preparing, a similar condition prevails: "... to want a job that exercises a man's capacities in an enterprise useful to society is utopian anarcho-syndicalism; it is labor invading the domain of management. No labor leader has entertained such a thought in our generation."\textsuperscript{16} The standards of acceptability for a job are different than they are for work. A man who wants to work relies on competence and on the intrinsic satisfaction of the work itself and in the objects of his work. A man who seeks a job must demonstrate that he is safe, that hiring him does not entail a risk to the organization, that he is cooperative and will fit in. The standards of this world of jobs assure the elimination of competence. The application of the standards results in the screening out of innovation and significant change. The alternatives for youth are obvious and objectionable.

\textsuperscript{15}Goodman, Growing Up Absurd, p. 143.

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., p. 37.
The society seems not to want authentic men, since a man of this type is always a risk to the status quo; for he has values of his own, and they may prove disruptive to the value-neutrality and fluidity required for smooth operation of the system.

In politics, youth are subject to what Goodman calls an inauthentic civil peace. The society is rife with sources of conflict, yet consistently emphasizes meaningless compromise and value neutrality. Good never wins out, nor does evil; a bargain is always struck that obscures what could potentially be an instructive moral resolution. Instrumental values consistently take precedence over substantive values. Religious men is rendered absurd. Our concept of reality is affected more by what we cannot see and do than by the routine of daily life. The simple initiation and completion of an enterprise is generally reduced to the realm of hobbies and recreation. Passion, conflict, old-age and death are once-removed from the public realm. They become "issues," not facts of everyday experience, and are in some sense now properties of the media for use in documentaries and soap-opera dramas. Engagement with the deepest realities of life is denied most men, and especially denied to youth.

The consequence of these conditions has been a crisis of religious dimensions, especially with respect to youth. The imposed relativity in ethics and knowledge results in a revolt against

17Ibid., p. 209.
culture and a total distrust of history and truth. Goodman says,

Suddenly I realized that they [youth] did not believe there was a nature of things. Or they were not sure of that. There was no knowledge, but only the sociology of knowledge . . . To be required to know something was a trap by which the young were put down and co-opted.18

Goodman is basically a Calvinist; that is, he believes in the value of Works. His faith lies on the side of competence, craft, vocation, knowledge, culture and history. When confronted with a generation of youth whose rejection of Calvinism is based on and for the sake of Faith, he cannot communicate. In some sense, the life of faith is easier, for experience and effort count for nothing, yet those who have chosen faith have done so because of the successes of a Calvinist world which has left them alienated. Goodman rejects the leap of faith as revealing a lack of the moral courage to face up to life:

In the end, it is religion that constitutes the strength of the new generation. It is not, as I used to think, their morality, political will, or frank common sense. Except for a few, I am not impressed by their moral courage or even honesty. For all their eccentricity, they are quite lacking in personality. They do not have enough world to have strong character. They are not especially attractive (to me) as animals. But they keep pouring out a kind of metaphysical vitality.19

This sounds somewhat like Goodman is becoming cranky about a generation that has let him down, while all along they are the generation that took him seriously in his criticism of their world. That they

19 Ibid., p. 59.
rejected his proposals for the changing of that world is perhaps the legacy of a suspicion too deep to be offset by rhetoric. The "outpouring of metaphysical vitality" of which he speaks could be a sign of an energetic search for purpose (which may end in a renewed Calvinism), or it could be the echo of untended machines that run on and on after the apocalypse in Bob Dylan's *Talking World War III Blues*. Enthusiasm and vitality are qualities generally admired by Calvinists but which, in the absence of other values, cannot free mankind from his present condition.

Goodman cares about youth in a genuine way, and he blames the environment for not being educative in the sense of reflecting and transmitting a worthwhile culture to them. This, when coupled with his distrust of the intentional system of education called schooling, forces him philosophically to advocacy of a social revolution. If incidental education is the only worthwhile education and if the society at present cannot yield good incidental education because its institutions are corrupt, then these social institutions must be radically altered so as to create a humane and educative cultural environment. "If the institutions of society are made vital and functional and the young can take on those institutions as their own, identify with them, be free in them, participate in their management rather than as hired hands, then they will have learned the humane culture."20 This institutional

reformation or revolution would, according to Goodman, be achieved through radical decentralization of the institutions and a return to the democracy of the town meeting. Only under these conditions are the social institutions educative in a positive way. Thus it would seem that Goodman feels a moral revolution can be achieved through structural change in the social institutions. The structural conditions of life in the society must be altered in order to place institutions under the control of ethical will; yet at the same time some kind of moral choice must be made in order to begin doing this.

It is often extremely difficult to know how Goodman can call for and expect a return to humane culture and moral philosophy in politics, science, education and the arts, and at the same time contend that the present cultural milieu militates against the development of conscience, identity, and morality. If the institutions are the educational system and if these institutions do not reflect humane culture, then it would seem that intentional transmission of this culture is absolutely necessary as a condition which precedes institutional change. While Goodman argues against intentional education and against compulsory schooling, he also seems to demonstrate its necessity in providing the values and transmitting the humane culture as an ideal that is no longer reflected in the institutional structure of the society. Moral philosophy must be intentionally introduced educationally in a world that operates on relativism and instrumental values.
One can only discern new moral direction for change by appealing to ideas that now exist on the margins of the culture or entirely outside of the social structure. For example, to advocate decentralization as an ideal in a totally centralized culture, one must have access to ideas and values not reflected by that social system. One must resort to history or some system of intentional transmission of culture, as well as to values not currently embodied in the centralized system. A centralized system and centralized institutions do not educate incidentally for decentralization. This is the function of humane, intentional education, to provide alternative ideas and values as well as alternative moral and structural possibilities for the future of the society.

Schools begin the process of transmitting conformist and relativist ideals precisely when teachers themselves abandon moral values and begin to believe in the relativity of knowledge and in instrumental values. If this is so, then Goodman's notion of structural determinism is questionable, for it is possible that institutions reflect, rather than determine, values. Once this possibility is admitted, the value of intentional education is implicit in the idea of institutional change. Goodman's tendency to accept structural or institutional determinism in order to further his argument for decentralization and deschooling poses a significant challenge to educational critics and analysts. Does the structure of the social order determine the values men hold
and the education they receive? How are these institutional and structural conditions to be changed or transcended if their coercive power is absolute or if their intellectual imperatives form a barrier to the conception of alternatives? Historically, Goodman's tendency toward determinism is questionable, in that certain ideas and cultural forms have survived not only within a hostile social and institutional structure, but even in the face of direct persecution. The sacred writings of both Jews and Christians have been studied and passed on within the confines of institutionally hostile societies. They have formed the basis of intentional education for values that were not reflected in the social institutions. Black Americans have survived in the midst of personal and institutional racism for many generations, passing on a culture of beauty, grace and life that has had roots in faith and resistance. In the light of countless similar examples of the survival and propagation of noble ideals within a structurally hostile social environment, to attribute the failure of schooling to structural or institutional causes seems absurd.

There is evidence that suggests that schools fail precisely when they are seen as irrelevant by the groups which control them and no longer depend upon them for any significant purpose. For the white middle-class American, the schools are now a marginally important institution. Social mobility (or its justification) is no longer an issue, and the credentials granted by the educational institutions serve this group not to prevent downward mobility,
but to rationalize the status quo. If the schools are abolished, this group will not fall from its successful hegemony in America, but will be expected to turn to some equally accessible standard of achievement. Failure is impossible on any significant scale for the middle-class, which needs pass no further tests. In fact, one can see that the rise of absurd testing such as the ACT, College Board Exam, National Merit Test, et cetera, is inversely related to the decreasing demand for real testing of competence in the world. Consonant with the rise of absurd testing is the rise of absurd schooling to satisfy the demands of the tests. After several generations have been educated within this technological nightmare, the teachers themselves become "learning managers" who prepare students to meet the absurd standards. What is lost in the process is education as a connection with human culture and history and with the meaning of human life. The crisis is religious in that education has lost human purpose, and teaching is devoid of faith.

To call for an end to compulsory education does not restore this faith and purpose; it merely represents an open admission of what we already know, namely, that the middle class no longer needs the schools. Middle-class youth have been deschooled for some time now, and this is to their credit, for when the schools cannot provide faith in human purpose to those who desperately need it, it is a sign of good sense that the young turn elsewhere. But when the society at large also fails to provide spiritual sus-
tenance, the only way to turn is inward, and this has proven to
be dangerous, especially to young people with no viable cultural
history and within a society that is rootless and without limits.
The educational crisis is one of faith and culture and moral pur-
pose and not easily overcome through deschooling or other structural
changes.

Goodman fits into the romantic tradition in that he believes
in the goodness of human nature and in the reasonableness of man.
He also believes, as did Rousseau, that the nature of man can be
corrupted or ennobled by his environment. This led Rousseau to
advocate withdrawing children from a harmful social order during
the years of youth in order that they might grow and develop
according to nature. Goodman's response to the corrupting and
demoralizing environment is to change it structurally so that its
educative effect will be positive. Rousseau believes that good
men can unite in a social contract that evolves from and expresses
ethical will. Rousseau does not advocate anarchy, as does Goodman,
not because he distrusts man, but because he believes that the
unity of men in moral principle and purpose represents the acting
out of human dignity and nobility. Goodman rejects the imposition
of political structure with the argument that good men do not need
it, and this divergence in the views of Rousseau and Goodman is an
expression of the historical diversity of movements that have their
roots in romanticism.
The decentralization of society in its ultimate expression is anarchy, and the relevance of the general will in an anarchic society is somewhat difficult to explain. Given the contemporary social order, decentralization is a worthwhile goal in that it means gaining more control, and hence more moral sense of responsibility, over one's life. The decreased belief in moral accountability brought about through the creation of the conditions within which we currently live, may, however, be the result of choice rather than inevitability. Anarchy represents not only an attempt to gain control over one's own affairs, but, in some sense, a rejection of responsibility for what happens to one's fellow man. At this point in time the anarchist alternative of Goodman begins to look not only somewhat like a form of cultural withdrawal from centralization and the omnipotence imposed by technology, but also like an abandonment of concern for others. This is a sort of neo-social Darwinism, a retreat into self-sufficiency that implies no necessary responsibility for anything beyond the immediate and personal. We would be trading the imperatives of technology and belonging for the imperatives of narcissism. We have found that the general will in mass technological society lacks definition and meaning in everyday life. So, too, the general will in anarchic society has only fragmented significance. Schools ideally function to keep the general will alive for all men, and without schools the possibility of a general will seems remote. Since it is the general
will that is the true expression of man's nature and desires, anarchy implies a loss of faith in the possibility of resolving the conflict between individual wills into the expression of general will. It is here, it would seem, that the break between Rousseau and Goodman is most significant. This is not to say that Goodman has abandoned romanticism, merely that he has taken it in another direction. It is this other direction that defines the cause for Goodman's rejection of schools and Rousseau's support of them. Both men attack the society of their day as in conflict with human nature. Both advocate some kind of withdrawal from the society they see as evil. Yet Rousseau seeks a means of uniting men in a social relationship that is in consonance with man's nature, while Goodman seems to say that no such social and political order can or should exist. Rousseau wants to find a way to make man his brother's keeper, and Goodman says that each man must and can keep himself.

Rousseau's concept of general will is most emphatic in its insistence on the shared nature of social responsibility and in its affirmation of the possibility of reconciling society with nature. In our culture, Rousseau and Goodman would agree that the society is not an expression of the general will and is out of tune with man's nature and goodness. What we see around us is not even the expression of particular wills, for the most part, rather the ongoing extension of mindlessness and relativism. At this point, Goodman will settle for the reassertion of particular will
against the organized and unnatural system. Rousseau would say that we need to rediscover the roots of human nature, which are not particularist but general, and seek to live in consonance with that nature. Rousseau would say that the schools are needed to provide youth with the means of discovering and asserting the general will while protecting them from the social milieu which takes no note of human nature but seeks to mold youth to its own purposes.

We see most institutions in terms of our ideologies, and Goodman consequently must hold that schools serve the system that he opposes, and hence are evil. One might also postulate that in a world devoid of community, the schools are the last out-post of potential community. Having community implies a recognition of the fact that all of the institutions will not be totally pure; yet their potential is worth struggling to fulfill. Community implies mutual commitment and risk, and we might discover that risking ourselves for community through schools, though not yielding a bourgeois, clean, safe community, will pay off in other ways. Community implies belief in something other than itself, and schools represent an arena of faith and commitment that can restore us to our culture, our history and to each other.
III. EDGAR Z. FRIEDENBERG

Edgar Z. Friedenberg has developed a social and educational philosophy based on ideological elitism. His initial and pre-dominant concern is with the conformist nature of American egalitarianism. Friedenberg holds that nearly all American social institutions exert strong pressures against the individual and individualism in order to produce an other-directed, conformist, safe citizen. The autonomous, inner-directed person presents a threat to the stability of the social order and is constantly troublesome and disruptive of the status quo. The institutions within the culture are oriented toward both producing and serving the "mass man," offering him token autonomy through choice between mass-produced goods and life styles. For Friedenberg, this is totalitarianism in a new guise in that social and political compulsion and force have merely been replaced by seduction and manipulation.¹

the desire or need to be successful within the limits of well-defined norms. All traces of ethnicity as well as individuality must be erased as a prerequisite to success. "Our melting pot really works, and even the most stupid and vicious of us is beginning to believe that race no longer refers to any meaningful heritage, that Jews share nothing significant in Judaism. This is integration with a vengeance."2 The consequences of this drive toward homogeneity and conformity go beyond the creation of a populus without roots; the mandate for conformity has, according to Friedenberg, produced fear of autonomy and individuality on a total scale. Moral and cultural relativism produces a society where authenticity is met with fear and paranoia. Americans have traded identity for status, and competence for credentials.

Friedenberg maintains that an egalitarian society demands conformity because it fears the rise of an aristocracy. Every institution consequently places a premium on "adjustment," as opposed to individuality. As a social institution the school is no exception, for in it the young are robbed of their rights as citizens and of their dignity as human beings, and they are made to conform to the twin American ideals of success and contentment. The schools themselves have passed through a period of rigidity and excessive, harsh compulsion and have entered on a period of persuasion and subtle coercion in their dealings with youth.

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2Ibid., p. 93.
Friedenberg holds that their emphasis is increasingly directed toward internal conformity as opposed to external uniformity. The guidance counselor has replaced the disciplinarian with a paddle in hand. Maturity is acceptance of the status quo.\textsuperscript{3}

The autonomous individual with a highly-developed sense of himself is a threat to a conformist system; thus schools must insist that such youth develop an objective, rather than a subjective, world view. Educational needs are common needs, not individual needs, as educationist rhetoric would lead us to believe. Individualism is tolerated within the limits of what the society can handle without a great deal of strain. The perceptions of students are trained toward a standardized cognitive structure so that responses to any given situation are predictable and controllable. With the rise of objectivity comes a breakdown in group solidarity and ethnic consciousness. In the public school, "Not only are the people in it more likely to be strangers, they are more likely to be cultural relativists and to feel that they have no right to uphold their own values and folkways, even though they do not really accept any other."\textsuperscript{4} The values that are upheld are instrumental--getting along with others, not standing out, conforming to the wishes of teachers and the expectations of the group.


\textsuperscript{4}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 237.
Strongly held values are out of place in the schools where all points of view are respected and given equal deference; but where the validity of all values is equal, there is no means of knowing what to believe in and no real reason to believe in anything. The problem of value choice is not recognized; there is only the necessity to "communicate."

Friedenberg is opposed to such an educational system, and he believes that the primary function of the schools ought to be the development of individual identity in youth, to give them the tools with which they can interpret their universe.

Regardless of the uses to which any society may put its schools, education has an obligation that transcends its own social functions and society's purposes. That obligation is to clarify for its students the meaning of their experience of life in their society.\(^5\)

The schools do succeed, according to Friedenberg, in creating a common cultural vision, but fail totally in the problem of clarifying experience; that is, the school succeeds in its social function while failing the individual.

Part of the problem, for Friedenberg, is the teachers who control and run the schools. Teachers generally come from a lower-class or lower-middle-class background and are likely to be excessively conformist in their striving for upward social mobility. They are lacking in educational and experiential depth and are anxious about their social status. Teachers are likely, as a

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\(^5\)Friedenberg, *Vanishing Adolescent*, p. 75.
result of their educational and social background, to emphasize form over content and conformity over individuality. They are ambitious but petty. The teaching staff generally "is composed of individuals who have achieved their own basis of security by cautious attention to external norms--and these are not the most generous."6 They tend to identify much more strongly with the needs and rules of the school system than with the passions of the students.

Since both teachers and a majority of public school students have lower-middle-class backgrounds, Friedenberg is upset that "the common man's way of life is what the school settles for."7 He believes that this leads to the denigration of lower-class culture and to the establishment of a single pathway to success and mobility based on lower-middle-class values of conformity and social status. At the other end of the scale, Friedenberg believes that upper-middle-class youth are made to conform to a system whose expectations are far below their potential.

Friedenberg believes that youth, and particularly adolescent youth, are a source of competence and nobility within a conformist and degenerating culture. "As a symbol the cocky adolescent boy stands, a little like Luther, an obstacle to compromise and

6Ibid., p. 125.
7Ibid., p. 111.
accommodation. Adolescent self-esteem, according to Friedenberg, is largely based upon competence, and the development of identity during this period of life depends largely upon the extension of competence. "Competence is the foundation of autonomy; in the adolescence peer-group it is respected in a variety of forms. Respect for competence is a penetrating source of discipline."^9

Competence is, for Friedenberg, not only a source of discipline, but also a basis for the development of character and love. The area in which competence is gained is unimportant; what matters is the self-defining nature of the process of gaining competence and the respect that flows from achievement. This youthful competence is an outrage to a self-conscious and empty adult world, producing suspicion, fear, and distrust in adults. The only outlet for adult fear of youth is in attempting to discredit competence and force conformity to the mediocre standards of adult society. "In our society, a basic clause in the social contract provides that authority based on superior competence or insight must defer to the more popularly acceptable social formulations that it can in good conscience support."^10

What Friedenberg attempts to do is to say that youth form an aristocracy based on competence that is gradually overturned by

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^9Friedenberg, Vanishing Adolescent, p. 60.

^10Friedenberg, Coming of Age in America, p. 187.
an adult world that, because it fears aristocratic principles, insists on mediocrity. Since he believes that competence is essential to the development of strong individual identity, Friedenberg insists that schools ought to increase greatly their emphasis on intellectual competence. We ought to allow the development of an aristocracy of talent and intellect within the schools, just as such an aristocracy develops outside school among adolescents. Yet the schools are not doing this; rather, they are increasingly emphasizing adjustment to group norms and "cooperative" standards of behavior. They push constantly for conformity and social integration at any price. The denial of basic civil rights to students and the constant insistence on conformity to the most petty rules, destroys confidence, identity development, and independence among youth. The democratization of thought teaches that no idea is better than another and that intellectual depth and competence is of no greater value than shallow acquiescence to the mediocre expectations of the system. Youth who rebel against this atmosphere of blandness are treated as problems in "social integration" and not dealt with as authentic human beings. Friedenberg believes that the forces of the schools are strong enough to destroy the adolescent aristocracy of competence and to force acquiescence to the dilute standards of conformity.

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11Friedenberg, Vanishing Adolescent, p. 91.
Those who do conform can expect to achieve social mobility and status as a result. Those who refuse or do not have the means to conform must accept the school's appraisal of their worth.

In this way, the school contributes simultaneously to social mobility and social stratification. It helps to see to it that the kinds of people who get ahead are those who will support the social system it represents; while those who might, through intent or merely by their being, subvert it are left behind as a salutary moral lesson.12

Schools are not blatantly demanding adherence to middle-class tastes and standards, but they do reject the validity of any superiority or taste, requiring the acceptance only of intellectual, cultural, and moral relativism. Thus if a student does possess talent, he must adopt a style of humility in order to emphasize his denial of the notion that his talent legitimizes privilege or authority. He must defer to the system, denying his own worth in order to affirm the system's relativist principles.

Friedenberg has developed a kind of laissez-faire sociology founded on his fear of the loss of freedom in modern society. He says, for example, "At bottom, I suggest, is nothing less than the question of what it costs in individual freedom and dignity to provide justice and equality in a mass society."13 He has written much on what he feels the costs are, but little on why the price may be worth paying. Friedenberg seems to say, in the end, that

12Friedenberg, Coming of Age in America, p. 49.
while justice and equality for all people are noble ideals, the loss in freedom that we are experiencing in order to maintain an egalitarian society is excessive. That he poses the question in such a way implies that one is gained at the loss of the other.

Friedenberg believes that the school, in its desire to force equality, has destroyed individuality and freedom:

Our ideological commitment to equality of opportunity implies to us that the school is obliged to devote itself to a continuous search on behalf of that equality, while defining opportunity in such a way as to place it beyond the reach of privilege. It prevents us from seriously considering that any individual or special group may make us richer simply by being what it is.¹⁴

Friedenberg here mixes the concept of individuality with that of group identity, sounding simultaneously like both a cultural pluralist and an individualist. Yet he knows that while one can philosophically be a laissez-faire individualist, casually affirming pluralism, it is this very emphasis on individualism that has led to the breakdown of group and ethnic cohesion. When the ethnic, religious, and cultural barriers to social freedom break down in the name of individualism, group solidarity is threatened and begins to dissipate. The group solidarity is maintained at high cost in terms of limiting the individual freedom of each member of the group, and in general this is what Friedenberg has argued against.

He holds that individuality is sacrificed for group solidarity in primitive cultures. This idea, if stated in the

¹⁴Ibid., p. 218.
reverse, makes more sense in terms of understanding the current dilemma in modern society. We have, as Puritan descendants, placed total emphasis on individuality and have chosen to sacrifice group solidarity to that end, and only recently have we come to begin understanding the price that was paid. Friedenberg thinks that identity and individuality are synonymous and that a man is defined in terms of what he does. The more he does, or better yet, the more "worthwhile" the work he does, the better his security and sense of identity. This is merely a sophisticated modern version of the Protestant ethic. One of the central ironies of modern times is that so much individualism could produce such a conformist, mass society. One could legitimately reason that the intentional denigration of group solidarity as experienced in ethnic and religious communities was a central demand of the quest for an individual, free American identity. Now that the inner-directed, authentic, powerful, American, rugged individualists have created a world free from "primitive" group solidarity, the youth of the country are more alienated than ever. The only group left in this country that has not acceded to the demands of individualism is that of the blacks, who retain cohesion as a people and who are not troubled by identity crises and pervasive alienation, except as the total group suffers it at the hands of a culture that gives blacks no real place in it. It is just the "warm sense of belonging" that Friedenberg speaks of that might, if truly felt by middle-class white youth, mitigate the sense of alienation, the urge to conform.
A distinction needs to be made between solidarity and conformity, terms which Friedenberg consistently fails to clarify in his own writing. He leads one to believe that a well-developed sense of identity is blocked both by "primitive" cultures which emphasize group solidarity and by advanced cultures which demand conformity on different terms. He fails to establish the connection between the creation of a world where each man stands alone in an attempt to discover himself and a world in which the definition of self depends only on one's being accepted as a member of the tribe, group, or community. The tribal or "primitive" social system is not conformist, as Friedenberg says it is; rather, it pre-establishes the structural and functional outlines of identity while permitting the individual significant latitude for individuality and personality. True, identity is created within certain moral, religious, occupational and cultural confines, but it is exactly the negation of limits that leads to alienation. The state of alienation is a condition of being adrift in a world without shores, boundaries, or directional markers. It is life without limits, and it is the price paid for individualism. If every man is free to set his own limits and to define himself in terms that do not necessarily imply moral accountability or cultural obligation to a group, then the condition of his freedom is the loss of solidarity and the resulting feeling of aloneness. Erich Fromm has shown in *Escape from Freedom* that one result of this condition is a fear and insecurity that finds resolution and mediation in conformity. The distinction
between solidarity and conformity is that conformity is a free choice and solidarity is a free gift. Tribal cultures force identity, and individualist cultures permit alienation.

Friedenberg's notion of competence is also suspect. He sees the development of competence as essential to the formation of identity in adolescence. "In a world as empirical as ours, a youngsters who does not know what he is good at will not be sure what he is good for; he must know what he can do in order to know who he is."¹⁵ One could, for example, be good at stealing cars and still have a secure sense of identity because of this competence. This position is deficient on many fronts. Can any task or competence be free of social and moral implications, and, if it cannot, then are these factors simply irrelevant in the formation of identity? Is the value of the man related to the degree of competence or to the social estimation of the value of the work or task? Is a man merely a function of what he does, or does he have intrinsic worth?

Here Friedenberg again presents a superficially Calvinist position and offers no clarification or acknowledgment of the difficulties of the stance he takes. The conflicts of youth in America are surely more complex than this argument for competence reveals. Perhaps, as Veber, Riesman, and others have pointed out, the seeds of alienation are sown by a system within which a man is

¹⁵Friedenberg, Vanishing Adolescent, p. 40.
defined in such a way that what he is good at determines what he is good for, and alienation is not caused by simple failure to be good at something. Or, as Goodman, also a Calvinist, says, one of the sources of estrangement among youth may be the fact that the society simply fails to provide enough opportunities to be good at something worthwhile. Furthermore, one wonders how Friedenberg would appraise the worth of a man who is actually good at nothing. In some measure, the moral worth of a society is tested by its response to those who have failed the society itself. Again, one of the central problems of modern society is that it can measure competence, but it cannot judge worth.

Friedenberg's Calvinism results in an unreasonably conventional view of what he means by individualism, freedom, and identity. He went out into the public schools and gave a sentence-completion test in order to determine the effects of guidance policies on the self-image of students, and the results are much less interesting than is Friedenberg's interpretation of them. The responses of two of the boys who took the test, Kurt and Stanley, represent hope and failure to Friedenberg. Their reactions to several of the questions are particularly interesting in the light of Friedenberg's analysis of the boys. Responses to selected statements about the school are as follows:
Question  | Kurt | Stanley |
--- | --- | --- |
A good teacher is one who:  | minds his own business | explains things well |
If something is called school policy here at school, it means: | something to some and nothing to others | whatever has been decided and enforced |
The rules around here are really made by: | me | the board |
The nicest thing about school is: | the sexy girls | the things I learn here |
Nobody but a fool would: | spend money on Peter [another student] | insult teachers |
Our student government: | STINKS | is a good organization |
What I hate most around here: | these tests | wasting time in class when homework could be done.\(^{16}\) |

It is clear from these responses that Kurt is realistic and that he is in trouble. Stanley, on the other hand, is a high-school principal in training. Kurt is attempting to make it on his own, while Stanley has internalized the ideology of the school and made its values his own. Kurt has a sense of humor, and Stanley sounds like a serious little bureaucrat. Kurt is obviously the more interesting, though perhaps troublesome, of the two; and while one could easily anticipate the rest of Stanley's responses, Kurt engages the imagination, and one knows that he is

\(^{16}\)Ibid., pp. 150-55.
going to present some surprises. The responses of the boys to questions about the future are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Kurt</th>
<th>Stanley</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When I'm thirty I expect to be:</td>
<td>bum</td>
<td>successful in my chosen field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I think what the future will probably be like:</td>
<td>a soldier</td>
<td>I wonder if I'll like it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In picking my life's work, the army the most important thing is:</td>
<td></td>
<td>that I like doing it 17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here the boys reveal their expectations in terms of how they rank within the school and social structure as a whole. Kurt's expectations are probably realistic, and he seems already to sense that the mark of low status is upon him in spite of his good qualities. To entice Kurt to comply with the school in order to realize the American Dream would be absurd. Stanley is a bona fide winner, and he knows it. Without knowing what he is going to do with his life, he knows that he is already marked as a success and that the mark is permanent. Stanley's is a world of optimism and plasticity. Two questions related to the family and society are significant:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Kurt</th>
<th>Stanley</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brothers and sisters:</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>should get along harmoniously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-class people are:</td>
<td>fine</td>
<td>the average class of people 18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17Ibid.
18Ibid.
Kurt either confirms the existence of brothers and sisters, or he affirms their value by his answer, while Stanley gives the schooled response of the personnel manager. Kurt identifies with his roots in the working class, but Stanley is already achieving a degree of detachment. Kurt knows he is staying in the working class, while Stanley has already escaped; and his response is sociological, not personal. Most important are the responses related to the self:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Kurt</th>
<th>Stanley</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It's human nature to:</td>
<td>make love</td>
<td>want to better yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kids need:</td>
<td>a good kick in the can</td>
<td>understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's no use to:</td>
<td>try to stay out of trouble</td>
<td>wish for something you cannot have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm not really very much like:</td>
<td>what I am saying the average student at school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stanley is the consummate Calvinist, striving, modest, detached, practical, and confident, while Kurt cries out with passion and anguish. Kurt seems to say that he is not what the society thinks he is, that our judgment of him is wrong, that hurt and pain are still felt within his tough-guy soul.

Friedenberg misses the point. In his analysis of Kurt, he says,

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19 Ibid.
Kurt will fight anybody who comes close enough to his trap hoping to get him out and clean him up a little. In any case, most of the people he knows think he ought to be there; and even if they don't, they don't know how to get him out without hurting him worse, and they don't want to risk tangling with him. Kurt agrees: why should they?20

But Kurt does not agree—simply because he rejects the sort of "help" that would turn him into Stanley!

Stanley's sense of reality is so acute that he clearly perceives the absolute necessity of a total denial of himself and of complete acquiescence to the ongoing system. Friedenberg, however, sees him as the darling of the group:

Stanley is not really supposed to be possible. The modern world is too harsh; there is too much confusion and too little love. Young people today cannot be expected to survive it with a healthy and realistic sense of their own worth and of the realities they must deal with. A boy as intelligent as Stanley must know this, but he is anyway. Of all possible emotional states, this kind of health—this steeliness of nerve and vision, combined with sensitivity and warmth—is surely the rarest. There Stanley sits, in his own habitat and his own skin, at ease in his environment and completely aware of where it leaves off and he begins.21

Friedenberg again is off the mark, for Stanley is totally unreal; he sounds like a page out of Horatio Alger. He is the modern boy—well-adjusted, realistic, healthy, acquiescent and totally safe. Who could "risk tangling" with Stanley, the plastic boy? The school serves no function for Stanley other than to certify his acceptability. This kid is the end product of the

20 Ibid., p. 156.
21 Ibid., p. 157.
conformist and homogenizing forces of which Friedenberg has complained. Kurt is struggling to define himself in terms other than those prescribed by the system, and Friedenberg abandons him. If Stanley is Horatio Alger, then surely Kurt is Billy Budd. That Friedenberg chooses Stanley over Kurt reveals his reluctance to face up to the real moral and spiritual crisis of the schools, namely, how can they return soul and spirit and humanity to Stanley, and how can they make it possible for Kurt to survive and succeed?

Friedenberg does not seem even to recognize individualism when he sees it. The very concept of individualism, as it has evolved in the American historical context, is open to criticism. As Philip Slater has pointed out, the character of individualism is circular. The quest for freedom and individualism resulted in a world that destroyed ethnicity, religion, group solidarity and stability—all prime sources of identity. Man became free, but alone. As he then sought to reestablish a sense of self and identity, he pushed the individualist creed even further, ending up with a house in the suburbs just like every other house (but separate and alone) and a democratic family complete with a weekly meeting at which individuality, rather than solidarity and belonging, was emphasized. He separated himself further and further from his fellow man by increasing his isolation through technological independence; and ironically he created a society in which, though

free of his neighbor, he was so much like him, that his freedom was absurd. To call, therefore, as Friedenberg does, for increased emphasis on individualism and to argue that the world is too conformist, is to avoid the essential historical connection between individualism, alienation, and conformity.

The idea of alienation is a Romantic notion and derives from a belief that man has a natural self from which he becomes divorced. The Enlightenment emphasis on individual worth is also derived from Romanticism, though it is not necessarily identical with the idea of individualism as we now know it. The flaw in Friedenberg's thinking is contained in the convergence of these two ideas in modern times to form a distinct historical reality. The romantic view of the individual as it grew out of the Enlightenment represented an attempt to rescue the individual from the totalitarian demands of the Church and state. The modern extension of this view, in its social-Darwinist form, is an attempt to free man from accountability to his fellow man, which is not consonant with romantic individualism. Friedenberg's view tends to be more neo-Calvinist than romantic in that he believes that man is held back in his development by the demands of others and by what he considers to be the leveling effects of egalitarianism.

The romantics of the Enlightenment believed that alienation was a necessary condition of life in the social state. By this they meant that when man began to live in social groups, he would
necessarily create institutions and abstractions to replace the more natural relations of the primitive state. The emphasis is not on man's being less free, for in many ways the life of civilization made him more free and more safe. He was simply subject to artificially-contrived demands and a less natural way of life. The price was worth paying unless it became outrageously abusive of man's natural self. Rousseau complained that this had indeed happened, that society had gone too far from nature and that the price was no longer worth paying. He argued not to be more free, but to be more natural.

Friedenberg, on the other hand, holds that alienation is the result of a lack of freedom rather than an abuse of nature. He would tolerate a more unnatural state in the name of increased individualism. He ignores the paradoxical proposition that individualism may have become the means of modern man's estrangement. The solution, rather than increased freedom, may lie in increased commitment to the group, be it ethnic, communal, or religious, which means less individual freedom and more solid identity.

Friedenberg wants to end compulsory education and permit those who have academic ambition to have the freedom to choose to go to school. He believes in providing other opportunities for those who are not academically inclined. Schools would have the right to accept or reject a student, who would have to measure up to the school's standards of competence. One can easily discern
the consequences of such a policy in a society that demands educational credentials as a prerequisite for social status and monetary reward—namely the creation of an elite based on school success even more rigid than that which the present system has created. The only consolation provided by Friedenberg's system is that of knowing that the academic aristocracy is "academically competent." Until competence in all areas is equally rewarded in terms of status and economics, advocacy of such a system must be seen as elitist, undemocratic and unromantic. Rousseau saw the necessity of democratizing the access to education without regard to special competence in order to provide all men with the means of escaping ignorance and poverty. Friedenberg wants now to close this opportunity. We seem to be at a crucial point in education at which we need to decide whether we are willing to make the schools work for all people, as they now work for the middle class, or whether we will close access to them for those we can label academically untalented. The point here is that not all middle-class youth are academically talented or competent but that the educational system is made to work for them in spite of this. One possible choice open to us is to open this system of guaranteed success to more people.

Rousseau would maintain that a romantic seeks to make the schools a force for cultural cohesion and the creation of common cultural assumptions necessary to the formation of identity and
general will. The elitist position of Friedenberg sees only certain individuals as academically talented and educable, which, in the final analysis, is a denial of our common nature and of the most noble possibilities in man.

The issue today is not one of competence versus the destruction or alienation of competence, for only a competent people could prevent such a problem-ridden social order from collapse. We now face the necessity of placing limits on our competence, of forcing that competence within a moral framework that makes it accountable to more men. We need to develop a common historical, philosophical, and moral consensus in order to place competence within the control of all men. Competence within such a social milieu is not a precious commodity, a source of the paranoia of scarcity, but a human attribute within a context of humanity and generosity.
IV. JOHN HOLT AND JONATHAN KOZOL

The two writers chosen for inclusion in this chapter, John Holt and Jonathan Kozol, are representative of two significant directions or movements in modern educational criticism. Their positions are archetypes of two broad positions, namely the concern with technique and process in the case of Holt and the free school movement in the case of Kozol. Holt is included because his writing is more extensive than that of others, such as Herbert Kohl, who represent essentially the same position. Kozol's work is included because he is a free-school advocate who is also a free-school critic, and because he has a background in public school education.

John Holt's criticism of American schools is essentially a restatement of the previously-outlined belief that they are conformist, artificial, based on fear and compulsion, and generally bad places for children. His approach is more anthropological than philosophical; his arguments derive from continuous observation of schools and children, and these observations have led him to believe that a naturally curious and intelligent child is, in most cases, gradually transformed by the school into a fearful, dull, conforming adult. The mechanism by which this metamorphosis
is achieved is fear. Holt's premise is that the schools create an environment within which the fear of failure and disapproval is the single most influential motivating force affecting children. Within the schools, failure is never acceptable or honorable, in either a personal or an educative sense. Children who fail must internalize failure; that is to say that they must begin to see themselves as failures. They are rarely permitted to see failure as an avenue to further learning, which, in fact, it often is. Success, to the schools, means "right answers"; and failure means "wrong answers." Fear, for Holt, is also directly related to conformity in that the child who "behaves well"—that is, in concert with the expectations of the school—is rewarded and judged a "success"; while the child who does not, is said to be developing bad character and is destined to become a "failure." The creation of fear in children is thus a means of controlling behavior and keeping people in line.

Children respond to such a system by adjusting to its expectations in several ways. Those who have the desire to conform and the means to meet the system's terms simply learn the correct behavior and the correct answers, and they get by. They do so, however, at the expense of their innate curiosity, courage, integrity, spontaneity and creativity. Those who wish to adjust to the expectations of the schools but who do not have the means, learn to compensate in other ways. They develop, Holt says, tremendously
ingenious systems for getting "right" answers that they do not know. Holt says that children develop these strategies primarily because they know that "right answers" pay off in the schools, while true learning seldom does; but the relentless search for answers that will please, results in a total perversion of educational purpose and can lead children to the verge of mental disorder.

The strategies of most of these kids have been consistently self-centered, self-protective, aimed above all else at avoiding trouble, embarrassment, punishment, disapproval, or loss of status. This is particularly true of the ones who have a tough time in school.¹

One safe method of reducing or eliminating the fear of failure is to attempt to fail; thus the student can turn failure into success. Schools do drive some students to this absurd point of fear and terror. Failing can also be a strategy for opening up success; thus a student intentionally gives a wrong answer in order to get the exasperated teacher to give the right one.

Holt maintains that the schools' notion that their duty is to teach children to think, is total nonsense. Through extensive observation of learning in infants and young children, Holt has come to the belief that the methods and styles of learning that develop naturally in all children are not only extremely effective but also better than the methods of learning to which they are forced to adapt in schools.

The child is curious. He wants to make sense out of things, find out how things work, gain competence and control over himself and his environment, do what he can see other people doing. He is open and receptive . . . He is experimental . . . He is bold . . . And he is patient. He can tolerate an extraordinary amount of uncertainty, confusion, ignorance and suspense. He does not have to have instant meaning in any new situation. School is not a place that gives much time, or opportunity, or reward, for this kind of thinking and learning.2

This concept of a natural desire and ability to learn is based on observation and faith that man's essential nature is that of a learner. Natural learning proceeds from the interests and desires of the child and reaches outward to explore the world and assimilate its revelations.

Holt continues his argument by insisting that natural learning is the only true learning. It follows that schools which endeavor to "teach" anything to children must do so through the use of compulsion or coercion. Holt finds this reprehensible and futile. Coercion produces fear, and fear blocks learning. Children generally should be permitted to explore the world at their own pace and in ways of their own choosing. The teacher becomes a travel agent.

According to Holt, the overall structure of the school system ought to reflect the absence of coercion. Thus compulsory school-attendance laws should be abolished, as should any notion

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of a fixed curriculum dictated by a school board or by teachers. Children should use their time away from school to explore the world around them. Within the school, children should serve as mutual teachers, while the regular classroom teacher maintains a discreet distance.

The general impact of Holt's work is directed toward creating a deeper and more generalized faith in the natural goodness of children and in their willingness and ability to learn without coercion by adults. In a sense, Holt is the protector of youth in the face of a society that has gone mad in the amount of attention it pays to children. Holt is saying that we ought to manipulate them less, and trust them more. The intense concern with children in this country, he says, creates a condition within which it seems desirable to exercise increasing control over each detail of their lives. Out of concern to help them grow up well, we structure their world so tightly and rigidly that we leave them no room to grow at all. Holt argues for an acceptance of a romantic view of human nature. He goes beyond telling us to trust children; he believes that we ought to trust in nature. He is much like Rousseau in this, though when he attempts to apply his romanticism to the schools, he encounters difficulty.

In his desire to allow for the unencumbered natural growth of the self and to avoid what he considers to be the coercive structure of the present educational system, Holt adopts the
position of a relativist with regard to the role of a teacher. Is 
teacher-as-travel-agent significantly different from teacher-as-cop, 
for example? Holt asks the teacher to become a neutral entity in 
the classroom process, a non-being, a travel agent. "When we go 
to a travel agent, he does not tell us where to go . . . we choose, 
not he . . . He does not have to take the trip with us."\(^3\) The 
greatest problem with the teacher-as-travel-agent image, and with 
most teachers, is just that—they do not have to take the trip 
with us. If the teacher were committed to the outcome of the "trip," 
if he were physically, spiritually and morally engaged in concern 
for its outcome, if he could not feel himself detached from the 
humanity of his students, if he could not find the means to divorce 
their destiny from his own, perhaps then schools would be better 
places. What we need now, contrary to Holt, is commitment, not 
detachment; human unity in ethical purpose, not relativism.

Holt believes that the solution to the conditions of fear, 
coercion and the rise of destructive values in the schools is to 
abandon all values and turn to technique—*How Children Learn*, *How 
Children Fail*, *What Do I Do Monday?* His concern with process in 
education leads Holt into a great deal of writing on specific 
strategies and techniques for teaching. His reluctance to believe 
that teachers produce fear forces him to the assertion that bad 

\(^3\)John Holt, *What Do I Do Monday?*, a Delta Book (New York: 
technique produces fear. This shift in emphasis from a human, value
problem to a technical problem is an attempt to remove education
from the realm of moral enterprise and make it a technological
process. Holt, by choosing the emphasis on technique, thus frees
teachers from moral responsibility for the outcome of their teaching
as it is reflected in the lives of students. Teaching and learning
become isolated and isolating activities, free from coercion, but
also free from accountability. This process emphasizes the inde­
pendence of one man from the destiny of another and may lead to
an even more rootless and fragmented world, for no cohesive force is
necessary to the workings of a technological system beyond those
necessary to assure its smooth functioning and continuity.

Holt's stated opposition to compulsory education⁴ becomes
confused with his opposition to the rise of an intellectual
aristocracy. He argues that,

Human experience, knowledge, culture is everyone's. No
one ought to have to prove that he deserves it or has a
right to it. It ought to have been used for a great up­
ward leveling, to make a universal aristocracy of wisdom
and learning.⁵

Providing democratic access to human knowledge and culture is one
of the fundamental arguments for public education for all citizens,
however, and the rise of an intellectual elite is more likely to

⁴John Holt, The Under-Achieving School, a Delta Book (New

occur with an abandonment of compulsory education. Holt fails to deal with this apparent paradox in his thought. The rejection of compulsory education, for Holt, mirrors America's historical rejection of authority, compulsion, and absolutes. The alternative, as we have come to see, may be a society with no common ethical consensus, no limits, and no cultural cohesion. A world of no limits and of no moral imperatives yields an absurd freedom within which each man is alone and each has denied his roots in history and culture. Cultural and historical continuity are essential to identity and a sense of wholeness, and public schools for all provide democratic access to this essential source of identity. To be against compulsory education reveals one's willingness to admit that common roots are unnecessary to modern existence. Holt's position on this issue places him on the side of those forces which have caused us to become more separate, existence more fragmented, and individual men more alienated.

Jonathan Kozol's first book, *Death at an Early Age*, is currently in its fourteenth printing, and its overwhelming popularity raises several questions both about the current state of education in America and about Kozol's philosophical perspective on education itself. This book is a modern muckraking account of the failures and evils of the Boston Public School System. Kozol "exposes" the

racism of the school system and of the many teachers within the school in which he worked. The book not only seeks to expose this racism but rests on the implicit assumption that by revealing the evil, the author contributes to its elimination. In this case, however, such an assumption seems illegitimate for two reasons. First, Kozol passed up countless opportunities to oppose the racism in the Boston schools when physically present in them as a teacher; and one must at least question whether, if men choose to write books rather than to act, the racism within American public schools is likely to be overcome. Secondly, to believe that he can "expose" racism in an American educational institution in 1967 is simply naive and represents, on Kozol's part, more an admission of his own ignorance than a novel revelation of evil social conditions. These two propositions require further elaboration.

One of the first racist teachers whom Kozol encounters in his school is an overbearing woman he refers to as the Reading Teacher. In her manner, her speech, and her relations with the students, she consistently exudes racism and preferential treatment toward white students. Of his relationship with her, Kozol says,

I came into that school as a provisional teacher in October. It was four months almost at the end of February, before I had the courage to begin to speak to her with honesty.  

Kozol's choice of the word honesty is significant, for he should

have been speaking to her with outrage; yet he continued to treat
her with extreme politeness, deference, and timidity while she
went on harming black children. Nonetheless, Kozol regards his
personal conversion to honesty as praiseworthy and so, in some small
measure, diverts the focus of attention to his own minor psycho-
logical improvements. Kozol may indeed have had reason to fear the
reading teacher and to acquiesce to her, for in the politics of
the public schools, such individuals can sometimes make life dif-
ficult for a new teacher.

Other situations developed, however, in which Kozol failed
to act and which involved no one but himself and his students. He
describes such a situation by saying,

One day something happened to dramatize to me, even more
powerfully than anything yet, just what a desperate situ-
ation we were really in. What happened was that a window
whose frame had rotted was blown right out of its sashes
by a strong gust of wind and began to fall into the audi-
torium, just above my children's heads. I had noticed
that window several times before and I had seen that its
frame was rotted, but there were so many other things
equally rotted or broken in the school building that it
didn't occur to me to say anything about it. 8

Kozol's point, quite naturally, is that the physical conditions of
the school are dangerous to the children and that, because the
system does not care about black children, these conditions are
permitted to exist. Furthermore, he maintains that when such con-
ditions are general and pervasive, one becomes accustomed to them
and quickly loses the will to resist them. He mentions, however,

8Ibid., p. 31.
that he had noticed the window and that he had failed to report it. It would seem that a teacher who genuinely cared about his students would report it or would get a hammer and some nails and fix it himself. This last solution seems never to have occurred to Kozol. It is his passivity from the outset that is morally outrageous.

A second such incident occurred after the window had fallen in. Kozol's classroom was built out of makeshift partitions and standing blackboards.

One day I saw that one of them was wobbling badly—tottering—and it looked to me as if it could very easily tip over. Two days went by. On the third day, the Reading Teacher was getting ready to do a demonstration English lesson and she began to turn the blackboard, pushing it from one side with one hand. The entire unit tipped forward suddenly, then crashed downward toward the children sitting two yards off. It slammed down with a violent impact upon a desk in the first row... The child at that desk missed getting her skull smashed in by about two and a half inches.9

Here again Kozol has seen impending disaster and has neither told anyone about it nor done anything himself to remedy the problem. He consistently chooses the role of "injustice collector" when a man of concern would not have found it difficult to act.

Kozol's passivity was evident before he even entered the Boston Public Schools. During the summer before he began teaching, he had worked as a tutor in a Boston church. Shortly after his classes had begun, he was advised to close the enrollment in his class of fifth-graders. At that time, an older brother of one of

9Ibid., p. 90.
his pupils showed up and asked each week thereafter whether he could be allowed to come in and learn to read. Kozol refused. He says of this sixteen-year-old youth,

He could have been out playing, earning money, driving a car, doing anything he pleased. Instead he listened outside a volunteer tutor's makeshift class and at the end of each week he would ask me if there was any chance of someone's dropping out so that he could get in to take the empty place.10

This incident reveals not only Kozol's willingness to passively accept the "rules" of the organization, but demonstrates how little compassion he found in himself for the plight of this young man. To refuse him entry to the class, in effect to refuse him literacy, week after week, would require a tremendous amount of insensitivity. Surely Kozol could have simply opened the door to him and said nothing to anyone, or he could have at least pleaded the young man's case to those in charge of the program. In the face of a strong and painful need, Kozol failed a human being totally and went on to write a book about it.

Kozol recounts the experience of witnessing one of his pupils, Steven, receiving a beating at the school:

I have said how little he was. Sixty pounds isn't very heavy. He was skinny, with tiny arms, and he couldn't have been more than four feet tall. He had light-brown skin and a Red Sox baseball jersey. He had terrified, tiny little hopeless eyes. He had on corduroy pants, which were baggy. He had on basketball sneakers which looked a few sizes too large . . . 11

10Ibid., p. 48.
11Ibid., p. 15.
After describing the appearance of the little boy in terms of such deep sympathy and pathos, Kozol tells how he was finally made to take a severe beating. Kozol watched, knowing that the boy was frail, pathetic, and undeserving. Kozol's description of the incident reveals both his descriptive talent and his total failure of nerve.

Kozol reveals these incidents in order to make a case against the school system. This case is fairly made, though the racism and cruelty of ghetto schools is news only to Kozol and a few others. That he believes that the schools are this way because the public does not know what goes on in them is an absurdity that begins to make some sense only when it is realized that Kozol comes from an all-white, upper-middle-class background, that he has had an European education and that it is he who is ignorant of the condition of blacks in America. The really tragic irony of Kozol's book and of his thinking is that many books have been written about the black experience in America and its schools; yet books have not solved the problem—the sort of acts of courage in which a man stands alone and resists injustice and cruelty in his own realm of influence and action, the kinds of acts that Kozol consistently refused to perform as a teacher.

That Kozol was eventually fired from his teaching position for using a Langston Hughes poem in his classroom served only to make him something of a white-liberal folk hero. His experiences and his reflections on them seem to raise passivity and ineffectu-
ality to the level of virtues. Somehow the message that was conveyed by this book was that teaching in the public schools is impossible, that a man of sensitivity cannot be effective, nor can he survive in the schools.

Kozol proposes that the racism is institutional, which it is, as well as personal; but he attributes it to other persons and not to himself. This man's passive racism, his willingness to acquiesce to conditions and activities that were fundamentally racist, his unwillingness to resist on many occasions, makes him an accomplice and an oppressor rather than a liberator. His book may serve to assuage his personal guilt, but it is not what black people need. Whites tend to read books of this sort and to grieve for the plight of blacks in a quiet, ineffectual way; then they admit, along with Kozol, that the situation is hopeless. His emphasis on his powerlessness to change the conditions within the school appeals to the mentality of many whites who wish to hear that change is impossible so that they can continue to do nothing but collect and analyze injustices. Kozol chose not to act, but to write, and he has provided an eloquent model for those who choose to remain passive critics.

After leaving the Boston Public Schools, Kozol helped to found a free school in the Roxbury area in which he had formerly taught. His recent book, *Free Schools*, describes his experiences in establishing this community school; and in this book, Kozol reveals his new face, that of an enthusiastic advocate of the free-
school alternative in education. He espouses free schools for black and poor people in American cities and is extremely critical of those kinds of rural free schools in which the children from wealthy white upper-class homes find an alternative to boredom by making birch-bark canoes and engaging in sensitivity sessions. This kind of free school, he feels, has little relevance to the needs of the poor and the blacks who, for the most part, remain trapped in the poverty of urban ghettos. Counter-culture schools represent an attempt to escape responsibility for and commitment to those segments of the population whom the educational system has been failing all along and who experience this failure most deeply.

Kozol's premise is that a small free school dedicated to its students, can succeed where the public schools have failed. What this means to him is that the free school will do essentially what the public school is supposed to do, namely teach the kinds of subjects and skills that blacks and other minorities need in order to meet or defeat the system on its own terms. This means that in such a school, the curriculum remains essentially the same as that of the public school, and that the objectives of the free school are to equip students to get jobs or to get into college. Kozol is upset by the segment of the free-school movement that is so dogmatic in its desire to be "open" and non-manipulative that it fails to teach hard skills. This is the same area in which the public schools have failed blacks. Kozol feels that it is more revolutionary to get a poor black student into college than to teach
him to make Indian headbands, and in this criticism of much of the free-school movement, he is perceptive and accurate.

Associated with the counter-culture alternative in free schools is the belief that all attempts at direct teaching are essentially coercive and manipulative, and that learning results only from free exploration and never from conscious efforts to instruct. This idea is a kind of ultimate extension of John Holt's writing on natural learning combined with a political ideology that sees teaching as totalitarian manipulation. Kozol rejects this view, saying,

...there has been too much uncritical adherence in this movement to the unexamined notion that you can't teach anything. It is just not true that the best teacher is the grown-up who most successfully pretends that he knows nothing.12

Kozol now argues for a school run by people dedicated to providing students with the tools necessary for survival in the society. He does not mean "survival" in the same sense as it is understood by middle-class readers of The Whole Earth Catalogue, but survival in terms of escaping ignorance, poverty and oppression. Survival means gaining the skills necessary to become a doctor or a lawyer, not a belt-maker living on a commune in Colorado, engaged in "doing his own thing." The ideal of survival is gaining the ability to control one's own life, to better the life of one's fellow men, without being co-opted by the organized system or

freaking out in hippie irresponsibility. The role of the teacher, then is a classical one:

I believe in a school, as well, in which effective adults do not try to seem less powerful than, in reality, they are. I believe in a school, therefore, in which the teacher does not strive to simulate the status or condition either of an accidental resource-person, tangental consciousness, wandering mystic or movable reading-lab, but comes right out, in full view of the children, with all of the richness, humor, desperation, rage, self-contradiction, strength and pathos which he would reveal to other grown-ups.\(^\text{13}\)

Kozol now sees the ideology of weakness and ineffectuality as an affront to blacks and others who strive for and need to be extraordinarily effective in order to survive. "I think that we must be prepared to strive with all our hearts to be strong teachers, efficacious adults, unintimidated leaders and straightforward and strong-minded provocations in the lives of children.\(^\text{14}\)

Kozol wants a free school that is neither pseudo-revolutionary nor "spontaneous" in the sense that it is permitted to fail. He attacks bourgeois revolutionaries who discuss social problems in the abstract and, because of their own relative affluence, are able to ignore the real problems of suffering human beings. He also opposes the ineffectual free-school founders who would rather see their work fail than corrupt themselves by imposing structure and demands on themselves and their students. These kinds of

\(^\text{13}\)Ibid., p. 58.

\(^\text{14}\)Ibid., p. 61.
schools generally fail quickly, and Kozol wants to avoid the self-
flagellation of failure that many in the movement seem to find
pleasurable. He says,

There has to be a way to find pragmatic competence,
internal strength and ethical passion all in the same
process. This is the only kind of revolution that can
possibly transform the lives of people in the land in
which we live and in the time in which we are now liv­ing.15

The most interesting aspect of Kozol's writing is the
manner in which he seems to be able to divorce himself from his
ideology. In his first book he writes like a liberal and acts like
a racist. In his second book he writes like a radical, while what
he has done is to found a school based on pragmatism. His activities
seem always to be to the right of his rhetoric. The reader is faced
with the further problem of attempting to discern who the real
Jonathan Kozol actually is—the racist, the liberal, the pragmatist,
or the radical. His second book is a persuasive attack on exactly
the sort of person he was when he wrote the first book—weak, inef­
factual, and without passion, character or full commitment. As
such, one is forced to assume that Kozol now has changed to the
point where he believes in the pragmatic principles on which his
free school is based, despite his past and despite his rhetoric.

Operating a pragmatic free school for blacks in Boston
such as Kozol has done, depends on a somewhat questionable assumption.

15 Ibid., p. 45.
Kozol believes that the public schools deny blacks the skills needed to get good jobs and to get into college. The free school teaches these skills and, according to Kozol's assumption, thus provides access to mobility. This argument holds up only if one assumes that the racism of the schools is not reflected in the other social institutions. It is possible, however, that the schools, by not providing blacks with the educational background that leads to social mobility, merely make it easier for other, equally racist institutions to justify their rejection of blacks. That is to say that once blacks gain adequate educational credentials, the burden of screening them out of white society will simply shift to other institutions. If the total society is racist, and not just the schools, then freeing blacks from the schools does not solve the problem; it merely offers false hope and further obscures the issue.

Since Kozol's basic educational philosophy is pragmatic, and since his pedagogical orientation is basically progressive, he has not departed significantly from the historical principles on which public education in this country is based. This being true, his free school is, in methodology, a good public school, except that it is small, separate, and closed. For this reason, its impact is limited to very few people, and the overwhelming majority of blacks and poor people remain dependent and will continue to remain dependent on the public schools. What remains to be done is what Kozol failed to do in the first place, namely to make the public schools into free schools of the type he now so strongly
advocates. Kozol's abandonment of the public alternative occurred before he arrived at his present philosophical position, and he was never able to make a genuine attempt to be a strong, effective, passionate, competent public school teacher. If the public schools had only a handful of the sort of teachers Kozol now wants in his free school, there would be a great deal of hope for all black people, not just a very few, and hope as well for redeeming the idea and reality of public schools.
V. CONCLUSION

The romantic movement of the eighteenth century was a response to the inner decay of social institutions. Form and convention had replaced the vitality of living cultural forms. The intellectuals of the period, particularly Voltaire, Diderot, and Rousseau, were aware of this weakening of the prevailing institutions, but it was Rousseau who provided a philosophy which revealed an alternative that was also an opening of possibilities to increasing numbers of men. Rousseau's romanticism turned man inward, showed him that the strengthening of his culture depended upon human attributes rather than increasingly perfected social forms and institutions. The improvement of the institutions, for Rousseau, lay in making them increasingly reflective of human will, ethical choice, and acceptance of a common humanity.

The analysis of the schools and society by the modern romantic critics of American education is essentially similar to that of Rousseau and the eighteenth-century romantics. They hold that the school is losing its strength as a vital institution, that it has begun to betray its original purposes; and in some cases, they hold that the school should be abandoned. Their criticism has
reached the academic community in education and has been reflected in the works of many contemporary historians of education. Henry J. Perkinson's history of American education, written in 1968, holds that the educational institutions have historically been seen as a panacea, but that they have "failed to solve the multiple problems generated by urbanization, industrialization, emancipation, and nationalization."¹

The faith in American education is in a serious decline, and the optimism of James and Dewey seems to have plummeted in the years following World War II. Maxine Greene says of the men now concerned with education:

No longer do they address themselves, as in the 1930s, to building "a new social order." Nor do they talk, as in the 1830s, of moralism and defense of the status quo. The objective, even where the "slow" and underprivileged are concerned, seems to be to consider education as discipline, as craft—no longer as a carrier of dreams. The new morality of teaching is a morality linked to belief in "making sense," in the usefulness of conceptualization, forming the confusing world. No longer do teachers expect to pierce the "veil"; they are preoccupied with instructing in the categories out of which the "real" is now composed . . . To know has come to mean to be familiar with cognitive forms.²

The spiritual substance, the faith, out of which the public schools can be seen in terms of a dream or a panacea, has disappeared, and this void is reflected both in the works of the romantic critics


and in those of the modern educational historians. In this regard, the critics are in the position of having helped to kill the dream and the historians of bemoaning its loss.

The romantic critics have been consistent and accurate in most of their analysis of the public schools. The schools are now failing all people in some ways and some people in nearly all ways. The fact remains, however, that the public schools, as an institution, have never fully lived up to the dream; yet historically the means has been found for sustaining faith in them. What is said of the public schools as criticism today could have been (and often was) said of them at many other times in American history—times during which the institution of schools was still seen as a potent force within the culture. At present, nearly all social institutions seem weakened by intense criticism and loss of faith, for the family, the church, and the political system have come under attack along with the schools and seem no longer to be self-justifying and invulnerable.

Whether this weakening of institutions is the inevitable result of historical evolution, as Marxist historians would have it, is a matter of speculation and debate among social critics. Historically, some institutions do die out totally after weakening while others hold out and undergo a subsequent renewal of vitality. Public schools, if they are to survive, will need to acknowledge the criticism now being leveled against them. As a large and somewhat varied institution, the school should be able to respond to this
criticism and engage in a process of self-renewal without destroying itself. The level of criticism is insightful enough, however, so that the schools will not be able to undergo token reform in order to ameliorate their critics. The schools must take the critics seriously.

The romantic critics, while sharing a common analysis of the ills of the public schools, have differed widely in their advocacy of alternatives. Paul Goodman conceives of a shift to a vastly decentralized social system within which local control of economic, political, and social institutions would replace the present centralist and impersonal system. In such an anarchic or decentralized society, the present functions of the schools would simply be replaced by the incidental forms of education that would come from participation in local community life. Goodman's proposals include a call to abandon compulsory education in favor of this incidental form of socialization.

Goodman's views reflect his disillusionment with public schools while his anarchism leads him to advocate their disestablishment. For him, no institution should be permitted to command the allegiance or involuntary participation of the citizen. This anarchist position makes no provision for cultural cohesion and historical continuity and consequently could lead man toward increased estrangement at a time when a reversal of this trend seems necessary. The modern society is anarchic in the worst sense—each
man is alone, accountability is individuated, the impact of the individual over his destiny is severely limited, and there is no sense of collective solidarity. The public school experience is perhaps the only one which nearly all men in the society continue to share, and which provides the possibility of participation in some common enterprise. The survival of a shared intellectual base and a collective exposure to awareness of cultural continuity in an objective and deliberate form, depends upon the unique potential provided by a system of deliberate, common education. Ideas and values which are not institutionalized in practice but which need to survive as ideals are kept alive as a part of the cultural heritage through deliberate education. Through its attempts to perpetuate marginal points of view, the society keeps open the possibility of renewal on different terms. Ironically, the survival of Goodman's philosophy, which is marginal in terms of the values of the ongoing system, is due in large part to its perpetuation through intentional education.

Edgar Friedenberg also seeks to end compulsory education, but he envisions the rise of an aristocracy of intellect and talent as a result. The democratization of access to public education, he argues, keeps the academic institutions from being able to transcend conformity and mediocrity. The current system of public education is, for Friedenberg, controlled by lower-class ambitions and seeks to prevent the development of an elite through its emphasis on
conformist goals and dilute academic standards. If schooling were made voluntary, only those with "academic ambition" would attend, and only those with "academic promise" would be permitted to attend. This educational arrangement would certainly close the door on the reform of education even more tightly. When schools are permitted to become selective, they will accept only those students who will conform to the institutional expectations. The "problem" students will be rejected, and the system will isolate itself from criticism to an even greater extent. The tendency toward the creation of an academic expertise that rejects the influence of outside criticism is already apparent, and voluntary, undemocratic systems of education would serve only to accelerate this closing of ranks among teachers and administrators. If the influence of students, parents and critics is minimal now, it would be nonexistent under Friedenberg's system of voluntary education. Thus, in his desire to escape conformity, he proposes a system with the potential for demanding even more conformity.

Friedenberg uses the issue of conformity to buttress his argument for selective, elitist education. This argument must be rejected by any society which seeks to be democratic and in which access to the benefits of the culture is determined by education. The notion of competence need not lead to a restriction of the availability of education, for the functions of education can be used to increase and broaden general competence in the society. Nor
is competence incompatible with equality, as Friedenberg seems to believe, as long as the means of acquiring competence are open to all and as long as competence does not become synonymous with the application of false standards. The base of respect for competence needs to be broadened to include activities which are not the sole possession of one social class, and competence must be united with ethical purpose in order to truly serve man.

Friedenberg perceives the school as failing to recognize competence, establish identity, and respect the individual. As an institution, the school does fail to do these things in many ways. His alternative, however, is to abandon the school as a force for broadening the social access to those ideas, skills, and values which would make more men competent and secure, in favor of making a few men more competent. The romantic view is that all men are educable and that education is necessary to social cohesion and responsibility. Friedenberg's rejection of this view constitutes a departure from romanticism, for an ideology of elitism, with regard to education, is incompatible with the spirit of romanticism.

John Holt seeks to view educational issues in technological terms. He believes that the alienating forces now found in the public schools can be overcome through a revolution in technique. He escapes the moral and ethical bases of education by seeing teaching and learning as processes which can be exchanged for better processes. This technological alternative is limited in that it
fails to deal with those aspects of education which are the most profound and human. American society has begun to learn that technology does not contain inherent moral principles or limits, and that technological solutions for technologically-imposed problems merely feed an expanding technological influence.

Holt, by dealing with education in terms of technique, fails to come to grips with the most urgent needs of the educational system. He cannot shore up a failing system by altering its methods, for what the school needs is an infusion of faith and will and moral purpose, along with a sense of participation in a noble human enterprise. The revolution must be one of soul rather than one of style.

Kozol also abandons faith in the public schools, dedicating himself to the service of a personal ideal. His ideal is restricted by an ideology of revolt against a public system which betrayed his sensitivities. The majority of those who continue to depend on the schools, however, cannot afford the luxury of such frail sensitivities. Kozol's free school permits him to work in the absence of those forces of oppression and neglect with which the majority of the population is still forced to deal. Kozol's alternative is for the few who can afford the luxury of purity, while the majority continue to suffer. Rather than force the institution of schools to become accountable and human with respect to those it serves, Kozol has retreated to a world of safe innocence.
The educational principles of Kozol's free school are essentially those of the public schools. If the majority of men are to escape ignorance and poverty, the only alternative is to force the public schools to serve them. This is the direction that a true revolution in education must take, and the most radical position at the present time is to advocate a renewal of the original faith and purpose of public education. The free school is for those willing to ignore the masses who remain in public schools.

The romantic critics, each in his own way, attack the belief that public education is possible, necessary, or desirable. Their abandonment of the school reflects a general weakening of the social will to support institutions that are found to be flawed. The schools, for these critics, are probably not worth saving. This can be said of some institutions, but not of others. The schools, like the family and the church, serve needs more central to human life than do other institutions, and for this reason are, and should be, redeemable. The argument of this work has been that schools can serve as a unifying cultural force rather than as a disintegrative one. Schools, at their best, act as a positive force in the process of identity formation, giving man a sense of historical continuity and of roots in a culture that is shared. Schools can provide the basis for democratic access to knowledge and preserve ideas and values that are, at certain historical moments, marginal, or in danger of being lost. In these ways the school, like the family, serves to uphold our humanity. Institutions which
potentially serve man in this way are based on noble ethical purpose and, as such, must be seen as redeemable. Rousseau, in spite of his deep criticism of society and education, saw the schools as essential, and espoused a system of public education for Poland. He believed that institutions could serve man only when they were based on ethical purpose and were democratically accessible. The most significant failure of the romantic critics is their lack of faith in the possibility of saving the schools.

The redeemability of the schools is also the redeemability of those connected with them. In some sense, a reciprocal act of faith is called for, since, in order to survive, the school and its people must undergo change, and in order for this change to be possible, the school must again be seen as a human institution with deeply human purpose and responsibility, one that is worth saving. The society must begin to see that the redemption of the schools is necessary to the deepest needs of many and to the full humanity of all.

We are faced with making a decision between abandoning the schools because they work imperfectly and making them work for all. The society must choose to affirm its commitment to the schools because the central purpose of the schools is a deeply human one. To abandon the schools is to continue to internalize impotence and futility. To demand that the schools reflect human qualities is to redeem these qualities within ourselves. Such acts of commitment to the enhancement of all men reveal the goodness of each man.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


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