

Education and the Problem of Continuity

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Editors' Note: It is customary at the end of a collection of essays to offer a conclusion, an encapsulation of what has been “found” and revealed concerning the subject at hand. The fields of anthropology and education seem, however, to merit an exhortation more than a pat on the back. To a very large extent, we have arrived on the field of battle — and then hidden from the enemy. In this essay Craig Calhoun suggests that what is needed to unify the many disparate empirical enquiries going on is a perspective, a social, cultural, and historical context in which to set the problems of education. To this end he examines the relationship between individual and society, the inevitable instability of the latter, and its relation to the purposive character of education. Hopefully, a tentative point of departure will prove more useful than a false conclusion to the growing relationship between anthropology and education.

When we call the world in which we live “modern,” we are generally distinguishing it from a “traditional” one. We are suggesting that this modern world is somehow free from the bonds of the past. Instead of maintaining a social order predicated on tradition, we attempt to make new decisions, to respond to new situations. In the process we ensure that there will be still more new situations. The ideologies of progress and rationality which govern us are geared to bring this “modernity” more and more into being. But in this our ideologies are perhaps on their last legs. With them we attempt to break away from bonds that have lost their strength as well as their utility. Westerners often regard it as “backward” for members of traditional societies to balk at ever-accelerating rates of change and cycles of crises. At the same time, millions of Westerners seek community in both illusory and practical forms.

Since at least the eighteenth century, education has been a popular

cause of liberal reformers as they have sought to improve the moral and economic conditions of the working class. Equally often — and generally with equal disinclination to radical solutions — education has been put forward as the key to the “development” of Third World nations. But in many cases this development has amounted to simply a dissolution of traditional society or a weak and unstable syncretism of incompatible forms. As the essays in this book demonstrate, education can be in one view a process of enculturation and in another an instrument of social and cultural change (for better or worse). Education can be used in the attempt to produce community solidarity or individual distinctiveness. Educators throughout the world are currently grappling with means for encompassing multiple world views, languages, sets of expectations, rules. Moreover, educators are often presented with a double task: they are expected to act as the guardians of culture and stability, and at the same time they are expected to prepare their students to deal with new situations, that is, with situations in which their culture does not fit. To be sure, much educational practice may seem to avoid such a dilemma. But even where it does not consciously confront the issue, its social impact can only be understood through consideration of the way it relates to this problem. I shall attempt to show that one aspect of this problem — that of achieving continuity — is becoming increasingly dominant, even while most curricula and theories are focused on change. Our general problem, then, is to establish a context for the study of education.

I. This problem results, at its most basic level, from the existence of history. If we assume that societies do not form coherent and completely stable systems, then we must see change as pervasive.¹ A crucial aspect of any social situation is thus its *IMMANENCE*, the direction of change implicit in its organization as abstracted at any moment. Further, if we look at societies over time we see that rates of change are variable and may be accelerating or decelerating within any particular period. Now, the existence of history is not only a problem denied or avoided by some varieties of social theory and research; it is also a notion which has different meanings for different societies. It is thus that we suggest that

¹ Not all change is equivalent, of course, but some change is inescapable. As Marx notes, considering early agrarian communities: “The aim of all these communities is survival; i.e., reproduction of the individuals who compose it as proprietors, i.e., in the same objective mode of existence as forms the relation among the members and at the same time therefore the commune itself. This reproduction, however, is at the same time necessarily new production and destruction of the old form” (1973 [1939]: 493). At the very least, this is because the natural conditions of existence change, and the forces of production are developed in turn (leaving exogenous influences, for example, out of consideration).

history may not be an important — or even existent — REFERENCE (of the members) in highly stable, traditional social orders. Empirically, however, we note that there is some change. It is simply possible for the members of such societies to act on the assumption that the social order will not change. There is almost no place in the world today where effective long-term action could be based on such an assumption.

When we term a social order “traditional,” we clearly characterize it by reference to the members’ minds. Tradition involves attitudes and sentiments relating to the past. I contend, however, that traditional social order cannot be understood by primary reference to sentiments or by any such analysis of “efficient causes” (cf. Homans and Schneider 1955). To advocate an analysis based simply on efficient causes would be to advocate the sort of myopia with which any individual must necessarily view the workings of his own immediate society. This argument rests on the suggestion that social events take place over greatly varying “objective” durations. That is, put crudely, some things happen within the range of individuals’ vision and action, and some things do not. Of course this vision and action may vary. Some individuals may encompass a broader scope than others; some social situations may make the extension of vision more important to the choice of action than others.

Social institutions, such as unilineal descent, are particularly unlikely to be historically the result of “adoption” by consciously deciding individuals. The adoption argument has had its influential proponents, however. Among them are Homans and Schneider, for example, who proposed it in opposition to (their erroneous characterization of) Lévi-Strauss’s position (in 1949). Their misreading of Lévi-Strauss seems to follow, however, from the conclusions they wish to draw and the recommendations they wish to make for the future of comparative sociology and social theory. These recommendations and conclusions are individualist in bias and are geared toward a maximization of ends analysis, complete with the assumption that individuals are able not only to identify but also to achieve their ends. Their stance suggests that both the extent of individuality and the extent of maximization of ends are social constants. But this is not true. Further, this falseness and the reasons for it have important implications for social policy with regard to education. These include implications for the choice of conservative or liberal ideologies and of orientations which emphasize fitting the school to the students or the students to society. Although I do not adopt the latter position in its most obvious form, I think that serious attention to the problem of social order and continuity argues against the currently fashionable alternative.

In opposition to those who seek to apply exchange theory to traditional social orders,³ I suggest that as individualization increases and persons turn their “maximizing attention” more to their personal ends, such long-term social institutions as unilineal descent must be destroyed or at least removed from their position of social centrality. Paradoxically, therefore, the very social institutions which Homans and Schneider set out to study have as an essential characteristic the limitation of the individuality on which these authors base their analysis. The stronger the unilineal descent system, the less applicable Homans’s and Schneider’s arguments. The “psychological preoccupation” for which Needham faults them with devastating criticism (1962:126) is largely the result of their assumptions — and they are nothing more than assumptions — about the nature of man. Though they wrote nearly two centuries later, they shared the fault for which Marx criticized “natural right” theorists and utilitarian economists alike: the assumption of the state of man in alienated, capitalist “civil society” as man’s universal and inevitable nature.

What, then, is the relationship between society and the individual? We may divide the question into two components, treating first the relationship between context and individual identity, and then asking how sociality and individuality may variably characterize different populations. Of course, in neither case can we do more here than sketch the barest outline of a full discussion.

II. The identities of social actors are established primarily through contraposition with other actors. This has not been taken as being as obvious as it might seem, we may note, particularly by sociologists and anthropologists writing on the concepts of status and role. Many of these seem to reify social positions (statuses) into independent units operating outside of actual social situations and interaction. Similarly they tend to take roles as given concomitants of statuses rather than as the actions of an actor. This is more than just a terminological dispute; it is a real problem in social theory.

A necessary condition of any identity is distinction from “other,” from nonidentity, or, at the highest level, from nothingness. This necessity of the other implies as well the importance of the definiteness of the other. An identification by contraposition can only be as secure and as specific as each of the parties is to its counterpart. No identity (social or otherwise), then, exists at once, in itself, as an immediate unity. An actor’s social

³ And in opposition to those who would make simple individualism the ideology of all educational programs or of all economic activity.

identity can only be achieved/expressed in terms of other social identities, and, further, this interrelation of identities is temporal. It occurs as extant and given at no one point in time, but is both determined and created over time.

True reality is merely this process of reinstating self-identity, of reflecting into its own self in and from its other, and is not an original and primal unity as such. It is the process of its own becoming, the circle which presupposes its end as its purpose, and has its end for its beginning; it becomes concrete and actual only by being carried out, and by the end it involves (Hegel 1967 [1807]:80–1).

Hegel is describing here both a progress of a single mind and of “Mind” in history. The important point to grasp is the idea of movement, of the partiality or unreality of any moment taken out of context, and of the organized nature of the temporal whole. One caveat must be added with regard to the great question of evolutionary theory: whether the “end” is indeed implicit in the beginning, and, if implicit, knowable. Perhaps the most satisfying resolution to this problem is simply to indicate that revelation would be as necessary to prove such an historical doctrine as it would the existence of God (cf. Kolakowski 1971:31–58).

Leaving this last aside, the reciprocal involvement of social elements with each other in the process of establishing their respective identities is clear. As Fortes observes, this is the key to a segmentary lineage organization:

A segmentary relationship between lineages or any other social units implies the existence of specificities and cleavages which have the effect of making each unit a determining factor in the emergence of other units (1945:233).

The “social elements” for which this is the case include all the symbolic units of social intercourse, even such “material” ones as commodities (bear in mind that it is their symbolic, not material, nature that is involved). As Marx observed, value relations are such that the bodily or material form of one object becomes the value form of another. In other words, a commodity’s value cannot be expressed in and of itself, but is a matter of comparison: “The value of A, thus expressed in the use-value of B, has taken the form of relative value” (Marx 1970 [1867]: 59). In a note, Marx even remarks on the analogous formation of human identity (not only demonstrating his continuing affinity with Hegel, but anticipating in an aside a key insight of such modern psychologists as Erikson):

In a sort of way, it is with man as with commodities. Since he comes into the world neither with a looking glass in his hand, nor as a fichtian philosopher, to whom “I am I” is sufficient, man first sees and recognizes himself in other men (Marx 1970 [1867]).

Not only does “man” do this, and not only *vis-à-vis* other individual persons. Not only is this the means of first sight or initial identity. Social actors of all varieties (including both individuals and groups) have their identities only in relation to others. Where this does not at first appear to be true, it is because a process of abstraction has taken place. Such abstractions are statuses appearing in isolation from their contexts. The extent of actual identification by contraposition vs. abstraction is of course variable. Thus, in a highly stable society with a close-knit fabric of social integration, identification by contraposition is elaborate and highly specific; the extent of abstract identity is minimal. In our “modern” society a much greater part of the definition of social identities is abstract; contraposition is both more amorphous and more variable. In this indefiniteness others are still implicated, but to a very low extent: “Each is indeed certain of its own self, but not of the other, and hence its own certainty of itself is still without truth” (Hegel, 1967 [1807]: 232). The major characteristic (mechanism) or identity is thus weakened as social integration is weakened. Individuality destroys the means of individuality. This is a central paradox of society.

III. In a sense we have established individuality on the opposite end of a continuum from society. This continuum represents a (complex) sociological variable. We are not, for example, primarily interested in an existentialist conceptualization of the individual, that is, in his life for himself (although it is difficult to entirely ignore experiential aspects of individuality when considering alienation). We are interested in the extent and effects of individuality, not in the experience of it. Similarly, as Simmel comments, the connections involved in making up society may be exclusively matters of “consciousness,” but

...this does not mean, of course, that each member of a society is conscious of such an abstract notion of unity. It means that he is absorbed in innumerable, specific relations and in the feeling and the knowledge of determining others and of being determined by them (1971 [1908]: 70).

Absorption and reciprocal determination are the stuff of society, from the (objective, not subjective) point of view of individuality. Thus we characterize individuality as independence, stressing the extent to which the individual in society (as opposed to in individuality) depends for his identity on his relations with other units. Conversely, we may refer to society as dependence, stressing the multilaterally conditioned character of social action. The dynamics of independence, thus, are quite simply the factors which reduce the extent to which social units depend on each other.

There is no need to recount all the arguments which have been posed, especially by the founders of modern sociology, to show that the social is not reducible to the individual. Nonetheless, there is something to be learned from brief reference to a few of the most central. Generally, these arguments attempted to separate individual from social LEVELS, hoping to eliminate such reductionism as has recently returned to social theory with the neo-utilitarianism of exchange and transactional approaches. The early sociologists, however, tended to distinguish the social as category (perhaps for institutional reasons) and thus to lose from their theories and variable formulation of its extent.³ Sociology and anthropology both continued (and compounded) this error as they took “society” for granted, both as boundary and as organization. Fortes argued against the former aspect of this problematic usage:

For the concept of society as a closed unit ... we must substitute the concept of society as a socio-geographic region, the elements of which are more closely knit together among themselves than any of them are knit together with social elements of the same kind outside that region. We must substitute a relative and dynamic concept for an absolute and static one (1945: 231).

Fortes here at least introduces the extent of “society” (in our terms) into his definition, if not into use as a variable of comparison among populations.⁴

Of the turn-of-the-century “founding fathers,” it is Weber who, despite his excessive methodological and conceptual individualism, introduces and stresses the variable nature of sociation. He does this in the course of defining “social relationship,” and does it through the introduction of the idea of mutually determined probabilities existing in sets of individual behaviors:

³ As in Durkheim (1964 [1893]), although he does link individuality to social solidarity. Surprisingly — and I think incorrectly — he sees this as a positive relationship, suggesting that both social solidarity and individual distinctiveness increase with the division of labor.

⁴ A sociologist who did bring this strikingly into the foreground was Sorokin (1936, 1957), although he sometimes overestimated the ability of his fellow sociologists to grasp his points: “There is no need to stress the fact that THE DEGREE OF FUNCTIONAL UNITY OR FUNCTIONAL INTERDEPENDENCE IS EVERYWHERE NOT THE SAME: it fluctuates from unity to unity; in some cases it is exceedingly close, in others looser, until finally it imperceptibly passes into either a mere external unity or even a mere spatial adjacency (1957:7; original emphasis).

And again, we have Merton offering a critique which has held too much relevance for too long: “It seems reasonably clear that the notion of functional unity is NOT a postulate beyond the reach of empirical test; quite the contrary. The degree of integration is an empirical variable, changing for the same society from time to time and differing among various societies (1957:26–27; original emphasis).

The term “social relationship” will be used to designate the situation where two or more persons are engaged in conduct wherein each takes account of the behavior of the other in a meaningful way and is therefore oriented in these terms. The social relationship thus CONSISTS entirely of the PROBABILITY that individuals will behave in some meaningfully determinable way (1925: 63; original emphasis).

The condition that Weber makes is that the behavior must be “meaningfully determinable” to an (actual or potential) outsider, not necessarily meaningfully determinable to any or every social actor. The latter, however, is probably an important condition of the former. The more people are able to understand the actions taken by their fellows, and to thus make their own actions consistent with them, the more likely is an outsider to see pattern instead of chaos in their behavior. It is in the connection between these two levels that the “interpretative” nature of Weber’s sociology comes to the fore (see Gerth and Mills 1948:55). The sociologist must be able to understand the behavior of the actor, even if he uses different analytic categories.

Despite the (poorly worked out) hints of their masters, the followers of Durkheim, Weber, and Simmel seem to have found it easy to take up the position that the relationships between individuality and society were implicit in the structure of society — and then to ignore them as a topic of study. Great though this trio’s contributions were, none of them provided the necessary conceptual connection between such a variable and social organization. It would not have been so difficult for any of these writers to incorporate this variable, one would think, for Marx had given it some pride of place in his writings years before. This he did with the help of (his amended version of) Hegel’s conceptualization of alienation and his own insight into the importance of appearances in effecting the continuation of the circumstances which produce them by causing people to act rationally on an insufficient basis in valid understanding. The latter is a primary point made in the discussion of the fetishism of commodities in the first chapter of *Capital* (1970 [1867]:76–87), and of eighteenth-century ideas of independent individuals and production in the *Grundrisse* (1973 [1939]:83–84). As to the former, witness this early and very Hegelian critique of the “rights of man” theorists:

None of the supposed rights of man go beyond the egoistic man, man as he is, as a member of civil society: that is, an individual separated from the community, withdrawn into himself, wholly preoccupied with his private interest and acting in accordance with his private caprice (1964 [1844]: 26).

The point Marx is making is that man neither always has been, nor everywhere equally is, nor need continue to be to whatever extent he

anywhere is, either rationally or capriciously private. (Note the connection between private interest and caprice.) The tendency of philosophers and economists to be preoccupied with — or to take as a basic assumption — the individual, is part and parcel of the alienation produced by capitalism.

More specifically, capitalism increased the power of productive forces, but required a misconstruction of the conditions of social life in order to achieve and perpetuate its particular reified relations of production:

The relative liberation of man from his direct dependence on nature is achieved by means of SOCIAL action. Nevertheless, because of the reification of the social relations of production, this achievement appears in alienated form: not as a relative independence from natural necessity but as a freedom from the constraints of SOCIAL ties and relations, as an everintensifying cult of “individual AUTONOMY” (Mészáros 1970: 258; original emphasis).

Marx not only conceived, in the absolute, of the noninherent nature of alienated individualism, but he noted that it obtained in varying degree. Further, he incorporated this variance into a theoretical analysis of social history as a central dynamic variable. Thus he criticizes those who misunderstand the nature of capitalist production relations in which individuals production confronts them as an objective relation which is independent of them (taking the form of commodities). He terms it

... an insipid notion to conceive of this merely OBJECTIVE BOND [of commodity-exchange relations] as a spontaneous natural attribute inherent in individuals and inseparable from their nature (in antithesis to their conscious knowing and willing) (Marx 1973 [1939]: 162; original emphasis).

Such a bond belongs, of course, only to a particular phase in historical development, not to “nature.” The existence of such a bond merely demonstrates that historical production is still underway. Assessment of this historical process is a PRECONDITION of any discussion of social organization. One may only anticipate the ideal state of affairs:

Universally developed individuals, whose social relations, as their own communal [gemeinschftlich] relations, are hence also subordinated to their own communal control, are no product of nature, but of history (Marx 1973 [1939]: 162).

Static analysis is thus inevitably inadequate, and where its temporal context is not considered, is actually misleading.⁵ It is in the process of negating partiality, false or immediate wholeness, and abstraction, that a subject realizes itself, according to Hegel. In the case of man this is a

⁵ Reality appears as a dynamic in which all fixed forms reveal themselves to be mere abstractions (Marcuse 1960:26).

mediated realization, as man self-consciously creates himself. That is, mankind becomes more human — in essence — over time, one aspect of which process is becoming more conscious of itself as making itself. This is the crucial concept to a coherent view of history (following Hegel and Marx). The coherence comes from the production of each historical stage by its predecessor (any supposition of ultimate purpose is unnecessary). The process is, in particular, one of manifold negation:

These stages are not merely differentiated; they supplant one another as being incompatible with one another. But the ceaseless activity of their own inherent nature makes them at the same time moments of an organic unity, where they not merely do not contradict one another, but where one is as necessary as the other; and this equal necessity of all moments constitutes alone and thereby the life of the whole (Hegel 1967 [1807]: 68).

Since humanity is inherently self-consciously self-realizing, stages in its social history are also stages in the history of its consciousness. In order for humanity to become more fully “self-mediating,”⁶ its consciousness of itself and its situation must be improved. It is largely in support of more revolutionary improvements in human social consciousness aimed at greater self-realization of mankind — both at large and in individuals — that Marx criticizes Hegel’s later emphasis on reconciliation and its germs in the earlier work.

Two of the stages which Marx sees are relevant here. The first is that of high sociation and low mediation. This is how Marx conceives of much “primitive society.” The second stage is that of alienated individuality but with the development of the abilities which will EVENTUALLY allow for fuller mediation. Leaving aside the hoped-for eventualities, then, we contrast sociation with alienation. The virtue of socialism/communism, as Marx conceives it, is that humanity can attain the same degree of sociation as “primitive” society provided, but be much more directly and significantly self-consciously self-mediating. Individuals will be no more (or less) determined by their social relations, but collectively they will be more accurately aware of them, and thus more able to effectively take a hand in shaping them. Much doubt remains as to how this collective awareness is to manifest itself, and that is a problem which we will not solve here. Let us simply note that a characteristic of Marx’s “ideal” is that persons should be neither isolated and alienated nor wholly absorbed (unconsciously) in their social determinations.

For Marx the process of narrowing the gap between the actual capabilities and the ideal potentialities of the individual

⁶ “Meditation” refers to something positing itself, being subject and not merely object to transformations from one state to its opposite (see Hegel 1967 [1807]:80).

... is inseparable from the realization of the “truly SOCIAL INDIVIDUAL.” The more the individual is able to “reproduce himself as a social individual,” the less intense is the conflict between individual and society, individual and mankind (Mészáros 1970: 285; original emphasis).

This follows on Hegel’s suggestion of the eventual unification of “impulses” and “duties” (1967 [1821]:29) in the ethical community.⁷ Marx differs from Hegel here in suggesting that individuals can maintain a greater degree of self-consciousness (and control over their own actions) in the proposed ideal community. For both, a key element in the process of transformation is a change in the nature of social consciousness. It is this change which Hegel considers the ultimate value and meaning of education (1967 [1821]:29, 124–126).

IV. Both Marx and Hegel discuss education and related concepts primarily as writers concerned with eliminating an alienation which they see as on the rise. But as the papers in this volume make clear, this is not always what appears to educationists as the problem. Whether an escape from social bondage or from alienation is to be sought through education depends on the social situation under consideration. It is thus impossible to formulate absolute or universal statements about the role of education in social organizations. What, we must ask, are the differences between education leading towards more society (the *bildungsprozess* of Hegel, and in a sense Marx, following von Humbolt) or towards more individuality (the self-actualization model, for example, prevalent in much contemporary educational ideology)? How does education relate to the immanence of sociocultural organizations?

If we assume that change — not stability — is the universal condition of society, then education can never be simply “maintaining the status quo.” Although change may happen more or less rapidly, the status quo CAN never be maintained. Education systems may thus attempt to forestall or impede changes which are in progress (or may in fact do so unintentionally). But since only a part of social life is the result of education, it may only be a partially conservative force. If it maintains the prominence

⁷ “In an ETHICAL community, it is easy to say what man must do, what are the duties he has to fulfill in order to be virtuous: he has simply to follow the well-known and explicit rules of his own situation. Rectitude is the general character which may be demanded of him by law or custom. But from the standpoint of MORALITY, rectitude often seems to be something comparatively inferior, something beyond which still higher demands must be made on oneself and others, because the craving to be something special is not satisfied with what is absolute and universal” (Hegel 1821:107; original emphasis). Morality, in Hegel’s usage, is the characteristic aim of civil society as he found it to be constituted. An ethical order was the goal of the reforms he suggested.

of certain ideas while their social context changes rapidly, it may well contribute to a decrease in what Sorokin would call consistency, or “logico-meaningful integration” (1957:9–17). Education, in other words, may either resist or be a part of the logic of a society’s immanence. Whatever its relation to the LOGIC of immanence, however, education cannot help but be part of the society’s change. If for no other reason, this would always be so because education must always be inadequate. There must always be unintended consequences (cf. Merton 1936). Situations must always arise in which courses of action are not “given” and the results of choices are not known.

As we have suggested above, the stability of social life depends crucially on the extent to which social actors are predictable to one another. As one’s social environment becomes less predictable, one is led to plan over shorter and shorter spans of time. This in turn makes one less predictable to others. The process is self-accelerating. The spiral is also furthered by the extent of individuation. The more distinctive people are, the less predictable they are likely to be. But this is not the crucial factor. That, rather, is the fact that individuation is accompanied by an increase in the incidence of individual decisions. In other words, people are faced more and more with situations which are “new” enough to render received knowledge inadequately applicable. Under these circumstances they must make decisions. In a sense, then, we could say that a new decision is made to the extent that an action is taken on incomplete information. The more complete information — that is, the more certainty — there is in the anticipation and action, the more the actor may be said to be acting directly on values. It is only when he is uncertain that information becomes important. But the more important it is, the more difficult it is to get. Really adequate information can be had only when very little is required. Very little is required only when the situation is very much like other situations and the future appears stable. Faced with inadequate information, people make choices that are individual. That is, they select (consciously, unconsciously, and by virtue of their positions in society) from the available information, of which there is always more than they can handle. With this information they make decisions which inevitably fall short of ideals of perfect “rationality.”⁸

To the extent that education emphasizes individualized decision making, it contributes to an increase in the rate of social change. Perhaps more exactly, it contributes to an increase in social instability which may in turn lead to greater social change. The reverse would also seem to be true:

⁸ See Simon on administrators who must “satisfice because they have not the wits to maximize” (1957: xxiv).

education emphasizing sociated action contributes to the production of social stability. That is, it helps to create the conditions for social stability, one of which is sociated action. It does not in itself create the stability, and indeed, it may even promote social change in the short run. This is because greater sociation is itself a change, and in terms of some widely spread ideologies a radical change. A value on individualism is pervasive in Western liberal culture (and, along with the ill-defined value on progress, is becoming more and more common in the Third World — or parts of it). The fact that this value is widely held does not mean, however, that it is consistent, either logically or practically, with all other widely held values.⁹ The kind of individualism generally valued in the West is inconsistent with values on community, with many religious values (Weber notwithstanding), and with values on social (and economic) stability. Inasmuch as education for sociation is successful, it produces a condition for stability ONLY given a fundamentally different sociocultural system. Such immediate impacts as it may have on stability cannot be permanent. Indeed they are likely only to prove sufficient for the groundwork for rebellion stemming from general sociocultural dissatisfactions. In other words, unaccompanied by more fundamental changes it can (macrosociologically) only help to provide impetus to one side of the periodic fluctuations between liberation and retrenchment (*vide*, the 1950's followed by the 1960's followed by the 1970's, etc.).

We are talking, then, about education in larger terms than those of the immediate impacts of fluctuating pedagogical styles. Indeed, in this respect the fluctuation itself reveals more than the content of any style. We are considering education's sociocultural context in terms of fundamental tendencies in social organization. These tendencies vary only over relatively long time-spans or across very radical changes. The "tendencies" to which I refer are the interwoven patterns, principles, and productions of social organizations. They cannot be reduced to any single underlying principle, however profound (e.g. capitalism), or assumed to be a completely coherent system. It is in these tendencies that the smaller and larger practical problems of social organizations arise. No item taken from this context can be treated as displaying the same meaning as it displayed within it, sociologically speaking. It is in this sense that Hegel says:

Rulers, Statesmen, Nations, are wont to be emphatically commended to the teaching which experience offers in history. But what experience and history

⁹ An overemphasis on values as such, and the assumption that simple generality of a value is sociologically conclusive is one of the problems with Parsonian theories of social change (see, for example, Smelser 1959, 1962).

teach is this, — that peoples and governments never have learned anything from history, or acted on principles deduced from it. Each period is involved in such peculiar circumstances, exhibits a condition of things so strictly idiosyncratic, that its conduct must be regulated by considerations connect with itself, and itself alone. Amid the pressure of great events, a general principles give no help (1929 [1837]: 345).

V. The question we must now pose is a difficult and perhaps insoluble one: How do sociocultural tendencies change? In some ways this is comparable to asking at what point an object under strain — say, a bridge — collapses, or at what point a wave breaks. The mathematical description of those physical events — as in catastrophe theory, a branch of topology — is still a subject of much debate.¹⁰ Social events present still more complex problems in many respects, not least those of adequate empirical — especially quantitative — description. Still, two points must be made: The first is that however gradually sociocultural change may be seen to occur in history, there are nonetheless catastrophe points — points beyond which events move in a different direction, on a different surface. This is the meaning of RADICAL change — not that change is sudden, but that it is a change at root, singular, nonrepeatable, of essence rather than of quantity. Such changes are certainly not always — if ever — identifiable by the observer. None of the immediate events will reveal the radicalness of a change; that can only be seen in historical outcome. The span of relevant events may be infinitely long, but the point of radical change has no width.

The second point follows from this. Sociocultural tendencies change in such a way that their transformation cannot be managed. That is, it is not subject to conscious control. Further, an order cannot be changed without disorder; a tendency must BREAK DOWN in order to be replaced by another. This is not to say that conscious change is impossible, only that conscious determination of the results of radical change is. The complexity of the phenomena renders the probability of predicting specific results extremely small. The greater the uncertainty in the situation as a whole, the more difficulty there is in predicting any single (or more

¹⁰ Catastrophe theory is an attempt to describe the shape (including the shape in time) of certain singularities. Rather than treating (as do linear algebra and most statistics) of averages, catastrophe theory treats of sudden changes in the linear nature of relationships, such as in conventional statistics are suggested by bimodal distributions. In other terms, where x and y are related to each other, catastrophe theory is concerned with situations where a decrease in x will not affect the relationship as the simple inverse of prior increase in x , after a certain point. Rather, the relationship will “jump” to a different course. Productive though applications of catastrophe theory may in future be, at present it is helpful primarily by way of metaphor. See Stewart (1975) for a general discussion.

accurately, partial) event. Thus the partial events with which social policy and social engineering deal are rendered more difficult to grasp as disorder is greater. Change of the radical sort which we are here considering can only take place amid disorder.

The causes of such disorder may be internal or external to any social organization, but the disorder cannot be "outside" it. The disorder must be OF it. There cannot thus be an orderly transformation of a tribal society into a bureaucratic or entrepreneurial capitalist state, though the disorder of the change may manifest itself in various ways. Both political and personal instabilities may stem from such disorder, for example. Further, in this particular instance, we may add that the "modern" centralized political state and capitalist economy are likely to exhibit less social order than would a traditional tribal organization.

The mechanics of producing the disorder likely to lead to radical change may be entirely different from those which operate to establish a new order. More often, some particulars will continue while the overall combination shifts so as to change the tendency. In such cases the elements which emerge as dominant features of the new order are likely to be versions of those which were submerged under the old order. In this sense, there is continuity even through radical change. The new tendency, the new organization, is not a creation *ex nihilo*. Rather, it is created out of the dissolution of the old. In this it reflects both some of the aspects of the old order, and the process of change which gave birth to it.

VI. In the introduction to this volume education was described in terms of continuity. In this essay I have attempted to show how continuity may be a characteristic of a social organization, or, may be in its absence the focus of numerous social issues or problems. The latter seems more and more often to be the case. This seems to be a major aspect of the common distinction between "preindustrial" and "industrial" nations. The former refers to those with a high degree of stability achieved through a tightly knit structure of social interdependence. Such societies are described with the aid of concepts like "multiplexity" of relationships and hierarchical inclusivity of corporations. Industrial societies, on the other hand, are seen as characterized by increasing differentiation of functional specialisms and atomization of social units. That such differentiation takes place apparent. What is debatable is the contention that it results in or is accompanied by greater integration.¹¹ Though a larger population may

¹¹ As, for example, Smelser (see 1962 for a general discussion) who argues following the Parsonian line, and Durkheim (1964 [1893]; see also Note 3 of this article). With a related optimism, Horton describes African traditional thought as "closed" in

be brought into interaction, it seems a dubious usage to consider that indicative of greater integration. Contrary to Smelser, I suggest that while social “unrest” and/or change is generally followed by relative stability, there is not necessarily greater integration after it than before it. Rather, there is only greater integration after than DURING it.

Education is among the sociocultural activities which are differentiated with the creation of so-called industrial society. In other words, education ceases to be an intrinsic and indistinguishable part of the range of social activity and becomes subject to specific intentional manipulation. Rather than being governed by the complex interaction of institutions and events, it is governed by the (relatively) simple choices of individuals and groups. Accordingly, the likelihood of discrepancies between those educational choices and social organization as a whole is increased.¹² Efforts to achieve greater accountability or otherwise to bring the two back in line through “rational” means are doomed by their own inevitable inadequacy to run a hopeless race against growing complexity.

Problems associated with the differentiation of education from other sociocultural activities are discussed in several of the papers in this volume. Thus, for example, King notes the problems faced by planned communities in developing a means of enculturation which makes their own offspring likely or suitable members. Only highly institutionalized communities seem to have any considerable success in this respect, and they may succeed because they do not treat education as primarily an issue of distinct individuals. Rather, education is regarded as a part of the life of the group as a whole. Though more attention may be focused on some members than on others, this is not conceptualized as being for their benefit alone (in either sense of “alone”). Many “hippie” communes, on the other hand, incorporate a strong emphasis on “self-realization” and “self-reliance” as distinct from dependence on the community. Here education is at odds with the survival of the community, though this is not generally recognized by the members. Similarly, although an attempt is made to educate members into a life of community, most communal groups seem to find themselves with problems of the second generation.¹³

comparison with Western science (1967). In this he rather overestimates the rational (Popperian) PRACTICE of scientists. However rational scientists’ ideologies, the social and intellectual realities of scientific advancement follow a somewhat different path (cf. Kuhn 1970; Merton 1973).

¹² A problem of dysfunctions of unintended consequences of purposive action (Merton 1936, 1957). See also Lee (1963 [1955]) for some interesting observations on “discrepancies in the teaching of American culture.”

¹³ Described by Spiro in his study of kibbutz children (1958). The problem of the second generation is simply that of discrepancies between what parents and children

The *Bruderhoff* studied by Zablocki (1971) recognizes the inevitable inadequacy of such education and treats the problem in a novel manner. Its solution is to require that all young people spend a period of time outside the community so that those returning will have made a choice to commit themselves — thus presumably demonstrating the success of earlier enculturations (and/or the unacceptability of life outside). These returnees must be accepted, as must strangers, and must go through a further period of enculturation designed to secure their dependence on the community.

There are severe difficulties, then, in instituting an educational program which secures social values in the midst of our individualist culture. These are not wholly unlike, although different in content and direction from, the difficulties faced by European missionaries and educators who would transform indigenous cultures in Eastern Nigeria (see Nwa-Chil's paper). Aside from difficulties of implementation, there is the simple impossibility of taking all the relevant variables into account. The situations are too complex for perfect planning. As Leacock has observed, one prominent response of educators (in America and Africa) is to artificially abstract education from its sociocultural context. This amounts to practicing what Slater has called "the escalation of failure" (1970:40). The very problem confronting educators is (unsuccessfully) dealt with by increasing the factors which caused it in the first place and have failed to remedy it in the meantime. One reason for this is that it is only by drastically narrowing the range of educational approaches they consider that educators can produce any sense — however unreal — of dealing with a problem of manageable proportions. Examples of situations of this kind can easily be multiplied. They are in fact the stuff of our everyday lives as well as of our large-scale plans and collective policies.

It is a mistake, then, to treat of education as necessarily a force for either continuity or change. In many traditional societies education fits closely into the social order and works to reproduce it. More and more, however, education is the responsibility of specialized subunits. as such it becomes more subject to individual decisions and more productive of diverse results. Some aspects of this process may well be valued. But we must also remember that education of this sort becomes the source of discontinuities and contradictions in sociocultural organization. In essence, education can become part of the dissolution of society. We must not

are likely to think of a community which the former have chosen and built, but into which the latter were only born and raised. At the very least, the grass always seems greener on the other side of the hill.

think that society is simply THERE, given. It is not a conscious and complete formal organization, like a state. As Ortega y Gasset said, "... a nation is never formed The nation is always either in the making, or in the unmaking" (1961 [1930]:134).

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