

1-1-1978

# The politics of pedagogical reform.

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312066013475358

THE POLITICS OF PEDAGOGICAL REFORM

A Dissertation Presented

By

MICHAEL M. MORRIS

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 1978

School of Education

Michael M. Morris 1978

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## ABSTRACT

The Politics of Pedagogical Reform

(June, 1978)

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This dissertation analyzes a wide range of issues relevant to altering conventional teaching-learning practices in American higher education. It sets out to determine the historical source for many of the 'new' ideas and discusses the re-articulation of these concepts during the 1960's and 1970's. Various proposals for reform advocated during this period are analyzed from a critical perspective. In particular, the underlying assumptions about how change occurs are thoroughly critiqued.

The central thesis of this work is that most of the major strategies for reforming higher education are liberal in their origin and consequently doomed to inevitable failure. These strategies tend to hold that one can tamper with structural or process aspects of an institution in ways that lead to transformation of the whole. This liberal perspective, besides being extremely naive, denies the importance of three critical resistance factors: (1) mainstream American ideology, (2) the nature of the university as an organization, and (3) the biases inherent in most institutional decision-making systems. Each of these factors is discussed along lines which demonstrate how they subvert reform ideas.

The concluding portion of this study stresses that pedagogical and

institutional change will continue to be elusive unless reform ideas are tied to a larger social change agenda. Particular attention is given to the key elements in the old change agenda--access, power, and values--and how those ideas must remain constant concerns. Nevertheless, it is suggested that a more 'transitory strategy' will have to emerge which links internal higher education reform with the nature of life in this society before and after credentialing. The issue of "Work in America" is then examined as a potential vehicle for transitory strategists.

Data for this dissertation was gathered from participation observation at several non-traditional programs, over one-hundred twenty-five hours of taped interviews, and a thorough review of significant literature in the fields of higher education, change and innovation, organizational behavior, and political science.

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## FORWARD

A dissertation is not always a personal statement. Only in the sense that the general topic is somewhat related to an idea one might originally have in mind. What it is, however, is a negotiated topic-- negotiated with a committee and with yourself over time. As you begin to do it, the dissertation changes form. The topic you struggle to define as a problem assumes a life of its own. Often it is a life that you either did not intend or anticipate. And, in many cases, this life brings new meaning to your own. Such is the case with this work.

This writer does not use the word "work" lightly. For this has not always been a labor of love. What it has been is one white middle class male's ongoing struggle with himself and a branch of reality known as American higher education. The struggle represents a testing of not only analytic skills and insights but also a personal confrontation with the limits of my own mind and imagination.

When you read the pages that follow this will not be apparent. For in the writing, editing and re-editing of this work much of that turmoil and self-doubting has been brushed over. In this sense, it is the context behind which the discussion occurs that is missing. This context exists as a backdrop which symbolizes a journey in my own development as a person and professional. And, in order to more fully understand that context and why this particular document was prepared, some of that needs to be shared. For it is the story behind the pages which gives



meaning to this work and my own progress.

This dissertation is concerned with change, politics and pedagogy. It represents my personal odyssey with those issues. The travels began at Southern Methodist University in Dallas during the early 1970's. The times were filled with Vietnam, protest, and personal action. A major part of this action was directed at trying to improve the quality of life on that campus. Endless discussions were participated in where the mode was to analyze various ills of campus life and propose alternative solutions to those conditions.

My role in all this was as a low level administrator in the student affairs division. My style then was to take the central criticisms of a particular issue (say dormitory life or teacher evaluations) and set out on a search for relevant models which might be applied to the local situation. In surveying the possibilities, much time was spent reviewing articles and books on academic reform and innovation at other campuses. Inevitably, some idea would appear which seemed transferable to SMU and this writer would run back to his support group with this latest nugget in hopes that others would agree with the possibilities.

Always, there was a core group of fifteen or so who not only saw the merits of this suggestion (or had one of their own) but were willing to move forward with it. This usually meant that some administrative officer or governance unit was targeted for engagement. However, when meetings were held with department heads, deans, vice presidents and even presidents nothing seemed to materialize. Over a period of three years, this informal group of advocates advanced some ten or twelve ideas. . .all to no avail.

From this sense of paralysis my own deeper interests in the politics of change emerged. An obsession grew with this topic to the point that most of my readings, my professional trips, and my personal interactions with peers were related to it. Out of all this came a realization that some departure would have to take place, a movement away from Dallas and to an environment where innovation seemed not only to exist but to flourish as well. This, of course, required another search; one geared to finding a graduate program where change could be viewed first hand and where one had the ability to design a degree program which corresponded to my interest in organizational and social change.

A major criterion for moving was that the institution be actively experimenting with a number of innovative issues--access, admissions, governance, curricula, and so on. And that the graduate program be modeling behaviors which were consistent with these experiments. Few places fit those requirements as well as the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. At least, few seemed to.

The School of Education was at the height of its national publicity at this point. Saturday Review had just completed a comparative study between the Harvard program and UMass's, with the Amherst one obviously being seen as more change-oriented. Dean Dwight Allen was being portrayed as an educational guru dedicated to turning the system upside down.

Amidst all this, Allen made a trip to Dallas for an address before a major national conference on educational reform. Naturally, several of us were in attendance and became spellbound by his optimism. Remember that we were in an environment where change was not only disvalued



but where there was no hope given that it could occur. Here was a rather jolly figure, popping can upon can of Tab, and spouting one outrageous idea after another, all in dead seriousness. A most appealing personality. . .at least to those of us who were without a comparable role model locally.

That speech plus a personal audience with Allen served to entice me to UMass. Upon admission in March of 1973, plans were made to move in late summer. Also, it was my good fortune to find work that was perfectly suited to my interests. Beginning in late August and continuing for the next three years, my place of employment was the Office of Special Programs, that subunit of the University directly responsible for an assortment of twenty innovative projects. My work as a special assistant to the Associate Provost provided me with a first hand, extensive exposure to the intricacies of program planning, development and implementation. This would be the experiential component of my learning.

What about the academic program? Very early on my choice for a dissertation focus was made. That focus served to organize my course choices, my selection of independent study options, and my contacts with faculty members and fellow students. Basically, all my actions in this regard sought answers to these questions: what are the alternatives to the prevailing teaching mode, what sort of issues do these ideas address, what values underlie these ideas, and where did these ideas come from? In terms of change, my questions were: what constitutes change, innovation or reform, how does one recognize it, what are the restraining factors, and, more importantly, how does it come about?

Answers to these questions were sought in several ways. First, some attention was given to the historical development of higher education and, in particular, the changes which have occurred over time. This was done through both reading and conventional course offerings. Second, considerable time was spent on improving my understanding of organizational behavior and how that relates to the politics of change and the innovation process. Third, independent study programs were undertaken which involved a thorough review of potential reform options and their programmatic implementation.

Perhaps, the most insightful experiences were related to my work situation with the Special Programs division. Under the encouragement of my two supervisors (read mentors), Robert Woodbury and John Hunt, a major research inquiry was developed which sought to determine the historical and political development of special programs at UMass and the general reactions of faculty, administrators and students to these efforts. Over eighteen months, some forty-seven persons were interviewed in depth to a total of one-hundred-twenty-five (125) taped hours. This research served not only as a basis for policy discussions within special programs but as foundation for this dissertation. Much of what is discussed here emerged from those interactions.

Beyond that, the eighteen months as a staff member of the Center for Individualized Education at Empire State College have further contributed to this dissertation. Though the bulk of the content was written before employment at the Center, exposure to a national network of innovative institutions, and a wide range of professionals who work in such settings, has greatly influenced my tempering of several sections

of this document. Suffice it to say that the lessons which have been learned leads me to believe that things are neither as bad as I imagined nor as hopeless as my discourse sometimes assumes. Much of the optimism represented in my last chapter, for both educational and social change, is derived from my encounters with countless colleagues who continue to believe change is, indeed, possible.

What then is the gist of this dissertation? To begin with, it is an analysis of the pedagogic left and their suggestions for change in American higher education. Obviously, my interpretation is greatly biased by the fact that I am both an observer of this perspective, as well as a 'true-believer.' Consequently, this work assumes both an advocacy and a critical perspective. On the one hand are my basic beliefs; on the other rests my general skepticism about what is proposed in both content and process terms. Meaning that what follows here is filled with my own contradictions as a member of the pedagogic left and as a critic of its limitations. This constitutes a major portion of the personal growth issue mentioned earlier; struggling with this has greatly added to my own understanding of the issues and myself.

One can assume then that this dissertation takes the assertions of the pedagogic left at face value. My intention has been to look at what was suggested seriously. Their ideas and proposals for reform and change are interpreted as real proposals; proposals designed to change the educational system somehow and perhaps lead to a larger cultural transformation over time. The task of this dissertation is to determine if that occurred and, if it did not, to analyze why change was so difficult.

In terms of this, seven chapters review the issues in a fairly sequential manner. Chapter I discusses the historical roots of the pedagogic left. Particular attention is given to the elements of reform which came from the historical period of American society known as Progressivism. Chapter II delineates the major change agenda of the pedagogic leftists in rather straightforward terms. Several major concerns are discussed in some detail.

Chapter III is the pivotal chapter in this study. In that section, this writer argues that the proposals for change were designed to fail. My position is, basically, that the assumptions about how change occurs are limited and serve to doom change advocates to inevitable frustration. In essence, one cannot change universities by worshipping two opposing idols: reform and the status quo. By accepting proposals which seek to fix up higher education, reform efforts are advanced which do little to the total system, either education as a whole or the culture.

In Chapter IV, my intention is to begin discussing three central factors to understanding why change is so difficult in higher education. These include mainstream American ideology, the nature of the university as an organization, and the bias of decision-making. Chapter IV summarizes the ideological restraints on change. Chapter V elaborates on the three metaphors which dominate organizational reality and how each mixes with the other to impact on reform proposals. Chapter VI reviews conventional assumptions about university decision-making and then poses that all decision-making takes place within a context which biases the potential outcomes in favor of the status quo.



The final chapter, Chapter VII, is an attempt to capture the essence of the preceding chapters and place it in some larger cultural context. Far too often we have imagined change to be something that is done to institutions without tying the specific structural or process agenda to a larger social vision. As long as the terms reform and innovation are viewed in simple ways, either as new methods, processes or goals for educational organizations, then the elusiveness of change will continue. We can no longer be content with tampering with organizations while denying the context in which they exist.

The final chapter argues that real change must confront the realities of economic and political America. To continue playing with internal structures and processes solely is to deny the contradictions of the larger system, in which education occupies the role of an integral subsystem. The question is not an either/or one. Change proposals must address both institutional concerns and a larger social vision. That vision must seek to construct a new ideology, new forms of social organization, new participatory decision-making arrangements, and a new economic structure built on democratic principles.

Obviously, this vision cannot be built overnight. It will require generations of committed citizens working in a variety of settings (education and otherwise) to create a new culture. Consequently, one must view these complex changes as being developed over time in transitional ways.

Some of the changes required by this adventure are personal in nature. We each will need to change how we think about ourselves as individuals, each other, human nature, organizational structures, decision-

making, and what constitutes a just economic and political system. Such rethinking demands that we look at reality in radically different ways. As long as we accept what exists now as being inevitable then we are trapped with this reality. In the words of William Irwin Thompson "Consciousness is like an FM radio band: as long as one is locked into one station, all he receives is the information of one reality."<sup>1</sup> And it is with our own sense of consciousness that we must begin.

As a concluding note, there are several significant others who have greatly contributed to my intellectual and personal development throughout this period of my life. A special expression of gratitude goes out to: Jamie Roth, who convinced me that you can only change higher education when the society itself is transformed; Drea and Pat Zigarmi, whose friendship and support sustained many a cold New England night and fueled my thoughts in immeasurable ways; Jack Lindquist and Dan Flanagan, who demonstrated that politics and change are inseparable and continue to share their lives and ideas with me; John Hueffner and Steve Lander, who sent me on my way from Dallas with enough memories and lessons to last a lifetime; Mike Cusack, Jack Leader, Marty Miller, and Merrill Pellows, who taught me on countless occasions that students can indeed be teachers; and John Hunt and Tom Clark who displayed uncommon confidence in my ideas and abilities.

Others helped push me along through their personal support and encouragement. This is especially true of my colleagues at CIE, CAEL, and UECU--in particular, Harriet Cabell, Bill Craft, Ben Davis, Lance Dublin,

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<sup>1</sup>William Irwin Thompson, Passages about Earth (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 51.

Susan Fine, Ed Harris, Barbara Knudson, Earl Lowell, Cheryl Mateychick, David Morris, Tim Pitkin, Diana Bamford-Rees, and Susan Rydell. And, of course, no thanks would be sufficient for Bob Press who forced me to finally face the final chapter (and thus complete the cycle). In addition, my personal appreciation goes out to my dissertation committee members--David Schuman, Kenneth Dolbeare, and Robert Woodbury--who read draft upon draft and contributed their ideas and suggestions in a most gentle manner. And finally, there is Sherrye, my wife and friend, whose patience and love sheltered me in moments of doubt and self criticism. Without her this would have all been impossible and thus to her and our daughter Meghan this labor is dedicated.

## CHAPTER I

### SEEDS FOR THE SIXTIES: THE PROGRESSIVE LEGACY

Progressivism was a gigantic effort to deal with the discovery that the United States was a land of small farms and country stories no longer; an effort to deal with the discovery of the slum, the political machine, the immigrant, the monopoly, and the decline of ethical standards which was registered in poisoned toys, dishonest advertising, tainted meat, and toxic drugs.

Frederick Rudolph

We have all heard, at some point or another, the rather trite phrase which suggests that 'history has a way of repeating itself.' No doubt we have also heard that 'today's generation functions without any real sense of history.' Two things could never be more true. . . especially if we are discussing the dynamics and content of change in American higher education. With relatively few exceptions, things do seem to be repeating themselves and those who advocate various new panaceas almost always do so devoid of a historical perspective.

For example, given all the hoopla of the past decade, one would think we just witnessed an era of unparalleled debate on the educational process. Or, on the other hand, one might imagine that we have discovered a whole set of unique responses to the problems of the day--governance, admission, instruction, or whatever. Not true in either case.

You see, for more than two centuries now, laymen and educators alike have regularly debated several fundamental pedagogical issues:



what, how and whom to teach. And, as strange as this may seem, we have yet to reach consensus on these concerns as a culture or as individuals working in academic settings.

To examine this phenomenon in some limited way, we have chosen to begin our discussion on the politics of academic reform in the past. Because it is from these roots, to use the current vernacular, that the present conditions evolved. In particular, we plan to analyze the educational discussions which began some fifty to sixty years ago and became known as Progressivism. This perspective serves as the major breaking point with traditional interpretations of the university, knowledge and learning.

How and in what ways these progressive ideas were responded to also provides a noteworthy example of the processes of change. For Progressivism furnishes not only many of the rationales for current pedagogical reform thrusts but it also demonstrates how new ideas are resisted and compromised over time.

### Early Teaching-Learning Practices

In our colonial and pre-Civil War period, colleges were extremely rigid in their courses of instruction.<sup>1</sup> Also, they were often dominated by secular or religious groups. The student population was largely

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<sup>1</sup>Much of this subsection is drawn from the following sources: (1) Richard Hofstadter, Academic Freedom in the Age of the College (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961); (2) Walter P. Metzger, Academic Freedom in the Age of the University (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961); (3) F. Freeman Butts, The College Charts Its Course (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1939); and (4) Frederick Rudolph, The American College and University (New York: Knopf, 1962).

drawn from aristocratic backgrounds. Students were required to enroll in a standard curriculum based on the seven liberal arts: grammar, rhetoric, logic, astronomy, geometry, arithmetic and music. Added to this foundation over several decades were other intellectual offerings, but this core, along with the institution's particular brand of religious doctrines and moral philosophies, served to illustrate what a well-educated person should know.

However, the period prior to the Civil War, especially between 1800-1860, witnessed a tremendous growth and expansion of collegiate institutions as denominations competed with and against one another for moral and intellectual territories. As an example, before the Civil War some 516 colleges were established in sixteen states of the republic. Afterwards, only 104 survived or barely nineteen percent.<sup>2</sup> Usually there was very little to distinguish one institution from another in terms of curriculum. Whether privately or state funded, the curriculum content was mostly modeled on the classical-mathematical studies of the Renaissance period. A few colleges added medical and legal schools, while others introduced additional requirements in geography, history, chemistry, and botany. In most cases, faculty members were expected to instruct their pupils in each subject area, or at the very least several areas.

Soon critics of American higher education began to point to the rigidity and dullness inherent in this system of required courses. By

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<sup>2</sup>Hofstader, Academic Freedom in the Age of the College, p. 211.

1825, several persons (including Thomas Jefferson) had proposed alternative approaches to collegiate education. But George Ticknor, a Harvard College faculty member, is generally recognized as the foremost spokesman for a movement which called for more student freedom and choice among a wider variety of courses.

Greatly influenced by his graduate experiences and training at the German universities, Ticknor proposed that Harvard consider dividing its instructional staff along lines of study, such as Greek, Latin, mathematics, and so on. Ticknor's approach, which came to be known as the "elective system," called for greater choice on the part of the student from subjects taught by faculty who specialized in particular intellectual areas. Ticknor also stressed that the college should improve instruction through organizing subjects into specific disciplines, and thus encouraged faculty to instruct in only one area of knowledge.

It is interesting to note that Ticknor's proposals were debated nationally for nearly a hundred years. Moreover, Ticknor's ideas were never widely accepted at Harvard until well after the Civil War. Nevertheless, by the end of the nineteenth century, the narrowly prescribed curriculum of a few subjects yielded in most institutions to an ever-expanding curriculum which permitted students some choices. What became known as the German ideal won converts among faculty who began to see the merits of specializing in a single subject area.

As one might assume, this new model was not accepted without an immense amount of foot-dragging, debates, and outcries against the obvious subversion of the classical learning model. The classical studies interpreted Ticknor's elective system as a direct challenge to the per-

petuation of mankind's shared culture. Yet, the elective system gained wider acceptance due to its perceived efficiency and proceeded to spread to an increasing number of institutions. New curriculum and departmental structures were recognized. And, the American colleges began to evolve from a solely aristocratic and elitist model into a more meritocratic one.<sup>3</sup> In time, research acquired more importance, and academic status distinctions, in the form of professorial rank, were also introduced. Journals and other specialized publications were initiated to serve as forums for faculty discussions and debates within a wide range of disciplines and subfields.

By 1900, the college curriculum was generally beginning to be organized along elective lines. Students now had two distinct options which were commonly referred to as distribution requirements or field of concentration. In the first approach, students were to enroll in certain required courses in their first two years, but permitted to choose among the remaining discipline offerings in the final two years. Both Indiana and Stanford Universities had begun to experiment with allowing students an area in which to concentrate their studies. As this gained increasing favor on campuses throughout the country, it became known as the major concept.

### The Progressive Tradition

The twentieth century also produced a new dawn of social awakening

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<sup>3</sup>Christopher Jenks and David Riesman, The Academic Revolution (New York: Anchor Books, 1969).



which was labeled as the Progressive era. During this period, reformers in all walks of life questioned the existing social, economic, political and educational order. Educational institutions were not excluded from this scrutiny or from the activities of progressive zealots proposing solutions to the ailments of schools and colleges. As Progressivism challenged America and its citizens to deal with the problems and promises of this nation, it also shook the foundations of the standard content and instructional methods of education.

In his widely acclaimed study of educational change during this period, Lawrence Cremin categorized what Progressivism meant to education in these terms:

- 1) broadening the program and function of the school to include direct concern for health, vocation, and the quality of family and community life;
- 2) applying in the classroom the pedagogical principles derived from new scientific research in psychology and the social sciences;
- 3) tailoring instruction more and more to the different kinds of classes of children who were being brought within the purview of the school;
- 4) a radical faith that culture could be democratized without being vulgarized, the faith that everyone could share not only in the benefits of the new sciences but in the pursuits of the arts as well.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Lawrence Cremin, The Transformation of the School (New York: Ran-

Cremin goes on to acknowledge that the educational wing of the Progressive movement exhibited itself through "a remarkable diversity of pedagogical protest and innovation."<sup>5</sup> Others have noted that the absence of a well-conceived or shared definition of the meaning of Progressive education facilitated the use of the term with a pluralistic range of reform ideas.<sup>6</sup> So, as is often the case with the modern "innovations" of our own time, the word came to mean different things to different persons.

Within higher education, new and more intentional institutions did begin to surface as a result of this ferment. Many institutions attributed their development to the writings and/or direct influence of such Progressives as William Kilpatrick,<sup>7</sup> John Dewey, Harold Rugg, George Counts and Boyd Bode. In general, these institutions were seen as self-conscious colleges. They each shared a broad purpose to enhance the promotion of knowledge but from a more explicit set of principles or guidelines than most colleges operated with. Furthermore, these "experimental" institutions often attempted to integrate learning with some

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dom House, 1961), pp. vii and ix.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, p. 22.

<sup>6</sup>Patricia Graham, Progressive Education: From Arcady to Academe (New York: Teachers College Press, 1967), p. 12.

<sup>7</sup>In a recent interview with Tim and Helen Pitkin, the persons most responsible for holding Goddard College together for nearly forty years (Tim as president and Helen in one capacity or another) described how Kilpatrick mapped out the Goddard plan on a napkin at the Columbia University Faculty Club in 1936. Such places as Bennington, Reed, Black Mountain, Goddard, and to some extent Antioch, all took on elements of the Progressive movement.

fairly specific philosophy of life.

Of course, we must remember that there was rarely unanimity within these institutions concerning what the college should or should not be doing with regards to learning and life. Frequently, internal groups clashed over educational aims and directions to such an extent that it eventually led to the total demise of an institution. Martin Duberman described just such a case in the rise and fall of Black Mountain College.<sup>8</sup>

Still, the intentional institutions were the most visible exceptions to the more common trends of the period. Established colleges and universities tended to adopt and adapt the Progressive proposals into the mainstream of their educational offerings without redefining the mission or intent of the whole institution. In this manner, traditional colleges were most often likely to just graft on some of the new ideas without altering their total academic program.

The question remains: what constitutes a Progressive college or a Progressive program?

At a conference on Progressive colleges held in the early 1930's, E. H. Wilkins, then President of Oberlin College, stated, that it was: (1) a matter of attitude rather than particular devices; (2) a readiness to adapt the college to the "true and changing needs" of college students; (3) flexibility in the use of all instruments of college activity in the learning process; (4) the study of each student as an individual;

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<sup>8</sup>Martin Duberman, Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community (New York: Dutton, 1972).

(5) a heightened degree of faculty-student interaction and cooperation; (6) recognition and development of those educational values inherent in what are commonly called extracurricular activities; and (7) the progressive attitude, if it to be effective, cannot be delegated and dismissed to special offices, but must permeate the actions of the entire faculty.<sup>9</sup>

You will note that Wilkins fails to fully discuss the philosophical conflicts surrounding very opposite interpretations of the "true" purpose of higher education which were present at that time. It is with these conflicting views that one can best ascertain the tensions underlying very different approaches to the nature of knowledge and the learning process. Differences which continue to surface again and again in American higher education.

#### Debates on the Nature of Knowledge and Learning

When two opposing sides are present in such a discussion it is not long before the controversy becomes involved with fundamental points of view concerning what a liberal education should be, what studies are of most value for a college education, what the relation between college and society should be, what place authority and freedom should have, what the nature of knowledge and truth is, and, ultimately, what constitutes the essential stuff of human nature and reality.<sup>10</sup>

Though it may be somewhat difficult to draw absolute boundaries be-

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<sup>9</sup>E. H. Wilkins, "What Constitutes a Progressive College?" Bulletin of the Association of American Colleges, Volume 19 (March 1933), pp. 108-109.

<sup>10</sup>Butts, The College Charts Its Course.



tween all the philosophical camps which argued these questions, it is still useful to explore the two predominant forces active during this period.

On one extreme of the debate were persons referred to as Platonics, Cultural Traditionalists, Dualists, and/or Conservatives. For our purposes we will simply use the term traditionalists.

In higher education, this group was largely identified with such figures as Robert Hutchings, Mortimer Adler, Stringfellow Barr, and Scott Buchanan.<sup>11</sup> These people were interested in counteracting and repudiating the central concepts of the "scientific method" as it was then being pursued and argued by persons in the natural and social sciences. The Traditionalists believed in classical idealism as postulated by the teachings and writings of Plato and Aristotle: Each person was viewed as a moral and rational being endowed with an identical nature as all other persons. Thus each possessed the inherent qualities of reason, morality, a sense of art and beauty, as well as religion and therefore the best way to stimulate and strengthen these qualities is by a thorough study of the ancient masters of the great books of the world.

The traditionalists discussed learning issues in terms of developing a person's mind rather than her/his total organism. Each individual possessed a faculty of human nature entitled reason or intellect. And, the central mission of higher education and learning is to nurture and

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<sup>11</sup>For a representative sampling of these spokespersons, see the following: (1) Robert M. Hutchins, The Higher Learning in America (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936); and (2) Michael Harris, Five Counter-Revolutionists in American Higher Education (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1970).

expand a person's intellectual powers of discrimination and judgment. From the traditionalist's perspective, this could best be done through exposing the student to the great literature and classical studies of the past. In this manner, each person would share and experience the cultural traditions of mankind, and the torch of collective knowledge and truth would be passed on from generation to generation.

For the most part, the traditionalists believed the university was becoming diluted with 'new sciences' and their plans for undergraduate education resembled a return to the past. They advocated an improvement in the quality of university teaching in order to cultivate the intellectual lives of the students. For the traditionalists, the college was a retreat where the problems of the real world were locked out. In this setting, a select group of students and teachers pursue "truth" in the classical tradition.

### A Conflicting Opinion

The persons who opposed this cultural interpretation of humanity and learning were generally called Experimentalists, Pragmatists, and/or Progressives. The last term will suit our purposes.<sup>12</sup> Their ideas were closely linked to the writings of John Dewey and to research in the

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<sup>12</sup>There are much too many Progressive writers published to list in any meaningful way. However, for those who want to pursue this perspective further, we suggest the following: (1) John Dewey, Democracy and Education (New York: Macmillan, 1916) and Experience and Education (New York: Macmillan, 1938); (2) Boyd H. Bode, Progressive Education at the Crossroads (New York: Newson, 1938); (3) George S. Counts, Dare the School Build a New Social Order? (New York: Arno Press, 1932; and (4) William H. Kilpatrick, Education for a Changing Civilization (New York: Arno Press, 1926).

natural and social sciences, especially the early work of such learning psychologists as G. Stanley Hall and E. L. Thorndike. The Progressives believed that an individual develops her/his own unique and distinctive personality as a result of her/his interaction and participation with other persons and society as a whole. Human nature was interpreted by the progressives as not something fixed or permanent for all times but as a "mode of reaction which is affected by and which affects the surrounding culture."<sup>13</sup> Progressives saw differences in culture as producing varying effects on the manner in which an individual or group reacts. Consequently, one could not emphatically say that human nature was the same for everyone everywhere.

John Dewey, the principal author identified with this position, presented a new conception of knowledge and truth which became known as Instrumentalism. This approach views knowledge not in terms of the ideas handed down from previous civilizations through great books, but as the process of action that an individual carries out in her/his daily existence. Ideas or theories from the past are perceived as useful only as relative concepts or instruments of action. In this manner, ideas are simply tools or intellectual instruments utilized by the mind to deal with practical situations, and knowledge is seen as constantly changing as a person experiences different events and situations.

The major contributions of the Progressive education movement rests with the host of pedagogical ideas initiated during this period. As we discussed earlier, much of what was labeled as progressive might better

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<sup>13</sup>Butts, The College Charts Its Course, p. 276.

have been referred to as eclectic. For awhile almost any change, other than the prescribed classical curriculum, was identified as a progressive development. Nevertheless Dewey reportedly described the elements of Progressive education as "an emphasis on individuality and increased freedom, an inclination to build upon the nature and experience of the student, an atmosphere of informality, a preference for activity as distinct from passivity, and an unusual attention to human factors."<sup>14</sup>

This statement captures the essence of progressive reform.

During this period, programs were discussed and designed which permitted the student, some for the first time, to pursue her/his own interests. Students were viewed as possessing their own individual aptitudes and capacities. And, it was acknowledged that the prescribed curriculum format could not or did not fully take this into consideration. Thus a major part of the Progressive agenda was the notion of individualization.<sup>15</sup> Several institutions sought to restructure the student-faculty relationship in ways which explicitly recognized student differences, in terms of both interests and abilities. Again, institutions like Bard, Goddard, and Sarah Lawrence struggled to find ways to personalize the student's learning experience. Out of this activity grew the expansion and reaffirmation of the value of independent study options. First, it was permitted with juniors and seniors and later by first and second year students. Others attempted to utilize a contract

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<sup>14</sup>Graham, Progressive Education, p. 50.

<sup>15</sup>Louis T. Benezet, General Education in the Progressive College (New York: Arno Press, 1971).



approach as a way of individually negotiating learning objectives. Whatever the strategy, the student's uniqueness was validated in these settings.

Because the student was viewed as an individual with her/his own unique experiences with and in this world, experience and learning were correlated or linked to one another. Some colleges like Goddard and Bennington, in recognition that learning can take place anywhere, pressed students to make full use of their extra-curricular activities through involvement with plays, chorus, student government, clubs, and so forth. Others like Antioch and the University of Cincinnati encouraged the student to experience or test out vocational interests through work study options. Many other institutions, who were unable to provide this flexibility throughout the regular academic year, altered their calendar to permit January or Winter field periods for vocational pursuits and other learning projects.

Finally, the progressives' plans for altering the collegiate experience were founded on a belief that the institution and its members must engage the world. Students and faculty members have a responsibility to focus on the problems of the world as it exists, because it is this world which most directly influences their lives. Meaningful learning occurs when an individual and/or group gains experience and exposure to problem-solving that is as real as possible, and one cannot achieve this by relying solely on the great thoughts of the past.

In response to this, programs were created that dealt with problems and events in contemporary life. Thus, curricula were initiated which sought to break down the narrowness of the departments. Special courses

and seminars sought to integrate the perspectives of several disciplines to a social problem or thematic issue. In some cases, students were encouraged to pursue a particular project which required the application of several disciplines to a given topic. In addition, sessions were constructed on such topics as marriage and family life, personal health, public institutions, and a wide range of civic affairs.

In general, the Progressive era facilitated a reawakening within higher education. (Table 1 summarizes the major distinctions between the Traditionalist and Progressive Perspectives.) Institutions explored different ways and means to construct a meaningful undergraduate experience. Students within some colleges were able to acquire an increasing amount of autonomy over their educational and social lives. The concepts associated with recognizing the student as a unique individual were established. The validity of experience and action as learning tools were postulated and selectively tried. And, perhaps, more than any other contribution, the era planted the seeds of a different approach to teaching and learning.<sup>16</sup>

### The Devolution of a Movement

Others have reported that the student interest approach to higher

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<sup>16</sup>One can find many links, in both a conceptual and programmatic sense, between the Progressive movement and what would become known as the reform era of the 1960's. Perhaps the most interesting link is that several of the key writers for change in this later period came out of Progressive college experiences. For example, Harold Taylor served as president of Sarah Lawrence; Paul Goodman was, for a short time, a faculty member at Black Mountain; and Judson Jerome drew heavily on his experiences as a faculty member at Antioch.

Table 1

## The Traditionalist and Progressive Perspectives

<u>Traditionalist Perspective</u>	<u>Progressive Viewpoint</u>
<u>Culture</u> : stresses the cultural heritage of mankind through the study of great books and the liberal arts	<u>Vocation</u> : advocates the examination of more practical or vocational issues, as well as a redefinition of the liberal arts so that they might be joined with vocational issues
<u>Ivory Tower</u> : views the college as a monastic or academic retreat which is separated from the world and neutral towards its social, political, and economic problems	<u>Watch Tower</u> : argues that the student must engage the world and grapple with its problems
<u>Intellectualism</u> : holds that each person should have her/his intellectual faculties cultivated through an indepth exposure to the great books of mankind, books which are invariably Western or European in origin	<u>Intelligence</u> : supports student intellectual growth and development through designing education programs which assist the student in solving problems they face in their personal and social life
<u>Fixed Truths</u> : believes that truth in its ultimate form is absolute and fixed, and, therefore, education must also be fixed and authoritarian in order for students to acquire the correct conception of knowledge	<u>Changing Truths</u> : believes in experimental naturalism which looks upon truth and knowledge as flexible and changing conceptions; thus they maintain that education must also be flexible and changing
<u>Discipline</u> : thinks college should enforce strict disciplinary control over the student's life when she/he becomes associated with the institution.	<u>Freedom</u> : argues that the students should have more freedom and be permitted to pursue their own social and intellectual interests
<u>Aristocratic Institutions</u> : feels that college should be for the few, the intellectual and financial elite, and advocates selective admission standards to permit only the most "worthy" students to enter	<u>Democratic Institutions</u> : insists that in a democratic society colleges should be open to more and more students regardless of social, economic, racial, or previous academic background, so that any student might benefit and profit from the college experience

Prescribed Curriculum: says the student should enroll in a fixed set of courses, and supports a limited number of choices from which to select electives

Interest Oriented Curriculum: attacks the elective system and prescribed curriculum as being too fixed and rigid, and argues in behalf of limited or no prescribed courses with the bulk of academic experiences originating from the student's own interests.<sup>17</sup>

education never gained wide acceptance.<sup>18</sup> Even the more experimenting colleges of the Progressive period hedged on a solely individualized program. Places like Goddard, Antioch, Reed, and a few others continued to march to their own drum, exploring new frontiers along the way. But, for the most part, the pedagogical reforms of the era were dismissed as unreasonable or too expensive and time consuming, frequently without ever having been tried.

Some might say that there were no clear winners and losers in this struggle for ideological and programmatic dominance of our learning institutions. They would, of course, be wrong. In a Hegelian sense, the Progressives became the Traditionalists. The resiliency of the older and established educational values absorbed the new ideas. Compromise rather than reform occurred. In T. S. Eliot's terms, the movement for a new vision of education died not with a bang but with a whimper.

The crusaders for a new order through the utilization of applied and experiential learning were co-opted into the more staid and traditional system. The "new" sciences, both natural and social, became part

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<sup>17</sup>Adapted and reinterpreted from Butts' The College Charts Its Course.

<sup>18</sup>Benezet, General Education in the Progressive College, p. 170.



of the academic establishment, more like brethren than advocates. An unsigned alliance and truce was acknowledged: You exist, we exist. Let us co-exist.

The elective system reigned supreme by the late 1950's. Now, students were expected, required if you will, to enroll in courses from sciences as well as the liberal arts. Freedom and individual interests were sacrificed before departmental growth, institutional efficiency, and more importantly, social control. The student, viewed as an individual with unlimited potential, would be replaced by an identification number.

C H A P T E R   I I  
O L D   W I N E   I N   N E W   B O T T L E S

The breeding ground of institutional change is the sense of institutional failure.

Walter Metzger

The chroniclers of America have referred to much of the period ranging through the 1960's and early 1970's as the "era of student unrest." During that time, youthful dissidents protested against a number of social and political injustices they perceived to exist in this nation. The thrusts of these discords were primarily directed towards an expansion of civil rights, an elimination of American military commitments in Southeast Asia, and the institution which housed most of them--namely, the university.

In this section, we are concerned with the central issues surrounding the student attacks on higher education during much of this period. Moreover, the intention here is to present a review of the major academic reform concerns expressed in those criticisms.

The University Dethroned

Collegiate education in the early Sixties was believed to be every person's potential ticket up the social mobility ladder. As post-Sputnik America raced to catch the Russians intellectually, higher education boomed as an industry with federal, state and foundation support reaching all time highs. Almost overnight new institutions sprang up, and on

established campuses new programs, buildings and facilities were quickly developed. At some institutions enrollments doubled, then tripled, and even quadrupled as the 18-22 year old college age population swelled.

Yet, institutional growth was also accompanied by a series of potentially disruptive organizational conditions: overcrowded campuses; the building of largely impersonal and too often sterile facilities; an ever-expanding administrative bureaucracy with its subsequent red tape; computerized enrollment packages that further contributed to a general sense of alienation; academic requirements which often forced students to enroll in a host of large lecture oriented or televised introductory courses where they were often no more than a number among other numbers; and a more intense awareness of the competition and fear of failure that prevailed among the young who battled for grades, class rankings, graduate school admissions, and other symbols of academic success.

As John Keats reported in his excellent but too little read The Sheepskin Psychosis, students in the 1960's often entered college because that was where they were supposed to be. For college had been sold to America's young and their parents like some sort of ultimate elixir.

Still, many young persons chose to enroll in an institution on the basis of such superficial things as status considerations, the college's physical location, or its reputation for "good times," rather than any real commitment to what one might learn there. Also, too many undergraduates expected the college of their choice to be very different from high school, but they soon discovered that it was very often more of the same, only amplified.

After the Berkeley events, however, students throughout the nation began to vent their frustrations against the contradictions and inadequacies inherent in the educational system. Though they would express their concern over specific issues which might vary from one institution to another, the general dissatisfactions centered on increasing student freedom. The major issues included such things as: 1) the elimination of restrictive social rules and regulations; 2) an increased role in setting those rules and regulations, as well as university governance as a whole; 3) the improvement of living conditions within the university, ranging from dormitory conditions and restrictions to the quality of food service; 4) the nature of the entire teaching-learning process predominant in most universities during this time, embracing everything from the curriculum to grading practices.

It is important to stress the interconnectedness and reciprocity of the issues. Without the initiatives generated by the so-called "student power" efforts within the university, few of the dissatisfactions expressed over the learning process are likely to have received even an airing. It was the institutional climate created by the protests, and in many cases the attention it received from the media, which served to produce not only a sense of urgency, but also to legitimize the concerns as well. The issues themselves mixed in such a fashion that the real targets for change were often extremely difficult to decipher. So many issues were being presented that the situation appeared to be a potpourri of crises. Thus, no single cause was ever likely to stand alone, at least for very long. Rather, issues dovetailed into and extended from one another. One protest escalated to another in what often seemed

like an endless process. As an illustration of how an issue might bridge both the institution as a whole as well as standard teaching-learning practices, let us look for a moment at a major goal of the student protest movement.

### Power and Participation

Central to almost all of the student demands was the assumption that the university should exist as a democratic community. This meant that the decision-making processes within an institution ought to involve those persons most likely to be affected by the outcome of a specific decision. In particular, students believed to be currently disenfranchised from the governance of a university or college should be given more rights and responsibilities.

The arguments for why an institution ought to do this were based on both educational and democratic theory. The noted philosopher Charles Frankel summarized those in the following manner:

If people have some power over the way in which they live and work, they have more interest in their experience, and they learn more from it. If they have some power, they tend to become more responsible. They are more likely to make the connections between ideas and action, rhetoric and reality, that are at once the tests and pleasures of the moral life.<sup>1</sup>

The real question is, of course, how far does one go to democratize an institution? In most situations, students were initially interested in gaining representation on certain administrative-faculty councils or

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Frankel, Education and the Barricades (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1968), p. 28.



control over setting the rules and regulations which govern their social lives. However, it was soon apparent that by stretching the participation arguments a bit further students might also influence other areas. In the clearest sense of the word, participation became a direct challenge to the authority of the faculty and administration over issues traditionally considered under their purview. Student participation came to mean representation at all levels of the decision-making process, ranging from the board of trustees to departmental personnel committees charged with faculty tenure decisions.

#### Relevance and the Conflict of Values

In tracing other issues leveled against the university, one can see the same diffusion patterns in operation. A charge is articulated, usually against the institution as a whole, and then filtered down to engulf the departments and individual faculty members. For example, the question of "relevance" demonstrates this same phenomenon. Critics pointed to the foolishness of an educational system which teaches iambic pentameter but refuses to grapple with how to bring peace to society. They asked: Where is the moral application of what the university says it stands for? Why are the most important questions of human existence not seen as worth asking?

In an attempt to force America's institutions of higher education to bend to a more personal conception of education, students asked over and over again. . .what is the relevance of this to me in the here and now? That question was applied to almost every conceivable university regulation and course requirement, as well as a host of other things.

What had been only a few years before accepted as part of the traditional college experience was held up to more contemporary standards.

Thus, it was the very ideal of the university which was now in disrepute. While protests against American society wailed about this nation's inconsistencies, the university and that society were seen by many critics as "so intimately intertwined that their ills do not differ significantly."<sup>2</sup> One by one the myths which held academic institutions together were pulled like loose strands of a fiber. When a faculty argued the historical evidence which supported the neutrality of universities from involvement with social issues, some students indignantly pointed to the fallacies inherent in such logic. How could universities declare themselves as neutral and conduct war related research, act as slum landlords, or hold stock portfolios in exploiting industries? How could the university say it strives to inculcate democratic ideals and continue to discriminate against racial minorities through elitist admission policies? How could the administrators discuss the university in terms of building individual character and continue to practice in loco parentis philosophies through oppressive rules and regulations?

How could the faculty speak of a "community of scholars" and exclude the students from participation? How could the university discuss the merits of an educational process that is dominated by faculty research rather than undergraduate teaching? How could individual faculty members continue to say that research is value-free? How could adminis-

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<sup>2</sup>Michael Rossman, The Wedding within the War (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1971), p. 153.

trators and faculty members talk about education as if it were a fixed body of knowledge, separate from the world of contemporary problems, and basically unchanging? And so it went.

If there were a core source for the disputes to be identified, it must be derived from the obvious conflict of values which existed in this strained situation. For many of the young and their supporters had visions of what the university and society ought to be which were considerably different from those of faculty members and administrators who advocated a more traditional and restrained conception of both. The youthful values emerged loosely around such things as: participatory democracy, a return to community, the elimination of inequality, living in the present, personal growth and freedom, social consciousness, and the rejection of materialism. While the more tradition bound saw the young abdicating America's cherished culture; accepting an anti-intellectual and anti-reason approach to life; depending too much on their own emotions to impulsively reach decisions; asking for America's colleges and universities to allow them a free ride to "do-their-own-thing," and attempting to engage social problems that were none of the university's business. But as one disgruntled faculty member described, "the age asked for freedom, relevance, and informality, and the issue was never much in doubt."<sup>3</sup>

Soon four major concerns would be expressed on campus after campus: a) the quality of teaching and student-faculty relationships; b) rigid

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<sup>3</sup>Ronald C. Wendling, "The Undergraduate Curriculum: What Did We Do To It?" AAUP Bulletin, Volume 59, No. 4 (December, 1973), pp. 407-410.

academic requirements; c) grading and examination procedures; and d) the limitations inherent in existing curriculum arrangements. These would be the most often mentioned problems by students and critics of America's higher education system. Now, let us briefly look at each of these issues.

### Teaching

In attempting to explain why his campus sought to alter the standard teaching relationship, one administrator described teaching in these terms:

Too frequently the teacher stands in a place similar to the mule driver who has had the animals equipped with blinders as he holds tight to the reins and cracks his whip about the animals' ears. Similarly, in the classroom freedom and latitude in self-expression are usually discouraged and education is presented as a fiat. To be sure many such situations are enhanced in their rigor by pop quizzes and the like but they seldom produce greater self-insight, inspire personal initiative, or develop acceptance of responsibility.<sup>4</sup>

Teaching was based primarily on the lecture system in the early '60s. A faculty member might enter the classroom at the beginning of a session, take attendance, and proceed to lecture to the students on the assignment of the day. All too often, this took the form of a reiteration of the previous reading assignment. And, in some cases, the professor might actually spend the hour reading from that text. In most

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<sup>4</sup>From remarks by John Bevan at a conference on experimental higher education in W. H. Stickler (ed.), Experimental Colleges: Their Role in American Higher Education (Tallahassee: Florida State University, 1964), p. 94.



places, this was called teaching.

There are, of course, implicit assumptions behind such an approach to learning. As Harold Taylor explains:

It assumes that all learning and thinking is conscious and that the mind is as Locke described it--a clean slate on which sense impressions and ideas are written. It assumes an old-fashioned, pre-Freudian dualism in which the mind is separated from the body, the emotions from the intellect, the conscious from the unconscious. In spite of everything we know about communications, about symbols, signs, words, images, memory, intuition, and the way ideas and values are communicated from one person to another. . .it assumes that the best way to communicate ideas and facts is to sit people down in chairs in large groups and talk at them.<sup>5</sup>

The misconceptions in such a system seemed all too apparent to the students and their supporters. It served to put the learner in a subservient role to the all-knowing teacher. It forced the student to acquiesce to another person's view of knowledge. It taught the student to be passive. It encouraged students not to think, or if they did to keep those thoughts to themselves. For the concern of such a system is efficiency--implanting the greatest number of facts into the greatest number of students.

In order for that system to change, the students and their supporters contended that the authority and expertise of the faculty must be neutralized somehow. Classes would have to become smaller and more intimate. The role of the faculty member would have to be drastically altered from a dispenser of knowledge to one which was much more humanis-

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<sup>5</sup>Harold Taylor, How to Change Colleges (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 68.



tic and facilitative. Faculty rewards would also have to swing from the professional oriented emphasis on research to an equal recognition of the merits of teaching.

### Requirements

By the '60s the prevalent model in higher education involved splitting up the world of knowledge into smaller subject matter departments, each with its own faculty and course offerings. In order for a student to graduate from an institution, he/she was required to sample certain courses from each of these areas. This would normally encompass a student's first two years in an institution.

Even though a student might declare a major or area of concentration in his/her initial year, say business or political science, the academic marketplaces were such that the student was often compelled to enroll in courses which were not only of little or no interest to them, but also not in any conceivable way related to their major. In addition, within the department, a student often could not enroll in a particular course without having fulfilled that area's own requirements. This might entail a specific sequence of courses which a student must complete. In some cases, it also meant completing a prerequisite course or groveling before a professor to secure a waiver.

On the whole, upon entering an institution a student faced both university-wide requirements, college or school requirements, as well as departmental requirements. This sort of "lock-step" thinking created a situation where there were more rules blocking the learning process than those actually encouraging it. The assumptions behind most of the aca-

democratic requirements were seen by many critics as simply an extension of in loco parentis thinking. Which, in academic terms, is translated to mean that the students might not have the good sense to enroll in certain disciplines in a more open and voluntary system.

Faculty members countered by explaining that the well educated person should be exposed to the major thoughts and concepts of the various disciplines. This, after all, was the premise behind the term "liberal education."

Then how, replied the students, do you explain the fact that few undergraduates retain even the faintest memory of what those concepts and ideas are upon the completion of the required curriculum? They went on to say that requirements fail to recognize basic individual differences. Requirements cannot account for the uniqueness of the student's previous experiences, current capacities, and present interests.

The more radical students argued that the entire requirements syndrome was nothing less than a tacit agreement between departments to perpetuate their existence at the expense of the students. Requirements, they declared, were simply collusionary arrangements between departments designed to insure that each student would be equally exposed to all the disciplines, a sort of price fixing between departments. There was no educational philosophy at stake in the requirements scheme, just self-interests. The end result of such a system, these radicals argued, was to force the student to make a commitment to one of the disciplines.

The intention of the students' analysis was to open up what they saw as a closed educational system. This, they believed, could only be

done by eliminating most, if not all, of the requirements. In addition, more options would have to be provided for the student.

### Grading Practices

Few issues were debated under as heated circumstances as the question of grading. From the very beginning at Berkeley, the examination and evaluation practices of faculty were seen as suspect. But, it was not just the faculty who were to be chastised in this squabble. Students criticized each other for participating in the sham of "grade worshipping." One such critic noted:

You repeat to yourselves over and over as an undergraduate that "It doesn't make any difference. . .it's the grade that counts," . . .a threadbare and worn phrase (if you are lucky enough to make it to the third or fourth year); used as commonly as your word "regurgitation" in place of "exam." You know the measure of truth in those bits of slang: it is nauseous. . .you almost do "puke up your work" to professors.<sup>6</sup>

The importance of grades was stressed by educators, family and fellow students alike. For it was grades that had become the principal "coin of the realm" in the academic life of undergraduates. Grades were the unit of exchange--the so-called symbol of success or failure in the world of knowledge. Grades were important for other reasons as well: 1) their impact (at that time) on military draft status; 2) future employment opportunities and graduate school admissions; 3) a student's self-image; 4) the organizations and peer interactions open to a stud-

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<sup>6</sup>Brad Cleaveland, "A Letter to Undergraduates" in Jacobs and Landau (eds.), The New Radicals (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), p. 218.

ent; and 5) relations with one's parents and sponsors.<sup>7</sup>

But it was the negative aspects of the grading system which drew the most attention. Or, as one critic stated:

Because it controls decisions about the worth of student accomplishment, the assignment of grades controls everything else, and is responsible, more than anything else, for injecting the twin poisons of hypocrisy and fear of failure into the student consciousness.<sup>8</sup>

The students' reactions to grades were founded on a conviction that the entire educational system was entirely too competitive. Many students believed that competition was not a healthy thing for an educational system to be fostering. In their opinion, cooperation not competition should be encouraged. They linked a number of America's societal woes to the individualism and aggressiveness which were reinforced by competitive educational practices. For them, grades came to represent a symbol of all that was wrong with American education and, in particular, the excessive anxiety it generates among the young.

Students went on to argue that the grade itself was now more important to their fellow classmates than any learning which might take place in a specific course. In the quest for high grades, they admitted, students engage in rote memorization, endless last minute cramming, and even cheating on an unprecedented scale. Furthermore, the testing and evaluative mechanisms utilized by most faculty members were seen as

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<sup>7</sup>Jennie Farley, "The Scriber: Modern Styles," Improving College and University Teaching, XXII, No. 1 (Winter, 1974), pp. 29-30.

<sup>8</sup>Taylor, How to Change Colleges, p. 100.



not measuring what a student actually knew or thought about a subject so much as what the faculty wanted to hear. In the simplest terms, tests were creating a "right answer" syndrome which many students abhorred. Also faculty were charged in some cases with exercising their "power to grade" to punish students who challenged them in the classroom.

Faculty members responded to these allegations by admitting that each instructor must face the issues of whether grading practices were indeed valid, reliable, objective and totally free from arbitrary and capricious decisions.<sup>9</sup> They often acknowledged that each student was different but each also required some standardized form of feedback on how he/she was proceeding within a particular course or academic experience. One professor explained:

A grade should be considered an effort to put back together, to synthesize, the separate judgments about a student's work. It gives the student some sense of the quality of his performance on the whole.<sup>10</sup>

In many situations, faculty members gave in to what they interpreted as an anti-evaluation movement. However, they steadfastly maintained that grades were necessary not only for the registrars to be able to record a student's performance for graduate school admissions and employment opportunities but also because grades were the primary motivator for students in the present system. Many faculty believed that without

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<sup>9</sup>Wayne Mollenberg, "To Grade or Not to Grade--Is That the Question?" College and University, Volume 49, No. 1 (Fall 1973), p. 5.

<sup>10</sup>Robert A. Feldmesser, "The Positive Function of Grades," Educational Record, LIII, No. 1, (Winter, 1972), p. 67.



grades students would aimlessly pursue their education.

There were, of course, some faculty members who agreed with the student analysis of grading practices. These persons often resorted to subverting the existing system through issuing "blanket grades" to everyone. For the novice, this practice involves a variation of either giving everyone the same grade or allowing the students to decide what grade they will receive according to their own needs. As a result, more traditional faculty members argued that the grade would soon become so inflated as to be meaningless as a measurement of student achievement. These faculty members interpreted the anti-grade movement as a deliberate attempt to lower academic standards.

In viewing the grading-related issues, the movement for abolition or reduction of emphasis on grades was rooted in a belief that rewards must be more intrinsically based. This argument holds that each individual should have more control over her/his reward system. Never mind the difficulties of moving from a system that is dominated by extrinsically controlled rewards, students demanded a more egalitarian system where internal judgments by the student finally determine an individual's growth and intellectual progress. If this was an impossibility, then the existing system should be restructured to accommodate the more humanistic overtones of this argument. For failure, as a concept, was to be eliminated from the educational system. No one failed; they just did not fulfill the requirements.

### The Confining Curriculum

The criticisms levied against university and college curricula are

in many ways a continuation of the allegations and arguments previously discussed in relation to other teaching-learning issues. In discussing the inadequacies of the dominant curricular patterns, Judson Jerome commented:

. . .why have we not resented--and changed--education conducted almost without reference to current politics, religion, sex, personal ethics, family relationships--without reference, in short, to the areas of experience which matter as one prepares for citizenship, parenthood, or any other role outside the school? How many of us truly feel that our college education was relevant to real human concerns? How many of us, especially in graduate study, have let a model of scholarship be foisted upon us which took us farther from rather than nearer to, our interest in our subject? How many of us have let education exorcise our enthusiasm and quell our will to action?<sup>11</sup>

As Jerome stresses, and we have stated elsewhere, the prevailing curriculum in most institutions of higher learning was perceived as largely out-of-touch with the intellectual and social needs of undergraduates. In many students' opinion, the curriculum failed to give ample attention to the societal issues that dominated their lives--war, racism, the environment, and so on--and which as citizens they would be called upon to make decisions and judgments about. Moreover, the curricula, and the faculty and departments that sponsored the courses, seemed bent on suppressing any linkage between issues of a contemporary nature and what was commonly referred to as formal knowledge. Under the guise of traditional education, the curriculum shrank from addressing issues which focused on the students' personal problems and concerns.

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<sup>11</sup>Judson Jerome, Culture out of Anarchy (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), p. 14.

Coupled with this lack of personal relevance, the students also responded to the rigidity of institutional and departmental requirements. In their opinion, requirements chopped up their educational experience through unrelated courses. The student was expected to enroll in four or five courses from the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities, per semester or time period. It was argued that this tended to spread out student commitments to such a point that many were unable to concentrate sufficiently on any single subject.

One chief academic officer described the incongruencies of such a required curriculum in these terms:

The theory--was probably good: knowledge is vast and must be approached from divergent points of view if one is to become educated. "Educated" must in that case mean "having acquired, digested, related, even integrated some knowledge." My professors rarely spoke individually of any relationship between what each was asking me to learn and what I was picking up from other folk. The theoretical purpose of divisional requirements had no practical significance. There was no practice of integration. Now if I understood empirical tests at all, practice must precede theory. Without integrative practice, integrative theory could not exist. Fragmentative practice--requiring students to jump over isolated hurdles not even laid on the same track--made my curriculum. Naturally, I have never heard anybody advance a fragmentative theory of education.<sup>12</sup>

In a short time, a number of undergraduates and their supporters began to articulate a view that education, and in particular the curriculum, ought to consider the student along political, aesthetic, intellectual, social and personal dimensions. In other words, education

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<sup>12</sup>John Satterfield, "From Self-Examination to Self-Respect: Purposes Served by Faculty Evaluation," The Institute for Undergraduate Curricular Reform Newsletter, Issue Eight (April 1975, p. 5.

should strive to deal with the student in holistic terms. If the curriculum, with the possible exception of the natural sciences and professions, was as Paul Goodman stated, without consequences and "morally and even personally useless,"<sup>13</sup> then, the faculty and their curricula would have to be altered so that students could be dealt with as total persons.

In the future, all taboos against dealing with the student as a developing person were to be lifted. Because the student develops intellectually and also emotionally during the collegiate years, both fall under the purview of the institution and its faculty. Affective growth was to be equally as important as intellectual development. Furthermore, no longer could learning be assumed to be a phenomenon which is solely confined to the classroom. For total education also encompasses the world external to the campus and especially out-of-class learning experiences. The nucleus of this thesis was founded on a belief that learning can and should take place anywhere at any time and need not be limited to formal educational settings.

Many change advocates went on to propose that a more appropriate method to transform the curriculum and make it more action-oriented was to actively engage the world and its problems. Under this system, social problems and social change were to be a central focus of the curriculum and learning. In reaction to the narrowness they perceived in discipline-based curriculum, students and their supporters contended that solving problems would require the composite knowledge of many dis-

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<sup>13</sup>Paul Goodman, Compulsory Mis-education and the Community of Scholars (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), p. 316.



ciplines, rather than the prejudiced views and biases of single departments. As an example, the problems of the disadvantaged might be approached from such disciplinary perspectives as political science, economics, psychology, genetics, business, and many others. Therefore, the answer to holistic education, relevance, fragmentation, and requirements was for many reformers an interdisciplinary one.

### In Summary

The basic rationale for change during this era rested on a reiteration of a humanistic dictum. Critics especially argued that each individual must be viewed as a unique human being possessing enormous potential. Under prevailing conditions, the majority of America's institutions of higher learning were seen as thwarting human potential. Through their formalistic teaching practices, excessive requirements, overemphasis on grades and competition, and an antiquated curriculum, colleges and universities limited and controlled crucial aspects of student life.

For the student to be able to become more excited about education and learning, it was further argued that these institutions would have to be transformed. The salient features surrounding the strategies suggested to insure transformation of higher education will be analyzed and discussed in the next chapter.



CHAPTER III  
STRATEGIES FOR DELIBERATE FAILURE

The key word then was innovation, which carried a hidden implication that if we modernize ourselves a little, use a few gimmicks, jazz up our teaching methods, incorporate a little of the new hardware, we might get the old machine back on the highway.

Judson Jerome

In the course of the years 1964-1975, a good many universities and colleges throughout the country underwent an era of unparalleled modifications. Stringent requirements were lifted. New academic programs were initiated. Admissions standards were redesigned to facilitate the enrollment of students previously not served by higher education. In general, various educational experiences were generated or created which seemed to make these institutions more flexible.

Educational historians in later generations may attribute this so-called "reformation period" to a number of interrelated issues. Some may simply say that discussions about new educational approaches can be directly correlated with the student unrest which overlapped much of this period. Or they might point to the tremendous amount of state and federal funding which was then available to higher education. Others will no doubt single out the large foundation gifts which were frequently distributed for non-traditional and experimenting ventures. Those who sympathize with the power of the printed word will simply identify the proliferation of commission reports, journal articles, and other

change-oriented publications as part of the causal conditions behind the array of alternatives.

Whatever the answers, few periods in the history of American higher education produced a similar debate on the merits and pitfalls of learning. And, in the course of these debates, the knowledge establishments were aroused and challenged to a series of reconstruction possibilities on a scale previously non-existent. But, despite the widespread growth of potential alternatives, one must ask whether anything much at all really happened in the midst of all these change incantations. Did American higher education really restructure itself? Was that even the goal of these dialogues? And, in regards to the various ideas tested and tried, why has the luxury of time seemed to dilute their impact? Were these pedagogical and organizational proposals, as the early dissidents had so often said, merely appealing techniques for coopting larger struggles and thus a dissipating drain on societal change energies?

In this piece, these are some of the issues we hope to delve into. It seems especially important during these times of economic retrenchment and reported non-growth to glance over our shoulders at the major legacy of the educational decade just completed. If people are to comprehend the complexities of these academic institutions, they need to know whether these agencies of cultural preparation were capable of revitalizing themselves. Consequently, the principal task here is to delineate the major educational options presented over the past ten years. Moreover, it is also to make some rather rudimentary assessments of the limits inherent in these change strategies and then to discuss, in more

extensive terms, the results of these interventions.

### Utopian Visions

Almost every utopia is an implicit criticism of the civilization that served as its background; likewise it is an attempt to uncover the potentialities that the existing institutions either ignored or buried beneath an ancient crust of customs and habit.<sup>1</sup>

Before cataloging the various proposals which surfaced, we need to be more fully cognizant of an implicit goal running beneath the potpourri of pedagogical ideas and organizational choices. Though it was not often articulated as such, and some might argue that the diverse ideas cannot be condensed in this manner, the dreams for a better educational system remain part of a muddled utopian vision. The word muddled seems quite appropriate because so few of those who advanced educational panaceas realized the significance of their dreams. A minority did see that to suggest education ought to be different somehow also implied a different vision for the society as a whole.

As Mumford noted in The Story of Utopias, a utopian image, whether it refers to a nation state or one's academic department, is still a separate reality. We can say that it is separate because this dream resides with a given person or group and serves as a guiding light for the way they believe the physical world could or should be. In many cases, such visions are a reaction against the negative conditions of a parti-

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis Mumford, The Story of Utopias (New York: Viking Press, 1962), p. 2.

cular external environment, the physical world which rests outside the individual.

Still people who envision a different world--one, for example, where people relate to each other in more humane ways, where organizations serve the people who work and live within them rather than the other way around, and where ideals are pursued and debated in an open and yet supportive manner--have at least two choices: 1) they can attempt to escape the prevailing reality; 2) they can seek to reconstruct the external world in ways which seem to make it more congruent with their dreams. Although there are more than ample examples of both these approaches operant in higher education over the last decade, it is the remodelers which we plan to discuss in this chapter. For a central thesis in this work is that the people who sought a new educational system in America proposed (often unknowingly) "a new set of habits, a fresh scale of values, a different net of relationships and institutions."<sup>2</sup>

The implicit message of such a dream is humanism. Erich Fromm once defined humanism as a "belief in the unity of the human race and man's potential to perfect himself."<sup>3</sup> If one were to write a modern humanist creed, it would probably go something like this: "I believe that every human being has a self which gives that person the capacity for freedom, reason, creativity, love, and sympathy. I believe that, because each

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup>Erich Fromm (ed.), Socialist Humanism (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1965), p. vii.

person has such a self, we ought to respect him and create situations in which he can develop his capacities."<sup>4</sup>

The value assumptions of this vision encompass not only ideas designed to insure egalitarianism and personal liberty but also others which call for: nonauthoritarianism, interpersonal sensitivity, personal growth, intimacy, and social commitments. Humanistic expectations assume that every individual (read institutions as well) can become more open, just, caring, active and selfless.

In general, however, the tactics selected for achieving this earthly paradise have been founded on three interrelated maxims: 1) redistribution of power; 2) establishing a sense of community; and finally 3) a faith in the cooperation which would be nurtured by such actions. But it is *Gemeinschaft* or community which has always been the ultimate goal of the vision.

This ideal, a central utopian vision of Western society, has been described in the following terms:

. . .the desire for a community in which the needs of each are consonant with the needs of all, in which reason, freedom, and happiness converge in the real life and imagination of all people, is deeply woven into the design of Western art, philosophy, and religion. It is, in its multiple forms, a majestic, powerful vision of man released from the bonds of self and the limitations of history, a view of social harmony that transcends tensions between the one and the many, the self and others, characteristic of various modes of society.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Michael P. Lerner, The New Socialist Revolution (New York: Delta Publishing Company, 1973), p. xiii.

<sup>5</sup>Peter Clécak, Radical Paradoxes (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1974), p. 274.



At its core, then, the movement for a new and transformed educational system held out a definition of human nature which exalted the abilities of mankind, and also organizations, to mythic proportions. People were expected to instantly adopt behaviors well beyond their experiences and previous consciousness. More importantly, these neo-utopianists were to confront obstacles which too few imagined. In their quest for a new educational world, paradoxes emerged which few were able to handle, at least for very long. This led many to a sense of generational failure, frustration, anger, guilt, and eventually withdrawing cynicism. But we are getting well ahead of ourselves. Let us turn now to a longer discussion on the various options suggested for changing America's educational enterprises.

### Choosing the Options

To begin with, institutions and advocates could pick and choose among notions which dealt with governance, admissions, curricula, instruction, evaluation, space/time issues, and those which impact on institutional operations.<sup>6</sup> Table 2 represents a fairly comprehensive compilation of the variety of options and trends operant in this period.

From among all these possible choices institutions selected their own unique responses. For example, a few institutions sought to com-

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<sup>6</sup>For two other change typologies, see The Yellow Pages of Undergraduate Education (Ithaca, New York: The Cornell Center for Improvement in Undergraduate Education, 1974) and Harold L. Hodgkinson et al. A Manual for the Evaluation of Innovative Programs and Practices in Higher Education (Berkeley: The University of California Center for Research and Development in Higher Education, 1974).

Table 2

## The Old Change Agenda: A Typology of Academic Reform Trends and Options

Governance

## Proposals Sought

more democratization  
 increased student representation at all levels of decision-making  
 establishment of campus wide "community" governance units  
 elimination of rigid social requirements  
 deletion of required courses  
 class attendance requirements dropped  
 concentration and distribution requirements altered

Admissions

## Proposals Sought

greater access  
 greater minority enrollment in predominantly white institutions  
 breaking down of 18-22 year old attendance lockstep  
 enrollment of new student populations  
 removal of elitist admission policies  
 more active minority recruitment  
 development of special programs for the disadvantaged  
 increase in financial assistance opportunities  
 open admissions

Curriculum

## Proposals Sought

more student-centered courses  
 more open and flexible curricula  
 development of more curricular options  
 individualized study options  
     independent study  
     student-initiated courses  
     contract learning  
 expansion of social problems courses ✓  
 introduction of personal growth courses  
 integration of the various fields of knowledge  
     interdisciplinary programs  
     program-centered courses and programs approached from several disciplines  
 recognition of experience as a valid learning device  
     off-campus opportunities  
     work-study or cooperative programs  
     apprenticeships and internships  
     cross-cultural and foreign study opportunities

introduction of special study areas

- Black Studies
- Women Studies
- Environmental Studies
- Urban Problems
- Peace Studies
- Asian Studies
- Futuristic Studies

and a wide range of specially designed programs for First Year students

### Instruction

#### Proposals Sought

- less faculty authoritarianism
- less formality
- more seminar-like courses
- clearer course objectives
- more student input into course content
- some inroads into the concept of "teacher as learning partner"
- introduction of programs to improve instruction
  - student evaluation of teaching
  - instructional support services
  - teaching improvement programs and faculty development centers
  - teaching grants
- more emphasis on rewarding good teaching
  - teacher awards
  - more attention to teaching in tenure decisions
- rethinking of faculty advising and counseling functions
- students permitted to do some teaching

### Evaluation

#### Proposals Sought

- de-emphasis on grades
- initiation of a wide variety of grading options
  - pass-fail
  - pass-no record
  - elimination of point averages
  - written faculty evaluations
- development of examination options
  - student contracts
  - student projects and student portfolio
  - case studies
  - performance and competency criteria
  - self-paced instructional programs
  - increase in the use of personal journals
  - take-home examinations, and open book tests
- redefinition of the meaning of credit
  - recognition of life experiences as worthy of credit
  - initiation of variable credit concepts

credit through examination  
 credit for work experience

### Space/Time Variations

#### Proposals Sought

calendar changes  
 more emphasis on utilization of January term for learning activities  
 4-1-4 calendar adopted at many institutions  
 expansion of non-resident degree programs  
 external degree programs  
 university without walls  
 correspondence study  
 full time-part time options provided  
 students encouraged to drop in or out  
 curriculum modularized into smaller units

### Institutional

#### Proposals Sought

more cooperation between institutions through consortia activities  
 initiation of intentional experimenting colleges such as  
 Hampshire College  
 Evergreen State  
 Empire State College  
 Governors State  
 Eckerd College  
 Wisconsin at Green Bay  
 and many others  
 creation of experimental subunits in established institutions  
 model colleges  
 cluster colleges  
 residential colleges  
 living-learning units  
 "free universities"

pletely reformulate their goals and purposes. Grant and Riesman recently divided these more intentional institutions into four categories: 1) neo-classical movement--institutions which attempted to restore the 19th century classical ideals and curriculum into the college's program (examples might include St. John's College, Tussman's early experiments at Berkeley, and Coswell College at Santa Cruz in 1965); 2) aesthetic-

expressive movement--institutions which introduced the performing and creative arts as a central part of the curriculum (examples might include California Institute of the Arts, Grand Valley State College, and Carleton College); 3) communal-expressive movement--institutions which stressed the importance of a sense of community, and also emphasized programs from humanistic psychology such as encounter groups, workshops on group dynamics, and other exercises that foster an awareness of self or personal growth (examples might include the early Johnston College at Redlands, Kresge College at Santa Cruz in the late 60's, and the now defunct Prescott College); and 4) activist-radical movement--institutions which deliberately encouraged and facilitated student activism through involvement with social issues (examples might include Antioch College at Yellow Springs and SUNY at Old Westbury during Harris Wofford's tenure as president).<sup>7</sup> In many ways, however, these institutions and others like Hampshire, Evergreen State, and Empire State were the exceptions to the general rule.

Beyond complete institutional revitalization, academic change usually assumed two basic forms. First, numerous institutions simply initiated experimenting subunits. These model subcolleges or "new" colleges often operated as separate entities within some larger institutional setting where a wide range of teaching-learning approaches were explored while the main campus continued to pursue its more established practices. The second and most popular maneuver involved developing

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<sup>7</sup>Gerald Grant and David Riesman, "An Ecology of Academic Reform" Daedalus Volume 104, No. 1 (Winter 1975), pp. 169-176.



isolated and somewhat more random reform proposals. In this case, an institution left innovation to the individual initiative of departmental and college entrepreneurs. In these cases, there was frequently little if any communication, linkage, or coordination from one new idea to the next.

An excellent illustration of this last approach would be Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. During the years 1968 to 1973, although under the auspices of no single institutional umbrella or agency, this institution sponsored the following activities: 1) the Continuing Education division began to grant interdisciplinary masters degrees in the liberal arts; 2) the office of residential living (those people charged with dormitory responsibilities) began to coordinate several living-learning projects; 3) the Business School offered a series of personal growth and life planning courses; 4) the freshmen and sophomore oriented University College conducted a wide range of problem centered courses; 5) individual faculty members in selective departments--Sociology, Psychology, and History--tried out new examination and testing options; and 6) the institution as a whole adopted a pass-fail grading system as well as a "shared governance" model for decision-making.

SMU symbolizes the eclectic approach to change. There was no effort to integrate all these activities into any single institutional plan. Furthermore, none of these projects were intended to alter the basic goals, objectives or power relationships of that university. Most colleges and universities followed a similar pattern. They acted on the rather extensive change agenda by picking and choosing those programs which seemed to meet their local needs and situations.

To the novice it may appear at first glance that a considerable amount of educational re-thinking occurred during these years. However, once the proliferation of options are transcended and the inquirer ascertains the actual programs implemented and sustained, the record looks less impressive. In general, institutions only sought to actively adopt those ideas which were absolutely necessary.

### Looking for a Quick Fix

The standard reaction to pressure for radical change is to buy it off. Across America, a strategy of campus containment is emerging, which reads: grant with relative grace the minor changes and options that don't endanger the System itself.<sup>8</sup>

Of course, one would be hard pressed to say nothing happened at all. Students were given more personal autonomy and freedom to "shop, to pick and choose, and to move at their own pace."<sup>9</sup> And, since many of the demands for reform were directed at the liberal arts area, much of the formality and rigidity prevalent in those disciplines was relaxed. In addition, institutions did adopt new governance arrangements, admit new student populations, offer more student-centered courses, and dabble with bits and pieces of all the rest. Still, there are two key things to remember: 1) what was often done in the name of change was generally the result of a very, very reluctant reform process; and 2)

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<sup>8</sup>Michael Rossman, The Wedding within the War (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1971), p. 300.

<sup>9</sup>Grant and Riesman, "An Ecology of Academic Reform," p. 166.

the overall goals and objectives of higher education changed very little during this era.<sup>10</sup>

Generally speaking, the changes which do seem to have occurred are largely rhetorical. For it is the language of administrators and other institutional members that seems to associate every new idea with such nebulous terms as "experimental" and "non-traditional" or "alternative." As Leon Botstein, the ex-president of Franconia College (an institution frequently classified along all the above-mentioned labels) stated not long ago: "Although one can dismiss the misuse or soft use, of these words as superficial shortcomings, the contextual banality is a symptom of the questionable quality and the confusion in the current thinking about higher education."<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps, it is a natural tendency to identify change, no matter how diminutive, in terms of the language of the times. Nevertheless, Bot-

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<sup>10</sup>There are many researchers who have described the resistance to new ideas phenomena as experienced in American higher education. See especially J. B. von Hefferlin, Dynamics of Academic Reform (San Francisco: Jossey Bass Inc., 1969); Joseph Fashing and Steven E. Deutsch, Academics in Retreat (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1971); and Jack Lindquist, "Political Linkage: The Academic-Innovation Process," Journal of Higher Education, XLV, No. 5 (May, 1974), pp. 323-343. Also, in regard to institutional goals and objectives, Gross and Grambsch (major researchers in this area) recently stated: "When we compared the findings of 1971 to 1964, we were struck with the fact that there was practically no change in the rank ordering of goals or goal preferences. If the major events of the 1960's had had an effect on universities, the effect did not show up in the goals--that is, the direction in which universities were moving--or in the values associated with those directions." Edward Gross and Paul V. Grambsen, Changes in University Organization, 1964-1971 (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974), p. 197.

<sup>11</sup>Leon Botstein, "What Is Innovation, Really?" Change, IV, No. 3 (April, 1972), p. 14.

stein's point is well taken; much of what is being called "innovative" in our colleges and universities is tinkering at best. Institutions which did away with requirements (the trend now is to reinstitute the old ones), altered grading systems, introduced freshmen seminars, inserted independent study options, or announced calendar revisions, were all too often doing one of two things: 1) trying to pacify student demands; or 2) jumping on the perennial bandwagon. Many so-called reform ideas were simply applied to an institution's undergraduate program with little or no thought of the college's total aims or educational mission. Too often academic change symbolized the initiation of a few new gimmicks, a sort of band-aid approach to learning.

Yet, one must recall the historical context of the decade. Before the pressure for innovation was dissipated, the formula for change was a fairly effective one: Look around. See what seems to be wrong with the institution (the conditions which prevent human beings from relating to one another as free and equal individuals). Identify the university's complicity in perpetuating these conditions. Raise a few tough questions about this state of affairs. Do a little nonviolent sitting-in to draw attention to the issues. Then watch what happens. Repeat the recipe whenever necessary.

For a short time, the old faculty-administrative oligarchy was cornered ever so slightly into listening and reacting. Without fully realizing it, the pedagogical leftists had hit a central nerve. For in an organization whose principal membership is enamored with rationality (and all that the term implies), the point of critical vulnerability converges around the application of knowledge and reasoned intelligence to



perplexing problems. When the undergraduates and their advocates presented a potpourri of charges at the academy's doors, it switched the formal and informal problem-solving mechanisms on. Since so much of higher education's justification involves defining, analyzing and solving problems, the natural response was to think that these concerns ought to be resolved somehow.

But these were not just any ordinary questions. Though the queries were targeted at the university, one could easily transfer their indictments to the society as well. For the university was seen as: dehumanizing, alienating, isolating, meritocratic, elitist, and racist. In spite of this, rejoinders to these charges became inevitably entangled with negotiating acceptable actions for relieving the perceived tensions while simultaneously alleviating only the most blatant conditions. But change was not to be pursued in purely objective terms; it was to be guided along definitional lines which limited the debate and short-circuited the potential actions which might be taken.

When the charges merged into chants for reform and innovation, the victory seemed to be won. Hindsight now tells even the most casual observer that each of these terms sets effective parameters around what could and should be done with higher education. In other words, the limits of change emerged from the problem-solving logic and the language which became associated with this process. First, institutions responded to the demands by giving in only where absolutely forced to.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>William L. O'Neill, whose Coming Apart remains the only significant history on this period to be published to date, stated: "The threat of student action was always there to goad the faculty along.



Secondly, what became known as "academic reform" was referred to by opponents and advocates alike as "the modification and improvement of the program of an educational institution."<sup>13</sup> So innovation came to be thought of as any new idea, practice, or object which was interpreted as new in a particular educational setting.<sup>14</sup> The common language for such tinkering continues to embrace words like "redefinition". . ."renewal" . . ."reconstruction" and other fix-up phrases.

### Additive Strategies

Those who tried to rehabilitate America's institutions of higher learning employed several basic strategies.<sup>15</sup> First, reformers presented a number of seemingly interrelated goals and objectives: 1) to work for a general restructuring of colleges and universities; 2) to seek to redistribute power within these organizations; 3) to establish more democratic decision-making patterns; 4) to insure more personal freedoms; 5) to develop curricula and instructional options; 6) to increase access for minority and disadvantaged students; 7) to reduce, if not

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Most changes were made to appease students rather than to implement powerfully felt educational principles." William L. O'Neill, Coming Apart (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1971), p. 302.

<sup>13</sup>Hefferlin, Dynamics of Academic Reform, p. xix.

<sup>14</sup>Everett M. Rogers and F. Floyd Shoemaker, Communication of Innovations (New York: The Free Press, 1971).

<sup>15</sup>Tropman and Ehrlich's definition says a strategy is "an orchestrated attempt to influence a person or system in relation to some goal which an actor desires." In Fred M. Cox, et al. Strategies of Community Organization (Itasca, Illinois: F.E. Peacock Publishers, 1974), p. 162.

eliminate, competitiveness, meritocratic distinctions, confining social and academic restrictions, and also the sense of ivory-tower aloofness prevalent in most educational enterprises.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, reformers were able to adopt a critical approach to the existing situation by repeatedly pointing out oppressive, dehumanizing, and alienating conditions. Reformers then could further discredit the existing order by putting forward a complex set of humanistic values and needs and thus demonstrate that the dominant educational model was antithetical to these visions. However, it is at the point of implementing a new approach that reformers began to compromise their dreams and stumble into antiquated change assumptions.

As we have mentioned earlier, the most widely used tactic for achieving a new educational system involved instituting alternative programs right along side of traditional arrangements and practices. J. B. Hefferlin once described the renewal plans in the following manner:

Throughout the entire evolution of academic institutions, the technique of organizing separate and parallel units of existing institutions. . . and has been the easiest means of academic reform. Indeed, historically the most common means of adapting educational institutions to new conditions has been the device of parallelism; the creation of programs and courses which offer an alternative to existing programs.<sup>17</sup>

This sort of strategy assumes that when a perplexing issue or

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<sup>16</sup>In general, the call for change was much more haphazard than pictured here. Few advocates possessed this entire agenda. Most were like the small child in a shooting gallery pointing the pellet rifle at anything that moves.

<sup>17</sup>Hefferlin, "End Runs and Line Bucking," p. 4.

problem surfaces in a given educational system the best solution is simply to graft on something new to the organization. If the existing curriculum fails to deal with relevant social topics, then add a few courses that do. If the present decision-making system seems a little biased in favor of particular groups, then blend in the disenfranchised constituencies by creating more governance units. If the faculty are over dependent on traditional teaching styles, then establish a faculty development center to retrain them. If the dormitories are dingy student ghettos, then change the name over the door and transform them into "living-learning centers." Whatever the obstacle, no matter the complexity of the substantive issues involved, any "problem" can be swept away (solved, if you like) by merely creating some new gimmick.

In essence then, the hope of an additive strategist becomes very much tied to the possible repercussions his/her new program might generate. But one must ask directly whether such "islands of innovation" really alter the principal aims and purposes of the modern university, or even if such add-on strategies alleviate the things they set out to conquer. Hefferlin comments again:

. . .the techniques of creating a parallel program does not solve the problem of the existing program; it merely offers an alternative to it. It is not a device for reforming the existing curriculum, except by undercutting it. . . . It is an end-run technique, a means of making progress by skirting the opposition and outflanking it.

And here is the crucial point:

It is a beautiful ploy, but it is a ploy of diversion, of solving a problem by avoiding the problem. A ploy of "benign

neglect" that does nothing directly about existing problems  
 . . . .<sup>18</sup>

America has a tradition of looking at change as one-shot responses to symptoms. One can trace its modern roots through Johnson's Great Society proposals, back to the Camelot of Kennedy's New Frontier, and on to the opportunistic liberalism of FDR's New Deal. But one must remember: "used by themselves, interventive actions tend to become merely forays against ad hoc 'targets of opportunity' without any sense of how they fit into some larger plan."<sup>19</sup> More importantly, the greatest myth is that things can be made better by such temporary solutions while the whole remains largely the same.

### Keeping the Liberal Faith

The gospel of change in America is liberalism.<sup>20</sup> According to this faith, what is wrong with society, or any given institution within it for that matter, can be solved by merely following certain assumptions. The most common of them simply holds that when something is interpreted as wrong, bad, or oppressive, this can be easily corrected by replacing

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>19</sup>Cox, et al., Strategies of Community Organization, p. 161.

<sup>20</sup>This discussion borrows rather freely from the writings of Louis Hartz, Kenneth and Patricia Dolbeare, and Michael Lerner. Since this is unquestionably the salient issue in understanding how people think about change in this country, those interested in comprehending all the nuances of liberalism should begin with Hartz's work and then move on to the others. Also, we use the term here without making any distinctions about the variety of liberal types which might fall under such a classification.



it with some new rule, social arrangement or invention. This argument contends that when this does not seem to work then the next best response is growth, either through "natural" expansion of activities or in the form of acquiring new territories, new personnel, or even new euphemisms. The tradition of liberalism, implied in that last comment, believes that almost any problem can be fixed up, whether the cosmetics be catchy phrases or revised programs.

The cornerstones of this faith are pragmatism, accommodation, compromise and experimentation. Pragmatism furnishes the good judgments required for the moderation of corners two and three, while experimentation serves as the rhetoric which caters to elitist demands for differences and new things without bordering on the extreme risks required for implementing more utopian visions. Thus change, to these pragmatic counselors, becomes the art of the possible and their typical comments to moral or idealistic change agendas is: "that's too unrealistic, let's do something a bit more practical." Liberalism becomes the search for mutually acceptable techniques for solving symptoms, for inventing temporary solutions, for implementing only those proposals which are acceptable within the context of traditional values and established procedures.

A more extensive listing of liberal assumptions would include statements:

Problems are isolated from one another and can be dealt with independently.

Things will be better if people try harder or if we get the right people in positions of power.



American society (and the university also) is pluralistic and "all legitimate interests are heard under conditions of fairness, mutual tolerance, and realistic assessment of others' needs and power."<sup>21</sup>

Only rational, empirical, objective approaches to problems are valid.

Working within the system (through legalized processes, established decision-making units, and under conventional rules and regulations) is always best.

Confrontation, conflict, and especially violence should be avoided by choosing the more peaceful and compromised middle grounds.

Accommodation (giving in to the other side) is better for everyone involved rather than having to endlessly debate the merits of each and every issue.

It takes very little analysis to realize that these assumptions limit change to those things which are not going to significantly alter the dominant power and authority relationships. Furthermore, whatever mutations do occur must fit within particular ideological, structural, and political frameworks. This renders certain that the source of the symptoms, the social and economic systems which produce indisputable advantages and disadvantages, remains the same.

### The Legends of Failure

Put away childish things; grow up; accept reality as it is, and the rewards will be great and genuine.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Kenneth M. Dolbeare and Patricia Dolbeare, American Ideologies (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1973), p. 74.

<sup>22</sup>George Kateb (ed.), Utopia (New York: Atherton Press, 1971), p. 2.

The not so subtle message of liberalism is to give up the dream. To pursue idealistic visions in a hostile world is truly foolishness. The only recourse for those who desire a different reality, whether it be a global community or university run on humanistic principles, is to accept the fallibilities of humanity. Human nature cannot be changed; people will always be people. The whole system can never be radically altered. Yet, how much of this is derivative of the change pattern itself?

The French social critic Andre Gorz has distinguished between two primary change patterns:

A reformist-reform is one which subordinates its objectives to the criteria of rationality and the practicability of a given system and policy. Reformism rejects those objectives and demands--however deep the need for them--which are incompatible with the preservation of the system.

On the other hand, a not necessarily reformist reform is one which is conceived not in terms of what is possible within the framework of a given system and administration, but in view of what should be possible in terms of human needs and demands.<sup>23</sup>

Obviously, those who sought to change education were caught between the dilemmas presented by these two patterns. Though the dream might lead one to select a nonreformist reform pattern, we are captives of a culture and reality which dictated the course of the pattern. In choosing to change higher education, the choice had been made. The criterion for change was to be set by the established frameworks (ideological, organizational, and political) so that only the illusions of reform would

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<sup>23</sup>Andre Gorz, Strategy for Labor (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), p. 7.

result.

The illusions or deceptions of this pattern are much more difficult to detect in the midst of unrest and seemingly plentiful resources. In an era of growth, new programs and procedures offer immediate hope and demonstrate that the system has the capacity for self-correction. However, when things get tight, both financially and politically, the true nature of the system shines through. It was under conditions of economic scarcity that campus after campus eliminated the new luxuries, and demands increased for a nostalgic return to old power alignments. By this time reformers had accepted the message of the adage: "the more things seem to change the more they remain the same." A generation was stuck with the lessons that liberal reformist criterion siphons off radical pressure, coopts it, and then brings stability back to the system. The system is just too resilient. Give up the dream.

No one sets out to deliberately fail. But is that not what the majority of these misguided idealists did? To begin with, they overexaggerated what was possible, as well as the speed at which change was likely to occur. Schooled in Horatio Alger myths, too many felt radical reform was as simple as mixing instant breakfast cereal. More than this, they overestimated the impact of their pet panaceas. Not only was their interpretation of change much too romantic but most possessed a grossly distorted sense of history; they had a tabula rosa approach to the past which often said "let's just wipe it out and start anew." In general, these reformers were a generation indoctrinated with liberal myths, glorifying America's potential for redirection, and very much unaware of their own ideological biases.

Louis Hartz has said, in commenting on the liberal tradition in America, that the tragedy of most popular reform movements has been their imperfect knowledge of the enemy they face.<sup>24</sup> While Michael Lerner asserts that "the most obvious problem with the liberal position is that it provides a mistaken analysis of the problems and hence cannot provide a solution."<sup>25</sup> These are the real keys to understanding the failures. In pursuing educational and societal humanism, reformers chose to enter a political contest where the rules of the game were rigged from the very beginning; where academic and societal values and beliefs, no matter how flexible and neutral they may first appear, support and sustain particular options over others; where the nature of educational organizations encourages territorial (we-they) thinking and structural isolation; and where the processes of decision-making are biased in favor of what is rather than what might be.

These are some of the conditions which limit the possibility for real change. In the next few chapters, we will examine these interrelated issues in some detail.

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<sup>24</sup>Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1955), p. 13.

<sup>25</sup>Lerner, The New Socialist Revolution, p. 117.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CONSTANT LENSES

Western culture is a kind of Maginot line of the mind.

Philip Slater

In discussing reform and change in American higher education, advocates almost never acknowledge the full ideological significance of their pet panaceas. Proposals for new governance arrangements, revised admission standards, or individualized curricula more often than not take place in ideological vacuums. It is not so much a case of ideology being non-existent (which, of course, is never true) but that reformers either deny or ignore the barriers which arise from it. This, in a very real sense, is a fatal error that too often only shows itself in the form of a blocked proposal, a dismembered reform, or a poorly implemented idea.

The intention of this chapter is to examine the major elements of mainstream American beliefs. These basic ideas serve to limit and guide reform suggestions according to their own rationales. Until this is more fully recognized and appreciated, advocates will continue to create strategies designed to fail.

#### On Ends and Means

Let us begin with the rather simple notion that within each of our heads there exists some image(s) of what constitutes a university or



college. These images are influenced by a number of factors: 1) our previous contact and experiences with education in general, as well as with higher education; 2) our present relationships to such settings (parent, taxpayer, student, teacher, sports fan, and so on); 3) the information and opinions we have collected on such places over the years from family, friends, the media, governmental agencies, and a host of other sources. From this melange, we each construct an image of what higher education is and is not, as well as what we believe it should strive to be.

These perceptions about higher education are both collective and personal in nature. Some are shared images held by a wide range of individuals within the society. Others are uniquely subjective interpretations. All these perceptions are nothing more than the mental images which are part of a complex system of beliefs and opinions we each hold about reality. This system refers to the "total universe of a person's beliefs about the physical world, the social world and the self."<sup>1</sup> A belief system is what gives meaning and understanding to our experience. It is through these beliefs that we both comprehend and interpret reality.

Beliefs aid an individual in defining both the everyday situations one encounters, as well as "how the present social, economic and political order operates."<sup>2</sup> Thus, beliefs about education comprise only a

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<sup>1</sup>Milton Rokeach, Beliefs, Attitudes and Values: A Theory of Organization and Change (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1972), p. 123.

<sup>2</sup>Kenneth M. Dolbeare and Patricia Dolbeare, American Ideologies (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1973), p. 3.

small portion of a person's complete belief system. A person's total belief system consists of all the varied perceptual lenses with which he/she interprets the world.

Scholars frequently refer to this total belief system as a person's ideology. One typical explanation states: "Ideologies are integrated systems of belief in which definitions of reality bear a relation to a goal and methods of achieving it."<sup>3</sup> Still others have defined it as follows:

Ideology serves as a bridge by which community translates timeless, universal values such as survival, justice, and self-fulfillment into real-world application. It is the framework of ideas that integrates and synthesizes all aspects of a community's being--political, social, cultural, ecological, and others. Ideology legitimizes a community's institutions--business, government, universities, or whatever--and thus it underlies the authority and rights of those who manage the institutions.<sup>4</sup>

But, what is the source of our ideology? Our total culture defines the goals of this belief system. In other words, American society, through its heritage and social institutions, establishes certain end-states of existence as desirable "frames of aspirational reference." We all know that. From very early on we are taught that particular end-states are much more important than others. Through games, family and friends, teachers, television and endless significant others, we learn the desirables.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup>William F. Martin and George Cabot Lodge, "Our Society in 1985-- Business May Not Like It," Harvard Business Review, LIII, No. 6 (November-December, 1975), pp. 149-150.

What we often fail to realize is that how we accept these end-states greatly influences what we see, experience, and do, and, more importantly, what we come to expect. Conversely, these culturally determined end-states serve, in a very real sense, as boundaries to each person's understanding of reality. Ideologies are the lenses that trap (or free) mankind into particular ways of behaving and relating to one another. They are the constant lenses which are so difficult to shed.

If the end-states are largely determined by our culture, what about the means for achieving them? Robert Merton, among others, states that our methods for reaching the desired goals are also largely determined by what we believe. In other words, what we know as social structure is derived from the same source of rationale as the end-states. In Merton's own words, social structure "defines, regulates, and controls the acceptable modes of achieving these goals."<sup>5</sup> Thus, social structure determines the means or how of our lives. It dictates, clarifies, and regulates the acceptable processes and activities to be utilized in pursuing the end-states.

### Beliefs and Values

We acquire our beliefs through a very complex and little understood process. A person's personality structure, social setting, class and economic background, and life experiences all come into play in this process. Naturally, one of the central agencies associated with the

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<sup>5</sup>Robert K. Merton, "Social Structure and Anomie" American Sociological Review, Volume 3 (October 1938), p. 672.

"learning" of our ideological frameworks is the nation's educational institutions. Through these organized academies, we inherit the "American way" of interpreting reality. We learn about the merits, inevitability, and utility of our various institutions, their practices, and particular social-economic-political goals. Though few could deny the importance of other agencies and social units in this process (family, television, music, peers, organized religion, etc.), it is the educational establishment which performs an important and integral role in this indoctrination.<sup>6</sup>

Of course, we do not get inoculated with one holistic and integrated ideology. A person may comprehend and integrate only a portion of an ideology. Also, preferences develop between and among competing beliefs. For example, we each make evaluative judgments about the world: 1) whether it is good or bad; 2) what should be done about it, if anything; and 3) why things are like this. In the process of answering these questions, we each come to value some end-states more than others. Value suggests a choice among certain ends and means. It assumes a personal preference or selection among competing and often conflicting activities and purposes. Also, values exist at all levels of society. We have cultural values, organizational values, and personal values. A dominant ideology, however, does exist, and, it actively seeks to maintain the conditions, institutions, and customs which insure the realization of its particular goals and values.

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<sup>6</sup>Webster's dictionary defines indoctrination as meaning: "to instruct in any doctrine, or to imbue certain principles."



As the Dolbeares have noted, an ideology may be so pervasive and extensive that it is not perceived as such by a majority of its citizens and analysts. Because what exists has been legitimized by history and the prevailing power structure, its rationalizations and justifications go largely unchallenged. Under such circumstances an ideology becomes a device for influencing how people view reality and what are the appropriate courses of action open to them in a given situation.

America's educational institutions are a most active and willing partner in the perpetuation of the dominant ideology. These educational agencies derive their formal legitimacy, and often as not their financial support, from the society and its mainstream beliefs. Consequently, higher education tends to serve the society by translating, interpreting, and validating the acceptable beliefs and social-economic-political customs. Education celebrates the dominant beliefs through: 1) its own academic value system; 2) the manner in which it defines and disseminates knowledge; 3) the ways in which knowledge is organized; 4) the mechanisms through which this is all perpetuated--namely, how these organizations are structured and the processes by which they continue to reach decisions about their activities and practices.

### Baseball, Apple Pie, and Chevrolet

The concern here is with what has been commonly labeled as America's "mainstream ideologies." These consist of "ideologies that are established, enduring, and orthodox and have dominated the thinking of



American political and other leaders throughout the twentieth century."<sup>7</sup> Mainstream ideologies are those that give justification and meaning to what already exists in this nation. These beliefs presume that the existing social order and class structure are permanent and fixed. They support "what is" and do not challenge the underlying concepts and practices inherent in their view of reality. In this sense, these ideologies share a status quo explanation of how the society does and should operate, both economically and politically.

What, then, are these dominant beliefs? Conventionally, they are thought of as two separate but very much interdependent and overlapping belief systems, capitalism-liberalism. First, capitalism involves an explanation of how best to organize the economic sector of society.<sup>8</sup> But, because an economic rationale can never be singled out and isolated from a total understanding of a given society, capitalism also holds particular assumptions about how best to conduct the affairs of state. On the other hand, liberalism explains "how and in the service of which values the polity should be organized and operated."<sup>9</sup> In actuality, each belief system mixes its assumptions and values with the others so that it is extremely difficult to determine where one begins and the

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<sup>7</sup>Dolbeare and Dolbeare, American Ideologies, p. 16.

<sup>8</sup>In a moment, we will offer a definition from another source. Realizing that the present system no longer fits the classical definition, one could easily label contemporary capitalism as a mixed economy (which it obviously is); however, here we are dealing more with the basic beliefs purported by the system, not a description of an economic model of how it actually functions.

<sup>9</sup>Dolbeare and Dolbeare, American Ideologies, p. 18.

other ends.

Capitalism, however, is normally associated with a description of the American economic system. It has been defined as "the private ownership of the means of production and allocation of the resources, goods, and services of the society through the mechanism of prices set by competitive markets."<sup>10</sup> Today, it represents a term which means much more than a mere description of a so-called free market system. Capitalism is a total belief system which interprets certain "facts" about human nature and the most appropriate routes to the good life.

Capitalism, for example, assumes that mankind has particular needs (food, shelter, survival, etc.) which are basically individualistic in nature. In order to satisfy these needs, an individual must struggle alone against other individuals to serve those needs as she/he sees fit. The primary value underlying this assumption is that mankind is largely self-seeking in nature. Since our interactions and personal pursuits are motivated by self-interests, we seek to maximize our rewards and gains at the expense of others. Under these conditions, self-fulfillment is best achieved through competition and the satisfaction derived from those types of experiences. The measurement of successful achievement becomes associated with the possession of material goods. Status and recognition are connected with material acquisitions--money, property, goods, and so on. As symbols of cultural success, these separate the winners from the losers.

The economic system and the subsequent social order generated or

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid, p. 25.

created by it are largely accepted by liberalism. As a consequence, liberalism adopts the basic values of capitalism--individualism, competition, materialism, and especially the private ownership of property. But liberalism is chiefly concerned with the most appropriate political system for perpetuating and insuring these values. It envisions this to be a free political market for the exchange of ideas, demands, and support among competing interest groups. In this sense, liberalism views politics as a "pluralistic process."<sup>11</sup> This means that decisions and policies are seen as being made through a complex process of coalition building, generation of popular support, persuasion, bargaining, negotiation, and, of course, compromise.

To insure the openness and fairness of such a political system, liberalism relies on particular rights and procedures as guaranteed by law. Law or "legalism" assumes an important function in this ideological perspective. It is through the adoption of particular legal rights by the body politic--the right to own property, the right to participate in political elections, the right to due process under the law, and the rights of personal liberty--that equal treatment is believed to be assured for all citizens. The liberal perspective believes that the legal system accomplishes a number of important things. It makes sure: 1) that particular procedures and rules are used in the decision-making process of the society and its agencies; and 2) that the government is

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<sup>11</sup>For a classic discussion of the pluralistic perspective, see Arnold Rose's The Power Structure (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), especially pp. 255-297. We will discuss this issue much more fully in a forthcoming chapter.

limited. The existence of a comprehensive legal system further insures that conflicts are controlled, divergent and competing goals are channeled, and compromise promoted through techniques which encourage accommodation and conflict avoidance. As has been stated elsewhere, "Liberalism places its confidence in the method by which decisions are made rather than in the people who make them or in the inherent quality of the decisions themselves."<sup>12</sup> Consequently, stability and "working through the system" become the bulwarks of such a belief system.

Most analysts are content to terminate their discussions on America's mainstream ideologies at this point. However, increasing attention is being given to new elements which sustain the traditional belief systems. In the recently published The New American Ideology, Harvard business professor George Cabot Lodge proposes that education, in particular the fragmentation of what we have come to call formal knowledge and science, must be added to the basic tenets. Let us discuss these points for a moment.

### Reality and the Scientific Legacy

We know that within certain social institutions, which our society refers to as universities or colleges, formal education after the secondary schools is conducted. These bodies have been referred to as the "trustees of cognitive culture."<sup>13</sup> Their role and function are unique

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<sup>12</sup>Dolbeare and Dolbeare, American Ideologies, p. 68.

<sup>13</sup>Talcott Parsons and Gerald M. Platt, The American University (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973).



in this regard. As institutions, they define what is worth knowing. They pass on the cultural heritage to each new generation. Furthermore, universities develop the acceptable processes through which one learns these things. They also construct the standards against which the knowledge acquired by the student is validated. And finally, it is the university or college which must certify that the student actually knows these things.

To truly understand higher education's power, one must first come to grips with how it determines what is worth knowing. Today, the principal approach to understanding and knowing reality is scientific in nature. Science is a technique for comprehending many minute and global facets of mankind's existence. It is one way of experiencing reality that has been elevated to a position of eminence above all others. In this sense, science represents mankind's continual quest to control the universe through rational and cognitive means. Science is a searching and discovery process based on the need to know in order to control, to survive, to manipulate, and to dominate reality.

Science assumes we know what is real by following prescribed rules --the major precept being the practice of objectivity, which involves viewing the world without distortions or personal involvement. True knowledge is supposedly acquired from observations of reality that exist independently from any personal considerations and, objectivity is the central assumption behind the scientific method.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>For the novice in such matters, the scientific method encompasses the following steps: 1) statement of the problem to be investigated; 2) hypotheses as to the cause of the problem; 3) experiments designed to



In Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, a most articulate dialogue on science and reality, Robert Pirsig states that the real purpose of the scientific method is "to make sure Nature hasn't misled you into thinking you know something you don't actually know."<sup>15</sup> On this same course, Pirsig continues:

The whole purpose of scientific method is to make valid distinctions between the false and the true in nature, to eliminate the subjective, unreal, imaginary elements from one's own work so as to obtain an objective true picture of reality.<sup>16</sup>

The scientific perspective holds that reality, and by that we mean the world with all its complexity, is best understood when it is reduced to observable phenomena which can be experienced by the senses. This belief--called empiricism--considers all knowledge to be derived from the senses. Under the guise of empiricism, social reality is interpreted as those objects that can be measured, counted, touched, and otherwise observed. These objects also are believed to have connections to one another that can be discovered and explained by particular cause and effect relationships. The more positivistic vein of this perspective assumes that there are laws governing human conduct and interaction similar to those in the physical and biological science areas. Hence, science through the application of the tools of logic involves

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test each hypothesis; 4) predicted results of the experiments; 5) observed results of the experiments; and 6) conclusions from the results of the experiments.

<sup>15</sup>Robert M. Pirsig, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance (New York: Bantam Books, 1975), pp. 100-101.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid, p. 278.

the determination and interpretation of these relationships and laws.

### Academic Machismo

The successful practitioners of scientific life pride themselves on their cognitive skills, their ability to approach reality from behind complex methodologies and conceptual formulas. To them, cognitive rationality is the ideology of academia, for cognitive rationality controls intellectual pursuits in both theory and practice. It urges faculty members to participate "in the development, the manipulation, and transference of knowledge judged in terms of empirical validity."<sup>17</sup>

As a value pattern, cognitive rationality says there are primarily two ways in which to interact with and interpret reality. One is hard, tough, rigorous and masculine in its approach. This is called objectivity. The other is soft, irrational, erratic and feminine, and it is labeled as emotion and/or subjectivity. The first believes it can validate reality on the basis of empirical evidence. The latter is seen as being too inner-oriented and thus potentially reactionary in its response to the external world.

The practitioners of cognitive rationality view reality as objects and problems to be dissected, analyzed, and solved. In the process of reducing reality into smaller and more minute and manageable parts, this faith is practiced in an ever increasing number of disciplines and specialties. And rationalism, as presently mastered, is best explained as an inability to perceive wholes.

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<sup>17</sup>Parsons and Platt, The American University, p. 5.

In the empirically dominated settings we call colleges and universities, one must be independent, self-assertive and emotionally under control to survive. Faculty learn that they must be able to take it, to be tough and resourceful. The traumas of graduate education and then professional advancement require that they demonstrate strong, consistent, and aggressive behaviors. Since the research and publication grind can be very demanding, it means that the most competitive precise and forceful persons are likely to be held up as role models. People are frequently made to feel guilty if they do not select this rugged definition. Those who do not fit snugly into the mold are snickeringly referred to as intellectual light weights, soft researchers, flabby scholars, or just too intuitive.

Once one looks deeply at these idealized descriptors of what constitutes a good faculty member, the list appears more masculine-oriented with each statement. It should be obvious then that success in the academic world is measured in machismo terms. Here, in these descriptions, are the male images that have seduced generations of academicians, and that the ability to successfully cope in these mental environments is heavily weighed in favor of predictable male reactions.<sup>18</sup>

Machismo is normally associated with such movie figures as John Wayne, Clint Eastwood, and the late Gary Cooper. The big, strong, fearless cowpoke with the fast guns and a rough and tumble style is what

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<sup>18</sup>There is very little literature that makes this subtle point. However, a stimulating piece is Judith M. Bardwick and Elizabeth Douvan's article, "Ambivalence: The Socialization of Women," in Vivian Gornik and Barbara K. Moran (eds.), Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness (New York: Signet Books, 1972), pp. 225-241.

first pops into the mind. This is the fellow that battles the bad guys and then rides off into the sunset. We all recognize the stereotypes. We have lived with them through the televised escapades of Matt Dillon and the death defying leaps of Evel Knievel across the Snake River canyon.<sup>19</sup> The machismo image is part of our national consciousness, it generates popular heroes and influences even our foreign policy.

Academics are not inoculated against this imagery. Faculty members frequently size each other up in machismo terms. In describing academic work, they use the same type of language: "working at the frontiers of knowledge," the academic man seeks to destroy the primitive truths and legends of the pre-scientific world. The enemies they battle are commonly referred to as ignorance and prejudice. Instead of six shooters, their weapons are objectivity and reason. Often driven by needs for achievement, if not outright recognition, many race each other to see who will win the prizes and prestige that accompany myth destruction. From the DNA to desegregation to the space shots, they have competed for the right to give advice, to present their right answers, to solve humanity's unsolvable problems.<sup>20</sup> They are modern society's ultimate "answer men."

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<sup>19</sup>It should really not come as any surprise that the society values these masculine images, for success itself is primarily defined in macho language. For a longer and much more entertaining discussion on all this, see Pete Hamill, "A Farewell to Machismo," in The Village Voice (Vol. XX, No. 50), December 15, 1975, pp. 8-11. Also, see Warren Farrell's "The Masculine Value System: Men Defining Reality" In The Liberated Man (New York: Bantam Books, 1974), pp. 14-28.

<sup>20</sup>Robert Nisbet traces some of this in a rather apologetic account entitled "Knowledge Dethroned" in The New York Times Magazine, September 28, 1975, pp. 34-43, and 46.



Equal Time, Almost

There can be little doubt that the application of scientific methods and cognitive rationality have lifted mankind from "primitive" conditions to "modernization." Moreover, the scientific approach to problem solving has aided in the curing of diseases, in the lowering of infant mortalities, the expansion of crop production, and a host of other technological or societal developments. It has, however, also produced the most sophisticated tools for war and destruction.<sup>21</sup> But in terms of ideology, the scientific point of view has suggested that all other perspectives on reality are invalid. In other words, it has successfully labeled all rivals as being generally inferior. The scientific approach to reality has become dogma binding mankind to a certain set of views about the nature of the world and our existence in it.

As the late Abraham Maslow, a noted philosopher-psychologist, discussed in *The Psychology of Science*, science is merely "one philosophy of knowledge among other philosophies."<sup>22</sup> It is largely a product of Western culture and values, and, in this regard, shot full of assumptions about mankind and nature. It is also a product of a particular time and place in civilization. This especially needs to be more fully recognized. What is most unfortunate is that science per se has become

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<sup>21</sup>Those interested in a more supportive elaboration on the contribution of science are directed to any of the works of Jacob Bronowski. See especially The Common Sense of Science (London: Pelican Books, 1960) and Science and Human Values (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965).

<sup>22</sup>Abraham Maslow, The Psychology of Science (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 1.



synonymous with all knowledge. Science now serves as the yardstick upon which to judge what is knowledge and what is worth knowing.

### The Myths of Science

There are many lessons and suggestions implicit in the scientific approach to reality. Perhaps, the most perplexing entails the doubt it creates within many of us. For to accept the scientific interpretation is to doubt and deny the validity of one's human experience. Why? The normal person's perceptions are likely to be less than real. They are suspect at the very least. They are not always arrived at through an application of scientific methods. Undoubtedly, one's personal reality is distorted and influenced by humanity's true nemesis, the emotions. The first lesson is quite clear. In order to see reality as it truly is, all subjective considerations must be eliminated.

In perceiving the world and reality in these terms, supporters of science argue that objectivity allows mankind to demysticize nature. Through scientific methodology and its subsequent abstractions, the "true facts" about reality are finally discovered. These facts end the mysteries of life. Nevertheless, in the search for concrete facts, the data gathered always remain a portion of the whole. Science is committed to dividing the world into smaller and more finite parts and then building some structural understanding from these. The parts are continually lifted or sliced away from the whole, often out of the only context where they have meaning. As science reduces the whole, the interrelationship and interdependency among the parts is lost. The parts become more than the whole. The end result is that the parts often be-

gin to elicit an image of reality that is both incomplete and also mechanistic.

There is an old scientific slogan<sup>23</sup> which goes something like this: "Facts, justly arranged, interpret themselves." The key, of course, is the phrase "justly arranged." The ordering of anything requires subjective choices and considerations. Facts, in and of themselves, require interpretation. Selection of which facts to emphasize and how to present them all involves some human criteria. It is often influenced by a person's feelings about her/himself, the nature and worth of others, and her/his view of the world and how it works, or, to make it more relevant to this discussion: "A person's subjective state and ideology comes into play in such choices."

Science has tried to lead us to believe that facts stand on their own, and, it (science) has nothing to say or do with human values. Science has stated, through some of its practitioners, that it is merely an instrument for comprehending the how of life. It has no preferences about the goals, purposes and rewards of life. It is detached and neutral, or, in the language of the times, it is objective.<sup>24</sup>

But science is rooted in its own value system. Values are involved in the choice of what problems are to be studied, as well as the expla-

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<sup>23</sup>Much of this is drawn from the writings of Theodore Roszak. In particular, this section comes from his edited work entitled Sources (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1972), "The Mists of Objectivity," pp. 70-81.

<sup>24</sup>For a thought-provoking discussion on American intellectuals' objective pursuit of truth as it related to foreign policy and the Vietnam war, see Noam Chomsky's American Power and the New Mandarins (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967).

nation of the results. Some problems are always seen as more important than others. Or certain questions offer more challenge. The ability to pose the right questions then is based on a sense of what is valued. Choosing, rejecting, and selecting are all words describing the scientific enterprise. Each denotes value.

The pursuit of truth, which is what science refers to as its primary purpose, is a derivative of values. Truth is in itself a value. It involves judgments about the more desirable, more valuable, and more perfect conditions. It implies a preference. It involves a choice among other options.

#### Academic Ideology Revisited<sup>25</sup>

The structure and processes of American higher education are best understood as being consistent with the dominant ideologies. Higher education is individualistic, competitive, materialistic, legalistic oriented (politically speaking), dominated by objectivity, and influenced by expertise thinking. The educational system--ranging from its curriculum, requirements, grading practices, the "right answer" syndrome, to faculty status and tenure--is geared in both process and content to support the dominant beliefs. More importantly, it is designed to train people to view the world in ways which are largely congruent with that belief system.

The student products of such a system are as fragmented as the in-

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<sup>25</sup>One could simply end these comments on ideology here but we have taken the liberty of commenting on the ramifications of such a system, from our perspective. . . .

stitutions which nurture them. Trained to look at the world as a series of objects, they begin to see each other as objects as well. Indoctrinated in self-interests and the competitive ethic, it becomes easier for them to treat one another in those terms. Since they can no longer trust their subjective impulses, students frequently believe it is best to manipulate each other as one would any other object. In the end, the important thing is always to stay on top, to give the appearance of being a winner.

Our universities and colleges, in conjunction with the various academic disciplines and professional associations, also make choices about what are the suitable areas of knowledge to be studied. Tradition and the scientific value system generate a hierarchy of intellectual merit. Microbiology and sociology are seen as more appropriate tests of the mind than plumbing and woodworking. Even the most traditional disciplines believe that to be truly respectable one must be scientific. In this manner, a discipline gains additional status by becoming political "science." In other areas that sit lower on the intellectual totem pole, the introduction of scientific tools has the potential to create a new image. Under the mystique of science, a field like physical education transforms itself into "exercise science."

Within the academic community, the more scientific disciplines sneer at those who do not pursue truth in their terms. Truth has come to represent the level of abstractions dealt with and the utilization of mathematical formulas. Truth is now facts supported by numbers. But counting things implies that only the tangible or visible dimensions are addressed. Anything that cannot be quantified is unreal and suspect.



Truth insists that things are only what they can be shown to be.

What has been the result of such activities? The search for more and more concrete facts has produced a multiplicity of often contradictory answers. Pirsig described the phenomena in these terms:

The predicted results of scientific enquiry and the actual results of scientific enquiry are diametrically opposed. . . . The purpose of the scientific method is to select a single truth from among many hypothetical truths. That, more than anything else, is what science is all about. But historically science has done exactly the opposite. Through the multiplication upon multiplication of facts, information, theories and hypotheses, it is science itself that is leading mankind from single absolute truths to multiple, indeterminate, relative ones. The major producer of social chaos, the indeterminacy of thought and values that rational knowledge is supposed to eliminate, is none other than science itself. . . .<sup>26</sup>

Yet, relativity of truth is denied. Truth is too often articulated in fixed terms, meaning that the fragmentation of knowledge into many specialized disciplines creates varying perspectives about what constitutes truth. Each discipline and specialty area sees it differently. Within a particular field certain "facts" may be interpreted as given or absolute, however, divisions and disputes emerge between and among disciplines according to emphasis, understanding, and perceived importance. Consequently, truth assumes authoritative dimensions only in relation to its source. Since there are multi-hypotheses, truth is relative to who disperses it.

The issue, of course, is that human beings are more than objects.

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<sup>26</sup>Pirsig, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, p. 109.



Their problems are "living, inner, moral and intellectual" ones.<sup>27</sup> An educational system and an ideology that denies this limits personal knowledge. It generates a false sense of learning that is merely focused on the manipulation of facts and symbols, not on insight and self discovery. It assumes that most learning comes only through external sources. . .from textbooks, libraries, classrooms, and professional experts. It promotes the illusion that someone else has all the answers, and, if only we memorize the right ones, we can survive!

By only equipping the masses to deal with a particular type of knowledge, one rooted in the cultural and scientific traditions, these people are prepared not to live in the world, in some cases, not even to cope with it. Students are simply being socialized as victims, fluctuating from one personal and societal crisis to another. They are being trained to be both helpless and distrustful. Far too many are being encouraged to escape reality through any means, believing that the only solutions to the present traps and paradoxes are to be found in those things that insure privacy. Hoping, in the end, that some drug or shaman will show them a route out.

### The Limits of Ideology

There have been, of course, efforts to change all this. Others have reported and chronicled the academic reform efforts of the past decade. Generally speaking, they were seen as the work of "pedagogical

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<sup>27</sup>Roszak, Sources, p. 75.

leftists."<sup>28</sup> Their proposals were the product of a particular time and place in American educational development. But it is safe to say that the thrust of their ideas centered on reducing the isolation, alienation, competitiveness, sense of powerlessness, and lack of relevance inherent in most collegiate learning systems.

It is easier to see now that much of what they proposed was simply a response to the symptoms of what they believed was wrong with higher education.<sup>29</sup> What few of the change advocates were prepared for was the overall resiliency of the dominant ideology and its supporters. Few realized that the dominant beliefs would determine what would be seen as acceptable tactics and strategies for change, that would limit debates and define what were the appropriate courses of action available.

The dominant belief system forced the new visions and their advocates to play the game according to its rules. Even when there was sufficient evidence and pressure to muster, the basic approach to change was frequently one of reluctant accommodation. Higher education permitted only certain issues to be addressed. All the while, the mainstream belief system and its practices remained intact. Even when some projects were adopted, the dominant ideology stood ready to subvert these. Nothing was implemented without feeling the continual presence of the

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<sup>28</sup>Gerald Grant and David Riesman, "An Ecology of Academic Reform" Daedalus Volume 104, No. 1 (Winter 1975), pp. 169-176.

<sup>29</sup>For a recent discussion on reforming the symptoms, see George Bonham's editorial "Academic Reform: Still a Pseudoscience" in Change (Vol. 7, No. 9, November, 1975), pp. 11-12, and 64. Also, in Chapter III, entitled "Strategies for Deliberate Failure," we discussed at greater length the limited success of these recent change efforts.

forces of capitalism-liberalism and science.

Nevertheless, the mainstream ideologies we have discussed are products of the past. Each is grounded in the history, traditions and customs of our Western civilization. They are what has been. This combined ideology represents what has dominated our thoughts and actions to this point. In this regard, each is integrated and dependent upon the others. Each gives meaning and support to the others. Their collective forces serve to influence how we think about the world and ourselves, as well as to dictate how we design and conduct our institutions. They also serve to control what can be altered and how and act as our constant societal lenses. So it will require more than new prescriptions to change them.

## CHAPTER V

### THE UNIVERSITY: IN SEARCH OF A METAPHOR

. . .existing (organizational) theories offer little hope; they provide fragmented, truncated or romantic views of the nature of these beasts.

Charles Perrow

No longer are the tasks and functions of most higher education institutions as clearcut as simply teaching and learning. The activities conducted under the auspices of such organizations have become remarkably diverse. Most are presently engaged in things that range from restaurant management to multi-million dollar fundraising efforts. In the process of ever-expanding tasks and functions the learning organization has become extremely complex and complicated. Today's educational institution easily elicits descriptions which vary from "knowledge factory" to "giant marshmallow." In some ways, these metaphors point to a major conceptual problem now facing higher education: there are no consensus viewpoints about what these organizations are supposed to be all about.

The goal in this chapter is to examine the familiar stereotypes people commonly utilize as conceptual frameworks when discussing, explaining, and/or comprehending some facet of these organizations. It is our contention that several metaphors influence the debates about the nature of universities and have helped to create a bastard organization, one that adheres to no single image entirely but instead practices the

compromise maxim: "Let's have something for everybody." Thus, in order to survive the pressures of conflicting metaphors, the university has been forced to accommodate the competing demands of several distinct organizational viewpoints, each of which holds different expectations and presses for different organizational responses. Under these conditions, such organizations become a diluted mixture of goals, functions, and processes.

For those interested in educational change, this poses an interesting predicament. On one hand, proposals for change demand strategies which recognize the conflicting metaphors that exist within higher education. More importantly, those concerned with internal change must begin to understand how the prevailing interpretations of the university as an organization limit and guide their pet reforms, especially in terms of the rejection and acceptance process. Beyond this they need to realize that the pressures of these metaphors serve to subvert reforms once they are accepted. As you read what is to follow, keep these issues in mind.

### Organizational Consciousness

For over half a century now one of the fastest growing bodies of literature has related to the study of organizations, all shapes and sizes. In general, scholars have approached these social arrangements like every other phenomena, from a language of well-formulated suppositions which seeks to explain human behavior, action and events in those



settings.<sup>1</sup> However, what one often forgets in sifting through the piles of recent publications is that these perceptions belong to the experts, not the common everyday organizational members. Regulars, if we may label these common folks with that term, rarely spend the time or have the inclination for such analytic inquiries. Instead, the hypotheses they do seem to operate with are a loose mishmash of previous organizational experiences, personal encounters, half-understood theories, and a few catchy phrases. From such insights people interpret their organizational worlds and create expectations for what ought to go on.

Whether by design or through indifference, the only model people employ when comprehending their complex and dynamic organizations as often as not emanates from a single expression or a combination of fuzzy terms. Hence the conceptual frameworks most organizational members use emerge not from some well-conceived theory but from a single metaphor or two. These metaphors are "borrowed from a variety of other institutions, ordinarily without much of a conscious selection from the rather large set of alternative models available."<sup>2</sup> This usually happens because most organizational members are looking for some quick handle for

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<sup>1</sup>Since there is a potpourri of literature related to this topic, those interested in a healthy dose of the various perspectives from which the university has been approached theoretically are directed to the following: 1) Herbert H. Stroup, Bureaucracy in Higher Education (New York: Free Press, 1966); 2) James A. Perkins (ed.), The University as an Organization (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1973); 3) Talcott Parsons and Gerald M. Platt, The American University (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973); and 4) John Andes, A Systems Approach to University Organization (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1970).

<sup>2</sup>Michael Cohen and James G. March, Leadership and Ambiguity (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974), p. 30.

classifying the organization. Few are interested in exploring the nuances of organizational life beyond these mental reference points, thus these terms become their descriptions for organizational reality, either as they envision it or as they wish it would be.

As a consequence, within the university persons adopt various metaphors principally as a phrase for explaining the institution, for justifying particular conventional practices, and for planning demands (or expectations) on what ought to be happening in such settings. Although one might draw from a wide array of metaphors, there are three which have dominated higher education discussions in this country.<sup>3</sup> These are: 1) the university as a complex bureaucracy; 2) the community of scholars; and 3) the democratic ideal. In the subsections to follow, each shall be explored in some detail.

### Hierarchy and Its Counterparts

A formal organization. . .has a well developed formal social structure consisting of titled positions, giving those in a higher ranked status the right to give orders to those of a lesser rank and to expect the orders to be carried out.<sup>4</sup>

The explanation of organizational life that has reigned over much

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<sup>3</sup>Some may say this is a somewhat arbitrary selection, especially since Cohen and March have discussed at least eight. Still, these are the most often used ones. Even those people who now advocate some collective bargaining arrangements continue to be trapped in these perceptions. For a more thorough discussion on other higher education metaphors (the dispensing machine, the zoo, the mammoth cave, etc.) see Charles Monson, Education for What? (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970), pp. 122-131.

<sup>4</sup>Everett M. Rogers and F. Floud Shoemaker, Communication of Innovations (New York: The Free Press, 1971), pp. 28-29.

of this century is a bureaucratic one. Since the early writings of Max Weber, this concept has come to mean "organized social systems wherein tasks are assigned to individuals and to groups so as to attain, efficiently and economically, through the functional coordination of all activities, the objectives previously agreed on."<sup>5</sup> Within the university this metaphor has largely become associated with the administrative or management aspects of organizational life.

But a bureaucracy is usually understood to encompass the following basic features as well:

- 1) a hierarchized series of offices, each containing an area of imputed competence, responsibility, and status, rationally organized and functionally related for the purpose of achieving maximum efficiency in attaining predetermined goals;
- 2) an impersonal, routinized structure defined by systematic rules wherein legitimized authority rests in the roles or offices thereof and not in the person of the role/office incumbent;
- 3) prescribed relations between various offices involving considerable degree of formality and clearly defined social distance between occupants of these offices;
- 4) systematic rules aimed at minimizing friction and official contact between office incumbents to patterns which produce a stable set of mutual expectations.<sup>6</sup>

Persons who make use of the bureaucratic metaphor interpret the universities' activities as being responsive to several traditional ob-

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<sup>5</sup>Charles A. Tesconi, Jr. and Van Cleve Morris, The Anti-Man Culture (Urbana, Illinois: The University of Illinois Press, 1972), p. 4.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid, p. 4.

jectives--teaching, scholarly research, graduate training, and public service. The adopters of this metaphor see the university as being organized into a hierarchy of tasks and authority relations in order to most efficiently achieve these long-standing objectives. Thus the words and phrases which they frequently attach to this description include: division of labor, structure, hierarchy, authority, efficiency, control, coordination, consistency, specialization, impersonal, rules and regulations, status, pecking order, stability, and predetermined expectations. However, if one were forced to select the three key terms which represent the essence of bureaucracy, they would probably have to be hierarchy, efficiency, and control.

First of all, the central assumption underlying this model is that hierarchical arrangements are the single best means for accomplishing work. The implicit message is that organizations ought to be designed to deal with stable and routine tasks. When this is impossible, then the goal is to work towards the routinization of tasks. Hence, hierarchy supports the rational and systematic ordering of tasks into pyramidal arrangements. These formal arrangements denote the division of organizational labor and signify the distribution of authority, as well as which offices and positions are supposed to do what.

Beyond these rather basic notions of hierarchy is the belief that fuels many of the organization's operations and activities, efficiency. This is a crucial part of Western culture's productivity consciousness. Efficiency is a cornerstone belief of industrialized society which holds an incessant infatuation with speed, precision, accuracy, and uniformity. Besides being understood as the ratio of useful work obtained to



energy expended, efficiency symbolizes a constant idol for organizational workers. Everything is weighed in efficiency terms.

For example, efficiency channels and directs organizational energy by influencing what is done, when, where, and at what intervals. Efficiency also greatly defines the parameters about how competency is to be judged, as well as what the suitable work standards are likely to be. But in judging worker performance it emphasizes a criterion that all too often simply reinforces productivity thinking. By doing this the idea of efficiency becomes ingrained in the minds of most organizational men and women. Under such circumstances, it soon dictates how many of them interpret and conduct their assignments.

At the same time, in order to secure efficiency, a bureaucratic organization (like the university) utilizes specific devices to ensure that task routinization occurs. By choosing particular control devices, usually in the form of rules and regulations, the bureaucratic model desires to standardize tasks so that greater efficiency may occur. Yet, these measures help to legitimize what can and does go on in an organization. But routinization brings both privileges and obligations along with it. For example, in most settings rules and regulations encompass everything from vacation applications to standard operating procedures for office equipment. The real purpose of such devices is often to assure organizational predictability. Within the bureaucratic university, rules are frequently relied upon to direct and control certain courses of action. Often as not, they take on a symbolic meaning as well and thus assume a significance beyond their original intent. When this occurs, rules and regulations become a tool for stability rather than a



means to achieve particular goals.

There is one final point which relates to this metaphor. Since hierarchical arrangements are a product of dividing organizational tasks and functions in such a way as to achieve the most efficient utilization of energy and resources, individuals are required under such a system to develop skills which correspond to specific roles and/or occupations. Bureaucracy demands a great deal of role and skill specificity. But the definition of what constitutes those skills almost always stems from efficiency thinking, meaning that persons who perform a particular task with great speed or precision are often thought to be experts. Expertise may be more generally defined as having specific technical knowledge and/or concrete facts and information about a given area or subject matter.

Sometimes an organization can begin to distribute assignments in such a way that it can be said to be developing a complex form of organizational careerism known as professionalism. Many commentators simply correlate professionalism with high task achievement.<sup>7</sup> However, it is much more than that. Professionalism encompasses a strict code of behavior and a set of task or role-related standards. In many cases, these measures are not necessarily written down anywhere but exist as unspoken norms and expectations which are not to be violated. Standards such as these are deep-rooted and often result from the processes through which an individual receives his/her training. Consequently,

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<sup>7</sup>Talcott Parsons and Gerald M. Platt, The American University (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973).

such codes are built directly into the person rather than originating exclusively from any organization per se.

Professionals tend to only accept co-workers who have come through the same initiation rites that they have. A high employment priority is placed on hiring people with previous training or rather set qualifications. If a person has not experienced nearly identical preparatory training, he/she is often seen as ill-prepared and/or less capable. The whole notion of professionalism suggests a language, tools, methodology, and task mystique which are held as unique to all but its practitioners. To be an expert is to know things that no one else does.

In summary, it comes as no great surprise to learn that the university is seen by many observers and organizational members as a bureaucracy. For most organizations in this society possess all the necessary elements to be labeled as such. In this regard, the bureaucratic metaphor deals rather nicely with a significant portion of social realism known as university life. It captures, in its language and tone, the formal structural characteristics which vividly express the essence of such places--the division upon division of tasks and functions which hide behind strange names on organizational charts. The term also seems to convey the isolation engendered in organizations which appear dedicated to sustaining endless streams of long lines for breakfast, for registration, for identification cards, for advice, and even for illnesses. And what phrase could better suggest the nameless faces in such places who relish the power of rules than the graphic defamation--bureaucrat!

There can be very little doubt that the university exhibits enough

features of this description to warrant the title. However, this phrase, in many ways, is simply an explanation of part of academia's organizational reality. One must blend in the unique aspects of its professional subculture to further distort the picture.

### The Mental Professions

From the end of the Civil War into the early years of this century, the groundwork was laid for the emergence of academic disciplines. During this period, colleges went through a very slow and gradual transformation as faculty members began to declare their specialization in one or two disciplinary fields. Before this era most faculty were engaged in instructional activities which encompassed a wide range of intellectual pursuits. Soon national guilds and societies were formed and scholarly journals were initiated to further share information and new ideas. In short order, campus after campus adopted a fairly uniform organizational model, one that was greatly influenced by departmental arrangements and professorial distinctions. All this soon produced different obligations and expectations for faculty. Most found themselves responding to the pressures of departmental loyalty and other demands for research and scholarly publications.

However, the authority of any professional system only works if it is supported by some ideology. Within academia, this does not mean that what constitutes knowledge must be fully agreed upon by everyone. Instead, it indicates that the climate and processes associated with the creation of knowledge must be respected and protected. For the faculty professional, the concept that serves to bind them together is commonly

referred to as "cognitive rationality." The term cognitive represents a general concern for the state of knowledge that can best be reached through rationality, which had been defined as the "codification of knowledge in terms of empirically valid observations."<sup>8</sup> This dominant belief, shared by most faculty professionals, assumes that the true nature of complex phenomena can be detected through the strenuous application of rules of logic and reason.

Under the guise of cognitive rationality, actual and potential members of the professions come to accept the basic guidelines and informal code of this intellectual world. Faculty acquire an understanding about the following matters: 1) what are the suitable research areas in their disciplines; 2) how a scholarly journal article should be prepared; 3) what conduct is considered appropriate and inappropriate in the classroom; 4) how respectful one should be if one desires to advance up the career ladder. So, in joining a discipline, one must agree, however tacitly or temporarily, to the restrictions and distinctions of this unique fellowship and to all the other requirements usually associated with being a member in good standing.

Part of this happens rather naturally. Academic professionals identify a large portion of their "self" with their way of work. One's work serves to legitimize a person's existence; it gives one some sense of meaning and purpose. Also, to advance and prosper within a

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<sup>8</sup>Gerald M. Platt and Talcott Parsons, "Decision-Making in the Academic System," in Kruytbosch and Messinger (eds.) The State of the University (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1968), p. 138.



mental profession, one must expend large amounts of physical and psychic energy. Since the pursuit and maintenance of a career demands this sort of investment, one must adhere fairly consistently to the official and unofficial code of conduct. As a result, the code, and the concepts which legitimize it, are often held in reverence and their perpetuation becomes an almost sacred obligation. Therefore, the prestige of the profession and the standards associated with it must be protected as one would one's own self.

Yet there are benefits for playing the game according to its traditional rules. These may range from general promotions (going from assistant to associate professor) to the ultimate contract for life, tenure. Since most people are motivated to work for anticipated rewards and not immediate ones, these incentives are academia's behavioral chips. Each reward serves as another enticement into the profession. In their disbursement, they represent an intricate sanction system that supports certain normative reactions.

As an illustration, promotions are most commonly made on the basis of "professional promise."<sup>9</sup> This translates into such productivity terms as: number of publications (journal articles, abstracts, pam-

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<sup>9</sup>For a thorough discussion on the entire faculty evaluation process, see Robert R. Hind, "Analysis of a Faculty: Professionalism, Evaluation and the Authority Structure," in J. Victor Baldrige, *Academic Governance* (Berkeley, California: McCutchan Publishing, 1971), pp. 253-292. It should also be noted that the overwhelming majority of people who manage institutions of higher learning, those who hold upper echelon administrative positions, are largely products of this same reward system. They generally share not only similar career experiences but common perspectives on what constitutes a good university, a good department, and a good faculty member. The career ladder dictates this.



phlets, reviews, books, and so on), types of journal articles (in terms of content difficulty), prestige of the journals published in, number of federally or privately funded research projects and grants, and the level of involvement in outside consulting work. Thus, achievements are validated which primarily bring status and prestige to the department, the individual, and somewhat vicariously to the university. Despite the hue and cry of recent years for equal attention to teaching in the promotion process, career advancements and tenure decisions continue to be heavily dependent upon the old "publish or perish" criterion. And, in a time of economic uncertainty, the reward pendulum swings even farther out towards the research and publication end of the continuum.

Other factors contribute to the academic professional reward system as well. There is no denying that the job of a faculty member can be very gratifying. It is loosely structured and allows for a great deal of personal creativity. Furthermore, the organizational climate of most universities is filled with "flexible schedules, few deadlines, uninhibited bull sessions, conference going, freedom to publish, and so on."<sup>10</sup> Not to mention the prestige and status normally associated with being a faculty member--doing consulting work, making little impromptu presentations, being called doctor and all that can be pretty heady stuff.

Nevertheless, the hidden payoff for most faculty members comes from their need to be associated with bright people. This is the primary

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<sup>10</sup>Charles Perrow, Complex Organizations (Glenville, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1972), p. 56.

benefit of professional membership. As products of an educational system that seems to idolize humanity's cognitive cultivation, these people cherish the sanctuaries provided by most campuses. Here, in these settings, they can engage the "best and the brightest" of their professional colleagues, not to mention the intelligent young people who come under their influence. Here, at least under the boom conditions of the 1960's, they could pursue some microscopic research interest without too many distractions. Many are deeply afraid that such things cannot take place with much consistency anywhere else in society, that such activities are only protected and nurtured on college campuses, and most importantly, that the climate which has allowed this all to take place is now very much in jeopardy.

A social structure such as this one can only exist if its membership is protected somehow. Faculty members have survived and prospered largely due to academic freedom. In the simplest language the concept is primarily a license for professional autonomy. For several decades now it has come to mean freedom of instruction and freedom of inquiry.

Within the boundaries of disciplinary standards, academic freedom allows the individual faculty member some discretion to pursue his/her own thing.<sup>11</sup> The prevalent view today is that this concept guarantees that each and every faculty member will be free from all external inter-

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<sup>11</sup>This is, of course, a much idealized version. From the days of Scott Nearing to the more modern cases of Bruce Franklin and Angela Davis, academic freedom has been situationally practiced. This is especially true when political ideologies are presented in the classroom or through direct political action which run contrary to the dominant American beliefs.

ferences in their affairs. Accordingly, it has come to mean that faculty members are eminently more qualified to judge the competencies of their particular departments as well. As one might gather from all this, academic freedom has become the key rationale for arguing for faculty members to have the right to control the nature of their work situations, as well as who will do what, when, where and how. It is a rationale that says faculty are the university and thus they should be running it.

### Community of Scholars

To this stage we have sought to elaborate the nature of life in the academic professions. If one were to further catalog the phrases which comprise the ambiguous vocabulary utilized by this segment of the university population, it would be filled with the following terms: scholarship, academic standards, rigor, excellence, intelligence, intellectual development, reason and logic, academic freedom, autonomy, discipline, and, of course, tradition. It matters very little that most of these are exchanged without ever being mutually defined. For these are the verbal cues which comprise the academic professionals' perceptions of the university and they see the organization not so much as it actually is but rather as they would like it to be.

The metaphor most often used to express this idea of the university is "a community of scholars." In its customary usage, the term denotes an elite fellowship, one composed mainly of credentialed faculty members. The metaphor assumes the present day scholars remain dedicated to the timeless ideals of the medieval universitas: the preservation of cul-

tural heritage, the pursuit of truth through the application of cognitive rationality, and the constant creation of new knowledge. This unique fraternity traces its roots back to the academies at Oxford, Cambridge, Paris, and Bologna and to the legacies of Abelard, Bacon, and Galileo. Hence, the current professionals see themselves as possessing some ancient mantle which serves as perpetual pact with the scholarly generations that have proceeded them.

Of course, today this metaphor is most frequently used as a nostalgic call for a return to those older days. Many modern scholars tend to fantasize that "those were the days" when faculty members were at the apex of power. In this respect, the metaphor represents a commonly held myth in academia, that the classical academy and even the nineteenth century American college was a freer and more intimate place to practice the arts of the mind than what now exists. Others believe that somewhere in the past campuses were marked by a common culture and more clearly shared purposes. Thus the phrase--community of scholars--has become a sort of rallying cry for those who decry the management mentality of many present day universities. People use the term as an easy reference point for urging the re-establishment of those bygone days when faculty power and authority were supposed to determine what transpired in such places. Until now the metaphor has become not so much a description of what the modern university is as an idealized alternative to the bureaucratic impulses of control, coordination, and cost-efficiency. Then, in its present usage, the community of scholars is simply a justification for recreating faculty sovereignty.

One need only inspect the thorough histories of a Hastings Rashdall



or Nathan Schachner to discover the false sense of the past inherent in these organizational interpretations. From time immemorial, the moments of shared purpose have been extremely infrequent. More often than not the university has existed in a political context where external forces (be they popes, kings, governments or economic depressions) have constantly tugged at the internal operations. Even more importantly, the academic enterprise has rarely been an idyllic setting, at least not the community ideal professors often imagine. An honest history of most any academic discipline, or the campuses where such things are practiced, would likely be a chronicle marked by internal strifes, competition, persecution of minority viewpoints, and numerous displays of petty jealousies. Without carrying these generalizations too far, conflict more than cooperation has dominated the essence of this community.

However, the definition of what one means by "community" is the crucial issue associated with this metaphor. If one simply applies the word to a given university without fully exploring its meaning, then expectations are created which are both ambiguous and divisive. Too often faculty have limited their vision of community to a particular geographical plot (say a campus) or the territory they call their department, without realizing other dimensions suggested by the word. One cannot have the shared purpose these people so desire without the intentionality required to go beyond the isolation of professional and disciplinary autonomy. This means a clear delineation of what those shared ideals are that everyone (faculty, students, administrators) ought to hold in common, as well as the behavioral and organizational expectations and rewards required to reach these conditions. Also, one cannot speak of



community and define membership in limiting ways, that is unless one is committed to an exclusive fellowship. And, of course, the salient question remains: Can individuals create the community faculty desire within a bureaucratic structure like the modern university, or, more importantly, should they even try?

No matter the significance of these questions, the metaphor persists. It has been translated into the major utopian vision operant in academia today. As we will see in the next section, community is no longer just a fantasy for faculty members. Even radical students, theoreticians, and social critics have ascribed to this dream but in very different ways.

### The Jeffersonian Legacy

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.<sup>12</sup>

From the writings of Kant, Locke, or Marx, one can find many references to an ideal social order. However, within American political literature, the pen of Thomas Jefferson has produced some of the most illuminating tracts on humanity's potential. In particular, the scholar from Monticello gave this nation two concepts which have lingered in the imaginations of all those who aspire to some higher collective good. These concepts are equality and the power of the people. The one word

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<sup>12</sup>The Constitution of the United States (New York: Barnes and Noble Publishers, 1968), p. 22.

that most symbolizes the intention of these concepts is democracy.<sup>13</sup> In recent times, these propositions furnished a generation with the rhetoric of protest, if not a simple solution for achieving the liberty and happiness that Jefferson so desired.

Beginning with the Port Huron Statement, students and other critics articulated a significant portion of the past decade's change agenda.

We would replace power rooted in possession, privilege, or circumstance by power and uniqueness rooted in love, reflectiveness, reason, and creativity. As a social system we seek the establishment of a democracy of individual participation, governed by two central aims: that the individual share in those social decisions determining the quality and direction of his life; that the society be organized to encourage independence in men and provide the media for their common participation.

Students for a Democratic Society,  
1962<sup>14</sup>

This thesis applied the thrust of Jefferson's declaration to the university, as well as to the society in general. In doing this the concepts of equality and power assumed broader interpretations. Equality, for example, became more than just a matter of equal opportunity under the law; it meant that people had "a right of membership" which assured them equal representation and a voice in determining societal and institutional affairs. This argument usually was an extended para-

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<sup>13</sup>Carl Cohen, the distinguished political philosopher, has defined democracy as "that system of community government in which, by and large, the members of a community participate, or may participate, directly or indirectly, in the making of decisions which affect them all." Carl Cohen, Democracy (New York: The Free Press, 1971), p. 7.

<sup>14</sup>Charles Monson (ed.), Education for What? (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970), pp. 217-225.

phrase of Jefferson's manifesto: "In free societies all those affected by a social policy have an inalienable right to a voice in its formulation."<sup>15</sup> Then power, the primary instrument for achieving equality, became almost solely equated with some form of democratic decision-making and all types of organizations (governments, universities, corporations) were urged to adopt more distributive forms of management.

The password for this view of the university became known as participatory democracy. This concept was initially championed by and for the student population (who continue to be the constituency most enamored with the democratic metaphor). But in rather short order enfranchisement was urged on all organizational members. Theoretically at least, this was supposed to bring about a new sense of shared responsibility, one that would reverse "the trend toward concentration of political authority in the hands of elected representatives and appointed experts."<sup>16</sup>

Arnold Kaufman, a major spokesperson for this position, defined participation as essentially involving "actual preliminary deliberation (conversations, debate, discussions) and in the final decision each participant has a roughly equal formal say."<sup>17</sup> It was to have two unique features: 1) the dispersion of authoritative decision-making--this as-

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<sup>15</sup>Earl J. McGrath, Should Students Share the Power? (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976), p. 51.

<sup>16</sup>Terence E. Cook and Patrick M. Morgan (eds.) Participatory Democracy (San Francisco: Canfield Press, 1971), pp. 3-4.

<sup>17</sup>Arnold Kaufman, "Human Nature and Participatory Democracy," in William Connolly (ed.), The Bias of Pluralism (New York: Atherton Press, 1969), pp. 191-192.

sumes that an organization can become more open and responsive by transferring decisions downward from some centralized or hierarchical location into the hands of its general membership; 2) the direct involvement of amateurs--participatory democracy further assumes that it is wise to legitimize the active participation of novices throughout the deliberative process.<sup>18</sup> Thus the aim of this model is not to create an institution run necessarily by majority rule but one where everyone has equal influence through decentralized decision-making mechanisms which permit "codetermination" and "responsible collaborations."

Although the democratic metaphor may simply be applied to the university as a more realistic appraisal of the multiplicity of values and interests operating within and upon the institution, those who identify with this description tend to utilize it in a very optimistic manner. Implicit in the democratic approach is a fundamental belief in human potential. This faith holds that divergent groups of people can come together in a spirit of harmony and cooperation. Part of this is a continuation of a familiar message. The primary presupposition of democracy is "the existence of a community within which it may be operative."<sup>19</sup> In its present usage, democracy is seen as a rational technique for establishing community, for creating self-government, and thus empowering people with the creative and constructive power needed to achieve greater happiness.<sup>20</sup> Within the university, it becomes a word

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<sup>18</sup>Cook and Morgan, Participatory Democracy, p. 4.

<sup>19</sup>Cohen, Democracy, p. 41.

<sup>20</sup>Kaufman, "Human Nature and Participatory Democracy," p. 184.



that represents both the benefits of shared power as well as a valid learning experience that prepares one for a more fulfilling existence.

Again, realizing that this is another ideal for the university, let us review for a moment the central assumptions underlying this view. The democratic metaphor suggests: 1) that power resides somewhere in the decision-making process; 2) that by giving everyone (usually students, faculty, and administrators) an equal say, power will be shared; 3) that through legislative devices based largely on our federal system of government (constitutions, new governance units, committee membership) participation can best be insured; 4) that amateurs can have equal influence in these arenas; 5) that other organizational members share the democratic faith and thus will make every effort to see that the "participatory" system works.

If this descriptor can be understood in such an optimistic fashion, then it can also be interpreted as an extremely naive view as well. The democratic perspective almost totally neglects the fact that its aims are most incompatible with the nature of the university as we have discussed it in this chapter. For example, the conditions necessary for democracy to exist--whether organizational, intellectual, or psychological--are not present to any significant extent in most higher education institutions.

To begin with, in an organization where formal authority and the spirit of professional expertise stand as rather constant opposing forces to one another, no democratic wand, with all its good intentions, can easily transform the real power and status differences perpetuated by such divisions. Furthermore, the structural conditions (the func-

tional lines and specializations) combine with America's dominant ideology (individualism, self-aggrandisement, etc.) to form a competitive situation where it is very, very difficult, if not impossible, for organizational members to transcend their own parochial self-interests. Also, due to organizational size, complexity, and variations in issues, it is rarely possible for every member affected by a given decision to fully participate. Moreover, many organizational members do not participate due to exclusionary provisions, indifference or deliberate choice. Of course, there are other structural limitations that take the form of rules, laws, and rituals which further prevent or inhibit participation. And finally, the mutual trust and cooperation needed to form democratic bonds are antithetical to the expectations engendered by the other metaphors that we have discussed.

Yet as congressman-political scientist T. V. Smith said over a quarter of a century ago: "democracy is more than a form of government. It is also a way of life. . . ."21 Those who continue to support the democratic metaphor ignore the barriers; they strive to put theory into practice at an institutional level. However, in advancing expectations for fraternity, community, equality, and liberty, they set themselves up for frustration, cynicism, and the always reluctant acceptance of unmet ideals. Still, their vision of an open and democratic university calls for a new level of human interaction, one where people will respond to one another with a sense of tolerance and fairness that is well beyond

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21T. V. Smith and Eduard C. Lindeman, The Democratic Way of Life (New York: Mentor Books, 1963), p. 7.

what seems presently possible. So the organization they seek to re-create remains, in the immortal words of J. P. Jordon, "about as democratic as Saudi Arabia."

### The Metaphor Mix

Existence is beyond the power of words  
To define:  
Terms may be used  
By are none of them absolute.<sup>22</sup>

It would be rather ludicrous to propose that these terms explain all that the university seems to be. These are the images which participants and onlookers alike most frequently apply to academia. And, in that respect, these are the descriptions which most often dominate their state of mind about such places. Yet what people perceive as the true image varies significantly. What the university has evolved into for many is a loose collection of these metaphors and others as well. Now most either approach the university from one of these images, from some unique blend, or with no perspective at all.

This furnishes a most unusual dilemma for those who wish to change such places. Not only must they confront three opposing interpretations of organizational reality, but they also must develop proposals and ideas which are able to negotiate the precarious balance which exists between these perceptions. So few "change agents" realize that the merit of their suggestions depends quite heavily on whose perceptions

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<sup>22</sup>Lao Tzu, The Way of Life, trans. and ed. by Witter Bynner (New York: Capricorn Books, 1944), p. 20.

are being challenged or supported. More often than not these reformers are not even cognizant of their own organizational biases nor the contradictions inherent in these three views.

But, if one were able to spread each metaphor and its accompanying assumptions out on a table, like some giant jigsaw puzzle, it would soon become rather apparent that the pieces just do not fit, at least together. Why? The images contradict one another. Each is a different perception of the nature of organizational power, control, loyalty, and how the university ought to be managed.

Today's university represents a tenuous balance of these competing descriptions which has resulted from a chemistry process based largely on accommodation and historical accident. University after university has adjusted its sense of organizational reality in such a manner as to reconcile the conflicting demands of these three images. Until now almost anyone could point to some aspect of these visions--be it the hierarchical arrangements of control and coordination guarding the central administration, or the spirit of autonomy hiding behind departmental collegiality, and even the pseudodemocracy of campus governance.

Still, when an organization begins to harbor a significant number of members with either very divergent conceptions of institutional reality or with no clear image at all, then a false sense of harmony exists. Beneath the surface of placid cordiality, participants no longer share common ideas about how the university ought to be managed, what objectives are primary, and the nature of legitimate authority. At the roots of their contrasting dreams, these things (and other issues as well) are all open to disputes and different interpretations. Thus, un-



der circumstances where supporters of one view begin to exert their interpretations on how the university performs (as during the present era of system management and centralization), then the balance becomes disrupted and tension, if not outright conflict, results.

The arena for these disputes often becomes the university's governance system. In fact, if one separates the metaphor mix, the essence of their differences repeatedly centers on how decisions ought to be made. In the next chapter, we will explore this issue from both a theoretical and descriptive standpoint.

C H A P T E R   V I  
P O L I T I C S   A M I D   T H E   M A Z E

For the politics of education, while related to larger political crosscurrents, has exhibited unique tendencies over the past century, tendencies too often blurred by the commonly held fiction that education is non-political.

Lawrence Cremin

In the last two chapters, we have attempted to analyze two major issues which limit the possibilities for change in American higher education, namely, mainstream American ideology and the nature of the university as an organization. Now we want to merge these into a discussion about institutional decision-making. For it is through the decision-making system that ideas about reform and change get played out.

In this chapter, we will argue that not only does the dominant ideology discriminate against certain kinds of ideas, and this is especially true of proposals designed to address inconsistencies in the organization and its common practices, but it favors a decision-making system which plays a conservative function rather than an open one. How? By legitimizing a complex decision-making system which channels interests through various governance and bureaucratic mechanisms, and also the procedures and rituals connected with those structures, the decision-making system has the potential to direct and to influence competing claims on the university. These mechanisms and the principles underlying them can be and often are utilized to manipulate the "scope

of conflict" and effectively bias the possible outcomes. Thus the system becomes less of an open forum for the free expression of competing interests than it does an instrument for controlling certain issues and concerns.

With regards to this, the decision-making system performs several disturbing functions: 1) it projects an image that higher education encourages open discussions and debates on various issues and problems, when in actuality the system merely represents a series of theatrical stages for cooling off conflict and airing general frustrations; 2) by allowing weaker groups to become involved in a biased system a participation put-on is perpetrated without any real risk to decision outcomes; 3) a "work within the system" ethos provides a potent stimulus for those with different views from the mainstream beliefs--requiring them to either ignore the decision-making system entirely, play the game according to established rules and rituals, or face negative sanctions; 4) the system acts to slow down reform and change by forcing proposers of alternative views to make adjustments and compromises if they want approval for their ideas; 5) by virtue of this, the decision-making system is able to transform reforms into less threatening proposals. The end result of such a system is that it provides a stabilizing tool for the more status quo-oriented forces in the university, and, in many ways, serves to solidify their position.

The plan in this chapter is to explore institutional decision-making in terms of the pressures, tension and rivalries which result from the university structural and territorial relationships. Particular attention will also be given to the pluralist interpretation of university

decision-making, which serves to rationalize the present conditions of decision-making and explain prevailing arrangements. An effort will be made to demonstrate the limitations of this interpretation and how it impacts negatively on proposals for change.

### Caution, Decision Ahead

A complex decision is like a great river, drawing from its many tributaries the innumerable component premises of which it is constituted.<sup>1</sup>

Since Simon's classical work on decision-making in the late 1940's, there have been literally hundreds of books and articles written about this subject. The act of choice, the processes leading up to that choice, as well as those associated with decision implementation, have all been rather extensively analyzed so much so that the concept or word "decision" is very much maligned. Much like other social science terms, it is now a contested concept with as many interpretations as there are organizational theories and explanations for understanding human behavior. For that reason, it makes some sense to offer a few words of caution and introduction on this subject before we delve any deeper into the mixed bag known as university decision-making.

Any definition or explanation of decision(s) and the processes associated with it are linked implicitly to some basic assumptions about human nature and human conduct. No explanation better illustrates this

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<sup>1</sup>Herbert Simon, Administrative Behavior (New York: The Free Press, 1957), p. xii.



point than the so-called "rational model" of decision-making. Popularized by the economic school of decision analysis, this view corresponds quite nicely with the dominant American ideology's justification of human behavior. Ideally, it sees the act of choice as being very deliberate and calculative.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, it envisions human beings as maximizing creatures who define their goals and/or problems, find alternative ways to achieve or solve these, evaluate each alternative, and then select the most appropriate one to act on.

Of course, social psychologists and other researchers have demonstrated the shortcomings inherent in purely rational explanations of decision-making. Time, personalities, values, and personal biases often come into play when decisions are reached. Also, more often than not people act first and rationalize their responses later. Yet the rational model represents the principal normative standard against which all decision-making is judged. In this sense, the rational model is both an ideal and a value, encouraged and pursued by organizational society. It urges that all actions be measured on the basis of reason and intelligence. Lest we forget, neither of these are value free.

Nonetheless, when you have an organization pursuing many different tasks and objectives, some coordination of effort is required between individuals and larger clusters of people. Consequently, arrangements are established to deal with organizational priorities, to distribute various jobs, to evaluate performances, to allocate resources and space, and an endless number of other matters. The method by which an organi-

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid, pp. 66-78.

zation makes choices about such matters is referred to as its decision-making or problem-solving system. This almost always involves some pattern of communications and relations between organizational members and groups. The manner in which these things are conducted is called the organization's decision-making processes. The term "process" refers to "how" decisions are actually made.<sup>3</sup>

Katz and Kahn, among others, stress that there are also types of decisions which include the following: 1) the formulation of substantive organizational goals and objectives; 2) the formulation of procedures and mechanisms for achieving goals and judging performances; 3) setting routines for the application of existing choices to ongoing operations; and 4) ad hoc decisions that impact on both goals and the allocation of organizational resources--space, money, personnel, etc.<sup>4</sup> Thus, all sorts of decisions are being made constantly at various levels throughout the organization. Some decisions deal with relatively routine matters and others with more substantive issues or problems.

But there is always a thin line between such distinctions. A routine decision usually deals with general procedures, rules, or interpretations of how a particular job should be performed. While a decision that affects the entire institution (budget cuts, tuition increases, enrollment rollbacks) almost always seems more significant than those

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<sup>3</sup>There are commonly thought to be four general processes: 1) problem-solving, 2) persuasion, 3) bargaining, and 4) politics. James G. March and Herbert Simon, Organizations (New York: Wiley, 1958), pp. 129-131.

<sup>4</sup>Daniel Katz and Robert L. Kahn, The Social Psychology of Organizations (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1966), p. 260.

which impact on a single student or a particular subunit.

Few decisions are never cut and dried matters. There are always a number of stated and then some hidden considerations attached to any issue or problem. For example, a decision to offer a course in a given discipline includes these sorts of considerations: 1) the perceived need for such a course; 2) the benefits to the department for offering it; 3) the availability of a competent instructor; 4) his/her general reputation, qualifications and work load; 5) whether a time and class location can be arranged; 6) who the potential student audience might be; 7) the difficulty associated with getting the course approved, if it is a new offering; 8) the availability of resources and rewards.

Also, every organization has established some balance between who has control over which issues and/or decisions. This is usually referred to as the centralization-decentralization continuum. To illustrate, there are certain decisions which are made by members of the central administration unilaterally and others which subunits have more directly under their influence. Weber classified the continuum according to five zones: 1) administrative dominance--decisions made strictly by the central administration with little or no input from any other groups; 2) administrative primacy--decisions made by the administration but with some consultation; 3) shared authority--decisions by the administration and faculty in full collaboration; 4) faculty primacy--decisions made by the faculty with some consultation; 5) faculty dominance--decisions made unilaterally by faculty.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Arnold Weber, et al. Faculty Participation in Academic Governance

Despite the limitations inherent in this schema, the important point to recognize is that different types of decisions are being made at various levels throughout the institution. For example, faculty members may select the books they wish to utilize in a particular course but someone in the central administration designates how the books are to be ordered and where they are to be purchased on campus. Or students may select their semester courses but the faculty normally determines which courses will be offered and often the sequence in which a given course may be taken. In other words, even though different levels have the authority to make certain kinds of decisions, some decisions are obviously more important than others and the choices which may be available are frequently predetermined or at the very least limited in some way.

There are also many points of confusion in the literature over the distinctions between the terms decision and policy. As we have mentioned earlier, decisions are most often viewed as an actual choice which results from some specific deliberations. Granted, there are also a whole range of decision types which include everything from non-decisions to muddled ones. In its normal usage, however, policy implies a more important decision involving salient courses of action effecting a significant number of people. Although more researchers do acknowledge the incremental nature of single decisions being merged together over time to form policy statements, the term policy is almost always seen as the more critical label. Due to the fact that the two terms are often

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(Washington, D.C.: American Association for Higher Education, 1967).



interchanged for one another, there will be no effort to define or distinguish between the two beyond this point, except when required by the interpretations of a particular source.

### The Governance Maze

The organization represents the walls of the maze and, by and large, organizational decisions have to do with solving maze problems, not reconstructing the maze walls.<sup>6</sup>

Every institution of higher learning has some formal and informal system of governance. This entails a diverse number of processes and agencies through which choices are considered and made about institutional priorities and the allocation of effort and resources. As one might imagine, the most appropriate description for such a decision-making system is that it resembles a very disjointed and complex maze, for the essence of such arrangements is extremely bureaucratic.<sup>7</sup> Formal authority is delegated from state accrediting agencies which grant institutional charters to the university's board of trustees and then on to the president.

The winding paths of decision-making within most universities actually begin with the president or chancellor, as the case may be, for it is through this individual that authority is delegated inside the campus. Below the president reside the various vice-presidents, deans,

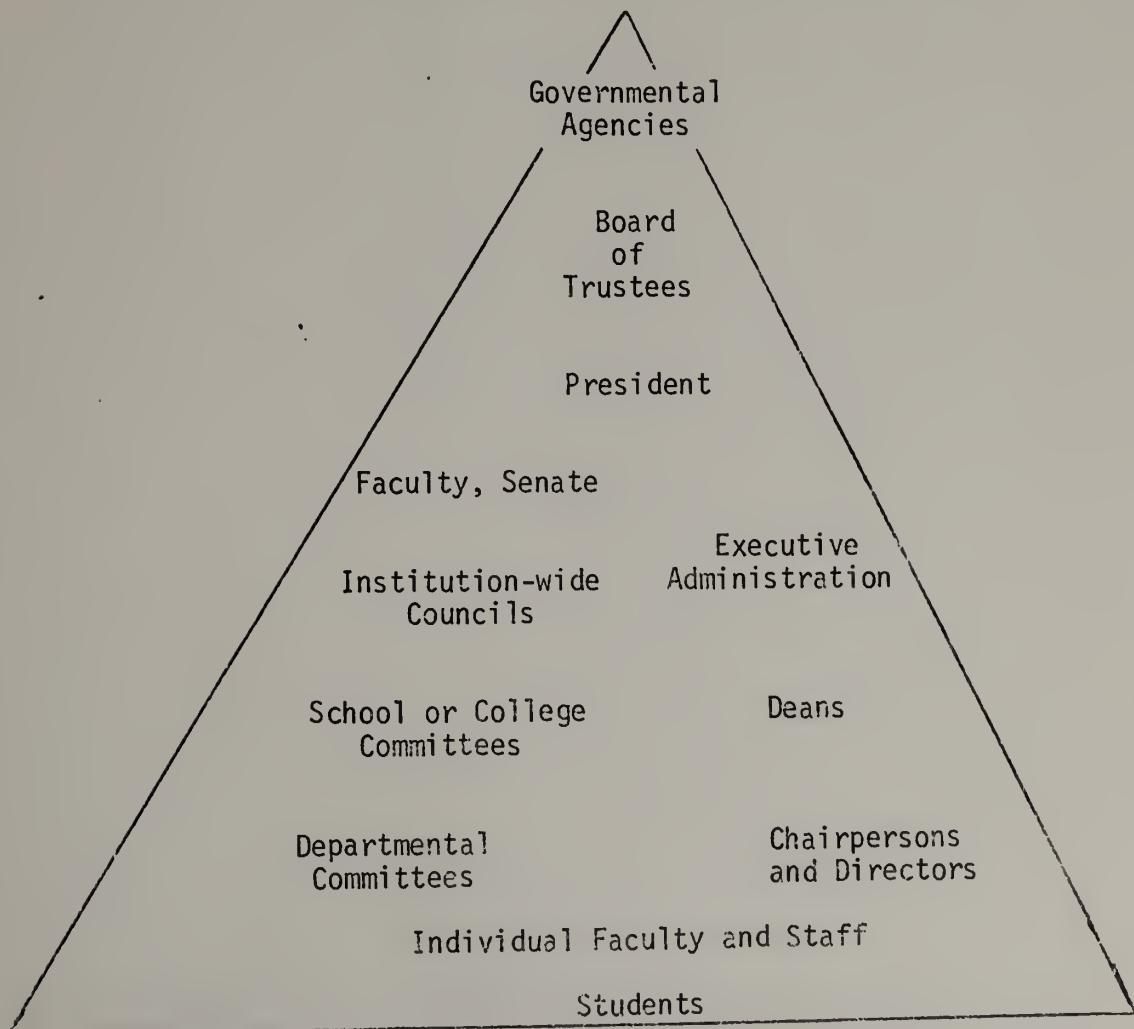
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<sup>6</sup>Katz and Kahn, The Social Psychology of Organizations.

<sup>7</sup>Jack Lindquist, Strategies for Change (San Francisco: Pacific Soundings Press, forthcoming).

and directors for such things as business affairs, food services, academic matters, student services, alumni development, and so on. Each of these positions is joined by specialized units with their own staff and office personnel. Within this loosely overlapping framework a number of groupings exist. Table 3 provides a clearer illustration.

Table 3  
The Structure of Governance<sup>8</sup>



<sup>8</sup>From Jack Lindquist, Strategies for Change

There are various kinds of decision-making bodies at different levels of the organization. At the top are various administrative councils for the executive level officers to present and discuss matters of mutual interest. In the middle are regular deans meetings for largely the same purposes. Then each division has its own configurations, both formal and informal, designed to coordinate the personnel in that particular area, as well as more permanent policy making groups on specific topics of interest. In addition to these arrangements, there are a host of faculty-oriented bodies. These usually include a representative senate of some sort with related councils and committees. Also, smaller units encompass such topics as personnel matters, curriculum, space and calendar, student life, budgetary matters, long range planning, and a wide range of ad hoc concerns.

The walls of the maze also include student decision-making groups. In residential campus situations, these include everything from dormitory councils to campus-wide student government associations. There are also commuter student assemblies, fraternity councils, married student associations, gay student alliances, political groups, and all the others which comprise the current generation's consciousness.

Grafted on to all this are the collective bargaining units. With a growing percentage of institutions operating under unionized conditions, these units represent an increasing number of campus employees and constituencies. And these agencies add an entirely new element to the maze, one based on legalized processes for bargaining and contract negotiation.

Perhaps there was a time, say in the early years of this century,

when America's institutions of higher learning seemed to have a single unified structure. Now the modern university resembles a maze where a number of groups and subunits vie for every available nook and cranny, claiming them as their own private space. From these points of limited vision, each views the university in its own terms and not as a whole. Each perceives its mission and objectives as predominant. Each over-emphasizes the importance of its activities, as well as what it may be capable of achieving. Some groups seek to cultivate institutional power, to give advice and influence decisions, while strictly maintaining their own autonomy and independence. Others believe their perspectives and leadership should dictate what the institution seeks to undertake. Still others just want to be left alone, to exist as islands insulated from larger concerns and institutional problems.

### Territories and Rights

The present university may be conceived of in territorial terms. This refers to a particular field of things--a space in which boundaries are set, patrolled and defended by some occupant or group of occupants.<sup>9</sup> Normally, a territory is envisioned as a physical space like a library or an admissions office. But organizational territories are more than that; they encompass specific roles, tasks and functions that become as-

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<sup>9</sup>The major source for most of this discussion is Erving Goffman. Although much of his writing focuses on face-to-face interactions, it has significant implications for those interested in understanding other facets of organizational behavior. See Relations in Public (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1971), especially Chapter 2, "Territories of Self," pp. 28-61. Also, see Robert Ardrey, The Territorial Imperative (New York: Atheneneum, 1966).



sociated with the divisions of labor. It implies a definition of organizational identity, a mapping of duties, responsibilities, power and status. Thus a territory suggests not only the places of organizational work, leisure, and residence, but also the activities that extend from these.

In this sense, each territory believes it has special privileges and interests. These may be thought of as jurisdictions, organizational rights that are derived from traditions and formal authority relations. Or they may simply be claims that have been granted because of expertise and/or organizational needs. Over time, however, a territory (and its occupants) acquires a unique and frequently distorted understanding of this delegated as well as interpreted set of rights.

Although a territory is created through the granting of authority, the field and activities associated with it soon become considered definite entitlements. Territorial occupants exercise control over these privileges as if they were actual material possessions. Their organizational belongings are personalized and then guarded with a zealot-like fervor. As an example, when policies and actions are suggested for the organization as a whole, occupants tend to favor those which seem destined to enhance the importance of their possessions. With this in mind, they oppose expenditures and other actions which do not fit into their conception of the organization.

Occupants want their sphere of influence to be as autonomous as possible. Although they may not envision all their missions and activities as fixed, they resist anyone outside of their preserve interfering with what they actually do. Having occupied their spots for some time,

in many cases, they assume a permanency that appears deep-rooted. Their attachment is derived from the sense of ownership and psychological advantages which accompanies having one's own private space. However, people who are part of a territory, no matter how loosely affiliated with it they may be, can and do form bonds which transcend personal and professional differences when faced with possible intrusions into their affairs.

Because it is often difficult to comprehend where some territories begin and end, it often seems like there are no clear boundary markers between preserves. Only when some encroachment occurs do we learn what a territory believes is under its purview. But boundaries are constantly being probed, tested, renegotiated and contested within the university. One of the most often played organizational games involves trying to anticipate which territories and occupants may react to a given action, or what response a territory may make to a specific proposal.

For over a decade, the most publicized struggles in higher education have been about territoriality and trespassing. First, it was the students in the sixties who tried to carve out larger preserves and rights for themselves. Then it was an administration, faced with economic turmoil, which fought to balance the distribution of funds throughout the territories. Now the focus is temporarily turned outside the university to federal and state agencies that are intruding on territorial operations. There seems to be no end to the potential encroachments.

Territories form the university. They divide the university into an ever growing number of special groupings that include students,

faculty, administrators and an expanding array of other people. Territories are a very real by product of how we organize universities, especially the bureaucratic arrangements which emphasize hierarchy, division of labor, and isolation.

But each territory requires somebody to defend it so that its power and status can continue. Territories are designed to keep people from one another, to exaggerate differences and spawn conflict. When an organization becomes dominated by territorial "we-they" perspectives, parts begin to believe that they are incompatible with one another. Each preserve develops what it thinks is its own unique sense of purpose and direction. Competing goals result that further generate value disagreements, tension, and a lack of trust among participants, until the university as a whole appears torn between a multiplicity of missions, uncertain and ambiguous to everyone. Decision-making, under such circumstances, becomes increasingly an expression of political advantages.

### A Political Explanation

Although many persons have written about the university from a political perspective, J. Victor Baldridge popularized this explanation with the introduction of his doctoral dissertation in a book form entitled Power and Conflict in the University.<sup>10</sup> As a sociology graduate student at Yale, Baldridge spent several years studying how decisions were made at New York University. Utilizing techniques of participation

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<sup>10</sup>We have also chosen Baldridge because his work is the most representative of the pluralistic position on university decision-making.

observation, surveys, and personal interviews, he generated the data which lead him to a political interpretation of decision-making.

The major focus of Baldrige's research is on policy formation. He explains his selection in these terms:

. . .major policies commit the organization to definite goals, set strategies for reaching those goals, and in general determine the long range destiny of the organization. Policy decisions are not just any decisions, but instead are those that have major impact; those that mold the organization's future. In short, policies are the 'critical' decisions, not merely the 'routine' ones. . . .<sup>11</sup>

Baldrige believes policy decisions are so important that people throughout the organization try to influence the final outcome so that it coincides with their values and interests. He labels the processes associated with those influence struggles political.

Baldrige views the university as a complex pluralistic system which is fractured by conflict "along lines of disciplines, faculty subgroups, student subcultures, splits between administrators and faculties, and rifts between professional schools."<sup>12</sup> Thus, the decisions which are reached within the university are often the product of conflict resolution among quite diverse competing interest groups. The central thesis of Baldrige's study deals with interpreting decision-making as the result of bargaining and negotiations between various groups all pushing and supporting particular goals. Furthermore, the

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<sup>11</sup>J. Victor Baldrige, Power and Conflict in the University (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1971), p. 21.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid, p. 105.



goals of these interest groups represent divergent values that foster continual and on-going degrees of conflict within the organization. Though there may be many goals shared commonly by several interest groups, the institution appears so complex and fragmented that the "shared values" are often overshadowed by the divergent interests.

In addition, the world for most universities includes both internal and external environments, each with its own set of special interest groups. In order to more fully understand the "political system" of a particular institution, the observer must know the structural arrangements, participants and values of both those inside the institution as well as potential external influences. Under these conditions, the political process not only takes place within the context of the university, but along certain structural boundaries, both formal and informal, which channel the conflict into the decision-making process. In a rather fluid manner, the decision-making process tends to move in and out of various structural arrangements (academic departments, governance bodies, and administrative units) which overlap and affect numerous interest groups. Thus politics is an activity that is not only multi-interest oriented but also multi-leveled as well.

Baldrige goes on to report:

. . .there is an insulating and segregating phenomenon, for the different parts of the system are often protected from direct conflict because they are not concerned with the same issues. . . . The departments have one set of interactions, the college or school another, the entire university another. It confuses the issue to talk as if all these levels were competing for the same types of influence or for control of the same issues. Ordinarily this is simply not so, for each level

is charged with different responsibilities and different spheres of influence. . .<sup>13</sup>

As one might imagine, conflict often emerges when particular subunits are in direct or perceived competition with one another. But the political battles appear initially as competing claims for authority and jurisdiction. The debates evolve from questions about who has responsibility, into who either wants responsibility, or how to influence those who do.

Though we have briefly discussed the decision process, it is the nature and forms of interest groups which give substance to this pluralistic model. As an illustration, Baldrige believes the faculty comprises one of the major subcultures within an institution. Its ranks are filled with members who represent varying statuses, values and goals. A partial list of faculty concerns might include: research and the advancement of knowledge, the preservation of a given discipline, maintaining job security, control over tenure and promotion decisions, improvement of teaching practices, concern for the growth and development of the student, the application of knowledge to contemporary social problems, and so on.

Accordingly, faculty will agree and disagree about the merits of these items within disciplines, across school or college lines, and in general, throughout the university. In a sense, the pluralist model believes there is a certain amount of flexibility within the system which may make for strange bedfellows on any particular issue. And faculty

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid, p. 108.

interest groups may range from specific faculty members within a given discipline desire to see the department move in certain curricular directions, to a campus-wide subgroup of the local American Association of University Professors (AAUP) chapter that advocates faculty unionization.

To summarize the pluralistic approach, decision-making is the result of a complex political bargaining process. Because the university is a diverse organization, fragmented by interest groups and structural arrangements, decision-making rarely rests with any one official. Powerful forces exist--interest groups, bureaucratic officials, influential individuals, organized subunits--that cause issues to surface within the university's political community. Decisions then are the products of informal decision networks, governance bodies, and committees, as well as professional and bureaucratic influence. The success or failure of any given group under this system depends on its trust of central governance figures, what organizational resources it possesses, and its persistence in bargaining.

More often than not the first political struggle involves where an issue or problem lands for deciding, in other words, the actual decision location. By the time this occurs, in Baldrige's own words, "decisions are usually pre-formed to a great extent. . .not all options are open and the choices have been severely limited by previous conflicts."<sup>14</sup> Compromises, bargaining and negotiations then describe the political process itself. But even when an issue appears resolved, the contro-

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid, p. 190.

versies and struggles are likely to continue on to the next concern and thus the conflicts in values and interests never seem to end.

### The Biased Forum<sup>15</sup>

To this point we have accepted the pluralist interpretation unquestioningly. One must realize, however, that this is merely a single explanatory position among competing theoretical perspectives. In essence it holds that decision-making is the result of mutual adjustment between competing forces. Of course, such an analysis can be both incomplete and misleading.

To begin with, the pluralist perspective says: the university political system offers to all who are organized, persistent, or have the time to spend, an opportunity to influence the institution's goals, direction and management. Is this really so? What about those members who are not part of any organized group? One could respond by saying this interpretation is especially distorted in favor of the stronger, more organized group and subunits.

Next, one needs to ask: if bargaining and negotiating have a great deal to do with determining decision results, surely there are people who do not possess these skills and are always at a disadvantage. Moreover, this approach places significant importance on two power related variables: trust for authority figures and persistence. It says very

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<sup>15</sup>Much of this discussion was influenced by the writings of William E. Connolly. For a more elucidating critique of the pluralist position, see Connolly's edited work The Bias of Pluralism (New York: Atherton Press, 1969), especially his own chapter entitled "The Challenge to Pluralist Theory."



little about what happens when the authority figures do not trust those who are being persistent, or how those with perceived power can and do deflect what they do not want to deal with.

An important ingredient in the pluralist analysis is the belief that interest groups and individuals have the potential need to influence the system. For in the pluralist's eyes, the system simply referees the decision-making process in a neutral manner. Yet one must ask quite candidly whether this forum is as tolerant and accommodating as this perspective would lead us to imagine. Does everyone have the right and ability to express their opinions and interests effectively? And, if they do indeed, does the expression of an interest or opinion correlate with power or influence? In other words, how much of this exchange process is simply symbolic?

What we are alluding to is the fact that most university decision-making systems are designed to allow people to think they might have some influence. In actuality, the system is more theatrical than anything else; what is decided is largely predetermined and as often as not inconsequential.

There can be very little disagreement over the fact that the decision-making discussions appear real. The people who participate in these meetings do feel involved in the management of the university, no matter how boring and meaningless the discussions might seem at times. And, of course, there is some expression of choice. Participants do affirm policies, veto provisions, recommend problems for further study, and defeat the adoption of controversial ideas. But these acts take place within a particular context, one that is heavily weighted in favor

of certain opinions, traditions, and customs.

Whatever the conditions, little is presented that has not been explored informally with the principal groups concerned. This is less true for students; they frequently view consultation as cooptation. In other cases they are excluded from the more significant deliberations by design and/or ignorance. With regards to faculty and campus administrators, most matters are at least pretested with key officials and opinion leaders. Those issues which have not undergone any prior parley are often considered along lines that anticipate the responses and reactions of influential persons or interest groups likely to be concerned with the issue, idea or problem.

Few concerns ever really pop up unannounced. When something unusual or controversial does sneak through, there are numerous tactics for derailing it. The issue can be directed to a particular governance committee for study; or if it comes out of one of these structures, it can be sent back for reconsideration, more information, and/or further clarification. All these are rather classic techniques for simply saying: "This is unacceptable."

Therefore, the decision-making system of most American institutions of higher learning must be viewed as being designed primarily to furnish a theatre, a stage, a setting for artificial interactions. This theatrical metaphor does not mean that participants are actors with fixed roles and lines, though surely some case could be made for a variation of that analysis.<sup>16</sup> Rather, these settings are places where symbolic

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<sup>16</sup>See, for example, Harold L. Hodgkinson, Education, Interaction,

gestures are made, where political charades are conducted, and where participants act out their power and influence needs. Governance meetings in particular supply a portable stage where members can let off steam, talk about the state of the organization, discuss problems, and make suggestions about what ought to be done, with the assurance that some captive, if not attentive, audience will be there to listen.

The purpose of a system which is more theatrical than it is deliberative is to provide for performance arenas to limit and control what is possible within the university, and to create an illusion of shared power among major participants. Such a system serves primarily as a release device for the conflicts which exist between community members and a mechanism for orchestrating desired outcomes. It imparts a false sense of power for members who need to believe that they are important and that the choices they make in those settings really matter.

### The Power of Context

When people talk about changing higher education, whether it be an entire institution or some aspect of its operation, they must inevitably face questions of strategy and tactics. A significant portion of this reflection involves determining responses to how one ought to confront the decision-making system. Regretfully, too many would-be change agents move their pet ideas forward without fully realizing the context in which decisions are weighed.

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and Social Change (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967); and especially, Ferdinand Mount, The Theatre of Politics (New York: Schocken Books, 1973).

In most cases, proposals are suggested which fail to take into consideration two very critical factors: (1) that the context of decision-making is almost always biased by academic history and mainstream American ideology; (2) that the nature of power to accept or reject a given reform idea is greatly influenced by bureaucratic arrangements.

As we have stated elsewhere, decisions and decision-making processes for that matter are not amoral or value-free. A course of action which is chosen in some deliberative process denotes a temporary commitment in favor of certain actions, procedures and/or desired conditions over other possible alternatives. Thus no decision can honestly be viewed as neutral. Although any choice may be selected through seemingly rational processes, it emerges out of specific ideological constraints which help to define what constitutes a possible and/or reasonable act or alternative in a given society or social unit. Then decision-making always takes place against a backdrop of values and beliefs which serve to legitimize some actions and discourage others.

Furthermore, our unique blend of capitalist-liberal philosophy combined with scientific rationality creates a biased interpretation of reality which serves to explain, justify and mobilize support for particular practices and institutions. In conjunction with this, over time the university has developed its own belief system which justifies and explains many of its practices, as well as its relationship to the larger society. These also support particular customs and practices within higher education. Still it is this mixed ideology (both academic and cultural) itself which constitutes an effective set of pressures and expectations which help give meaning to our daily lives as well as



greatly influence, in conscious and unconscious ways, the decision options we consider appropriate and viable.

Inherent in this ideology are specific rational, pragmatic and efficiency-oriented assumptions which often influence what is viewed as possible actions. These assumptions support a brand of skepticism which measures issues and concerns on an imbalanced scale, one that often selects options on the basis of "realistic criteria." In many cases, the pragmatic features of this ideology effectively prohibits alternative visions of reality from being assessed, either through deliberate subversion or simply by labeling the ideas as irrational. This establishes ideological limits around what can be tested and tried within a society and its educational institutions. And even when new ideas are introduced, the dominant beliefs serve to discredit them.

There are probably no better examples of this phenomenon at work, in both cultural and academic terms, than the issues of grading practices and experiential learning.

Initially, grades came under attack during the 1960's because they were seen as a part of the competitive ethic of society. Education was viewed as having a major role in sustaining and perpetuating that value. After several years of struggle, some variations on the pattern of competitive grading were adopted. But, in many cases, institutions have backed away from trying to tamper with these practices.

Though the reasons for this vary from place to place, most critics of grade reform efforts simply admit that competition is seen as a natural phenomenon, something which is basic to all human existence and thus unalterable. Consequently, proposals designed to play down com-

petitiveness run directly into not only ideological factors which oppose such notions as idealistic but a complex set of interrelated cultural practices that validate competition. From sports events to the Graduate Record Exam and on to the ladders of upward mobility, competition is reinforced to such an extent that few countersuggestions are likely to generate enough energy to overcome these forces. Thus non-competitive efforts end up being discussed in a contextual environment where the forces for change are far out-numbered, in conscious and unconscious ways, by the forces of the status quo.

In terms of experiential learning, we have a very different set of reactions. For example, advocates for internships and field study options have been much more successful than one might first imagine, for one thing supervised field experiences can be presented in pragmatic terms. Giving students a chance to test out career opportunities is viewed as a reasonable idea, especially in a market situation where citizens and government agencies are stressing the importance of education which is tied to employability.

On the other hand, reformers find more resistance when they discuss the more volatile issue of assessment of prior learning. To suggest that someone's life has value which can be translated into credit terms is truly revolutionary in academia. The more tradition bound disciplines, in the humanities and social studies areas, view education as being largely classroom and book-confined. To somehow be able to review a person's life and fix credit equivalency to parts of it is viewed as both a foreign process and an erosion of academic quality.

In this sort of situation, legitimate interests are often denied,

distorted, suppressed, and/or ignored if they do not correspond to the prevailing views. Whenever possible, this ideology tries to limit which concerns are able to gain access into the decision-making system of the university, as well as the reception those issues are likely to find once they have been presented. It also establishes a special legitimacy and rationale for conventional practices and procedures. Thus people with alternative ideas and new concerns inevitably encounter dual barriers, ones consisting of ideological rigidity and resistance.

Intermingled with these ideological constraints is another contextual nemesis, the nature of bureaucratic arrangements and the tools it furnishes for status quo elements in the university. Most of the research on power in collegiate settings seeks to ascertain whether the organization is controlled by competing power groups or some power elite alignment. These studies miss a very subtle point; it matters little whether the university is an oligarchy or not. The power of bureaucracy is found not only in who occupies which sets of influence, but it rests also with how such arrangements monitor and guide decision-making (both formally and informally) along certain channels. Moreover, power resides with the ability and potential of bureaucratic structures to force almost any proposal to go slow, be compromised, or face endless delays.

There is, of course, a curious paradox associated with all this. It is that reformers rarely realize it but their first choice before embarking with any idea is really: "should we engage the bureaucracy or not?" For once a group commits itself to an approval process, to having some authority pass judgment on whether the idea is valuable or not, then it must accept the fact that the idea is doomed to certain predict-

able happenings.

To seek approval is to negotiate the maze: Why? Because the process of approval means that the maze is going to be empowered with particular rights. It also means that those with a given suggestion for improvement will attempt to secure permission from an ever ascending number of department heads, deans, bureaucrats, committees, and councils. In essence, the quest for official sanctions entangles the idea with the structural dynamics of the organization, and the maze is designed to place immeasurable checks and balances on any suggestion for change.

To begin with, specific types of decisions--budget, tenure, hiring, program development--happen along what may be labeled "action-channels."<sup>17</sup> These channels structure the decision process, pre-select the major participants, determine when each participant enters the process, and distributes specific advantages and disadvantages to each person involved. These are the bureaucratic and governance related structures that channel issues for discussion. Since both these are hierarchical in nature, it matters whether an issue percolates up the maze, surfaces somewhere in the middle, or is sent down from above.

A central expectation of the system is that issues and participants are to follow the proper channels. As an illustration, student leaders who desire to change dormitory regulations but decide to take their case directly to the university president are likely to be asked immediately

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<sup>17</sup>Graham T. Allison, Essence of Decision (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971), pp. 169-171.



whether or not they have discussed their concerns with the "proper authorities." The first question will almost always be: Did you check with the dormitory councils, the director of residential life, or the vice-president for student affairs? Those at the top of the organization often hesitate to act on issues which fall in someone else's perceived territory. Also, people who are bypassed in the presentation of an issue resent not being consulted and may express their discontent by subverting the final outcome.

So the first rule of decision-making urges the participants to move their issues according to prescribed courses. Of course, not everyone pays attention to it. Nevertheless, inherent in the custom is a belief that certain members have a right to review particular issues. Besides the tediousness and built-in inertia generated by such arrangements, it also tends to produce a system that is cumbersome and timid. For one thing, organizational members often hesitate to make suggestions for change because it takes so long to get anything substantial approved. If they do venture forth with a new idea, there are so many check points that it is easy to stall or stop almost any idea.

Also, rules differ according to the issues at stake. Issues take different routes and involve different people depending on whether they originate in academic departments, relate to budget matters, concern physical plant problems, or deal with external relationships. In general, though, there seem to be four major considerations that influence what happens along the routes or channels. These are:

- 1) Who Must Sign Off? Many issues require several groups to agree before any action can take place. In other cases, when people

are known to be opposed to a given course of action, the matter may be bent to their wishes, terminated entirely, or moved forward very silently without the knowledge or involvement of opposing elements. The existence of sign off claims creates a system that is always concerned with the receptivity and willingness of overlapping groups to go along before decision action occurs.

- 2) Through Which Channels Is an Issue Required to Pass? Specific types of issues are supposedly required by governance agreements and bureaucratic customs to take rather set routes. This is especially true of curriculum matters which have long been under the purview of faculty. A proposal for a new course usually moves from a departmental committee to the school or college level and then on to a dean, an all campus council, a vice-president for academic affairs, and finally to the board of trustees. People with a new proposal realize that the more check points which have to be engaged the greater the risk for alteration and/or outright failure.
- 3) How High Up Does an Issue Have to Go? Many concerns can be and are settled at their point of origin. But issues that impact on the institution as a whole or on a significant segment of it are expected to make their way to the upper chambers.
- 4) What Form Does an Issue Have to Take? Some things surface in the decision-making system without any shape to them, but few ever stay that way very long. They are analyzed, dissected, outlined, and written up. Even when this is not the case, no

issue makes it through the system on its merits alone. The perceived influence of the issue-presenter, plus the style and language of the presentation, play an integral part in whether an idea is accepted or not. Also the form is likely to change drastically based on current needs and interests of those listening to the presentation. If it does not meet their present needs, the whole matter may very well end up in someone's file thirteen.

Several things may be deduced from this little list. For example, the most important silent rule deals with anticipation. People deliberate a wide range of issues with their ears to the ground. They are concerned, perhaps overly so, with how specific interest groups and key participants are going to respond to a given action. Thus the system often hesitates or fails to react because decision-makers are apprehensive about arousing what they see as "sleeping giants." Above all else, decision-makers seem bent on avoiding conflict and most will seek to avoid it whenever possible.

Also, this system functions on a fear of failure principle. This might be better called the "what-if-something-goes-wrong" syndrome. On both the bureaucratic and formal governance sides of the university, hesitancy and timidity are encouraged. People learn that caution is the surest course, that risks denote waves and these might upset the balance of institutional stability. Faculty and administrators also come to understand that being liked by one's supervisor is important to organizational survival. Sticking to principles may be admired in some quarters but there is no assurance that it will be rewarded. The best course is

a moderate or conservative one; it does not endanger one's position nor take the university into unchartered waters.

In summary, it is the context under which decision-making is acted out which represents the greatest barrier to change in American higher education. These learning institutions exist within a culture where certain values and behaviors are interpreted as more worthwhile than others. This ideology places an invisible boundary around what can be tried and in what ways. In addition, the structural characteristics of most universities remain bureaucratic, which adds still another set of barriers to the process. Invariably, such arrangements work to slow down and block significant proposals for change.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE UNFINISHED AGENDA

If God had wanted us to walk, he would not have invented roller skates.

Wee Willie Wonka, from the movie version of The Chocolate Factory

In this the concluding chapter, we attempt to integrate the dissertation's major thesis. Particular attention is spent on reiterating the failures of the liberal analysis which dominated academic reform efforts in the past decade. In addition, a distinction is made between institutional and social change. Change advocates are urged to acknowledge that conventional reform tactics are often illusory, the essence of the cultural system remains the same. A more transitional strategy is then articulated. To demonstrate how this approach might be operationalized, an effort is made to show how work in America can be intimately tied to a new social and educational change agenda.

#### The Liberal Dilemma

We were operating on the theory that here was a problem, you expose it to the world, the world says "How horrible!" and moves to correct it.<sup>1</sup>

Bond's statement clearly demonstrates typical 1960's assumptions

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<sup>1</sup>Julian Bond, "The Movement Then and Now," Southern Exposure, Volume III, No. 4.

about change. Time and events showed this to be a most simplistic and naive view. One does not achieve change by means of fair play, justice, and rational problem solving alone.

This might be called the structural change approach. Followers of institutional change believe various interventions can be introduced to rectify certain perceived negative conditions in an organization or society. In most cases, these actions are designed to either add on new functions or remodel aspects of an old structure--without altering, to any significant degree, the essence of the total system.

Those who advanced structural change proposals in higher education often found: (1) that standard channels of power withdraw from anything but the most modest of proposals; (2) that at best such ideas are likely to be viewed as merely temporary responses, usually accepted during times of crisis; (3) that the standard resistance factors--bureaucratic imperatives, cost-efficiency, academic disciplines, professional self-interests, and the conventional wisdom about teaching and learning--are not easily negotiated.

This constitutes the perimeter of what we will call 'the liberal dilemma.' You see the central thrust of structural change strategies is liberal in its origins. This liberal analysis says one can manipulate parts to alter the whole. Piecemeal internal efforts (be they referred to as reform, innovation or renewal) are then interpreted as mechanisms for adapting institutions to new sets of values, behaviors and relationships. But one soon learns that mainstream ideology, organizational patterns, and the continuing (but too often denied) biases of decision-making always seem to dominate America's institutions of higher learning.

The dilemma is that many reformers now find themselves trapped between equally unfavorable alternatives. They are convinced that what they tried failed and what exists is not good enough. In other words, the conditions which originally necessitated the liberal responses have not been sufficiently eliminated, and the panaceas which were suggested were often subverted, ill-conceived, or impossible given their lofty expectations. The end result seems to have produced an era of lowered expectations, tempered visions, and a growing sense of powerlessness.

Part of the current dilemma evolves from the liberal analysis itself. This perspective invariably focuses on institutional issues as separate problems to be solved. Frequently, it leads reformers to envision organizational symptoms in terms of single causal factors. Demands are then expressed which call for quick answers--what Hannah Arendt once called "the lust for plausible answers." Too often, however, the issues are not adequately linked to the social and cultural conditions which produced them.

Over and over again, the liberal analysis suggested programs that were designed to fail.<sup>2</sup> Governance, admissions, curriculum, instruction, grading practices, and various rules and regulations all fell prey to liberal interpretations. In other words, all were seen as separate levers to be manipulated, problems to be solved.

This perspective did, of course, accomplish some critical things. For a while, changes were made. Responses to problems were introduced

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<sup>2</sup>For greater details, see an earlier chapter in this dissertation entitled "Strategies for Deliberate Failure."

and some people said: "See, the system does work." Yet, many persons were dealing with things (processes, structures, and functions) as the source for change. In this sense, change all too often became translated to mean simply new techniques. More importantly, the changes which developed did not alter, to any great extent, the basic values and beliefs of the larger cultural system. The basic motivational system of American culture remained the same. That system continued to support profit-oriented, individualistic, competitive, and exploitive interpretations of human reality.

In summary, the liberal analysis coopted reformers and neutralized those who wanted more. People either became paralyzed by the failures of pet schemes or drew false conclusions. Still, the logic of liberalism created a major contradiction. To paraphrase Michael Harrington, liberalism worships two opposing idols: reform and the status quo. On one hand was the demand for change. On the other hand was a general acceptance of human nature, basic political arrangements, and the economic system which supports and creates those things.

### Social Change

To this point, the argument is basically that what were suggested as potential changes for higher education did not alter the essence of the dominant culture. Why? For the most part, university change has tended to be seen as simply playing with the means of internal educational processes.<sup>3</sup> Proposals for academic reform almost never grappled,

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<sup>3</sup>For two important exceptions, see Michael Rossman, On Learning and



in very concrete ways, with the ends of higher education, namely, that higher education is in the service of the larger culture.

Philip Slater once wrote: "Change can take place only when institutions have been analyzed, discredited, and disassembled, and the motivational forces that gave rise to them rejected into alternative spheres of gratification."<sup>4</sup> Slater is calling for a radically different way of thinking about change. His view requires one to begin with the contradictions inherent in the dominant culture and also for examining the motivations and institutions which create such things.

America's contradictions would include social inequality, racism, poverty, hunger, sexism, the polluted environment, the demise of small towns, and alienating work conditions. Those who lost their innocence in the struggles to deal with some of these issues in the last decade know that such things are interconnected. This is where the difference between institutional and social change begins--in the ability to accept the inter-relatedness in our lives. In other words, to move beyond liberal reform, one must seek to understand the complexity of the political, economic, and social forces which help define America's brand of late twentieth-century reality.

Those concerned with both social and educational change must begin with a simple realization. First, if credentialing is to continue, and there is no indication that we can expect otherwise, then those commit-

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Social Change (New York: Vintage Books, 1972); and Ivan Illyich, De-schooling Society (New York: Harrow Books, 1972).

<sup>4</sup>Philip Slater, In Pursuit of Loneliness (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), p. 125.

ted to social change must move forward along two intersecting lines: (1) engaging issues which address the means of higher education (internal processes and structures) and, this is the critical point, (2) developing strategies and programs which confront the ends of higher education (the nature of life after credentialing). Naturally, there could be at least two basic responses to this: (a) the radical response--which tends to say that whatever happens must begin with the immediate 'deschooling of society' by establishing schools-without-diplomas; (b) the transitional response--which counters by saying that intermediate goals can and must be established which will lead to some radical objectives.

The position we wish to explore here is the second one.<sup>5</sup> The next impetus for social change will have to come partially from a strategy which links educational means to cultural ends. In order for that kind of change to occur, educational change advocates will have to do these things:

- ....establish organic links between ideas which seek to fix up higher education and those designed to confront contradictions in the larger cultural milieu;
- ....develop carefully thought-out strategies to influence both the timing and methods for implementing these ideas; and
- ....strive to always initiate an idea which builds on an earlier one.

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<sup>5</sup>Andre Gorz, the French social critic, says the major challenge is to create the conditions which will lead to a cultural transformation. In his opinion, this can best be accomplished through a long transition of both small and large scale actions. See Andre Gorz, Strategy for Labor (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967) and Socialism and Revolution (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1973).

A logical reaction might now be: "Is this really very different from the liberal position? Is this merely another euphemism?"

To begin with, transitional strategies realize that change occurs in dynamic phases. Change is part of a progressive struggle. There are no quick overnight, easy, one-shot solutions--even under revolutionary conditions. Rather, social change must be judged in terms of its power to reduce cultural contradictions. Such efforts are endless and relative. With that in mind, reform is no longer an unacceptable course of action, as long as the goals are understood to be intermediate ones. But interventions must emerge which not only improve the situation in the short run but nurture the forces for a more dynamic cultural transformation over time. Such strategies must be both patient and purposeful.

### The Past as Future

Any new strategies for change must evolve from a deep respect for situational context, timing, and a sense of history. The last item is especially noteworthy. Advocates for change need to be mindful of the ideas and actions which have preceded them. Though the final aims may be to subvert the monopoly power of higher education, or to transform the economic structure of contemporary capitalism, tactics ought to extend from the lessons of the past. This means understanding that there was and is an old educational reform agenda which can and does serve as a rallying point for liberals and radicals. Moreover, this is an agenda which both groups know is unfinished.

Within higher education, the 1960's agenda centered primarily on

questions of access, power, and values. It asked: Who gets credentialed (which social classes receive access to which educational resources)? Who makes decisions and allocates valued resources (which persons and groups have power over the institution's activities)? What ideology is held in high esteem (which ideas, values and actions are justified by the dominant culture and its credentialing system)?

There is nothing drastically wrong with this old agenda. For example, in a society where degrees and diplomas are perceived by a significant proportion of the population as being crucial to one's potential employment opportunities, then who achieves access is a paramount concern. When an educational system credentials mostly those who can afford it, or only those who meet certain cognitive standards, or just those who are able to spend extensive periods of time at particular locations, then that system can be said to serve particular classes of learners. Under such circumstances, many of America's poor, minority, and socially disadvantaged can lose out on a de facto requirement for economic parity. Yes, access must remain a constant issue.

The question of power is less clear, particularly if one focuses almost entirely on the governance process. To fight solely for either new power arrangements or seats on specific decisional councils (boards of trustees or executive committees) may be an energy-draining venture. Instead, a crucial power contest, in the decades ahead, must revolve around the influence and interpretation of cognitive rationality itself.

Robert Pirsig recently stated it most succinctly:

. . .the true system, the real system, is our present construction of systematic thought itself, rationality itself, and if



a factory is torn down but the rationality which produced it is left standing, then that rationality will simply produce another factory.<sup>6</sup>

This view requires change advocates to concern themselves less with the symbols of power and more with its ideological sources. If the monopoly power of credentialing is going to be wrestled away from educational institutions,<sup>7</sup> then new confrontations will have to be made with the keepers of the gate--the professionals, the disciplines, and the knowledge they create, define and defend. In particular, internal institutional struggles ought not be directed entirely at the theatre of governance. Rather, the power of cultural and academic ideology needs to be examined, discussed, and debunked whenever and wherever possible.

All too often, however, the typical end-run strategy is to continue initiating programs which have the potential to subvert the established academic order--external degree options, university without walls, individualized education and credit for prior learning. These programs deal with ideology and power indirectly. The end-run approaches do erode the power of academic mythology--conventional beliefs which support faculty/disciplinary omnipotence and stress the obvious supremacy of classroom-confined learning. But these are still limited options. As programs they avoid the real challenge, they do not alter the value system in any measurable sense.

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<sup>6</sup>Robert M. Pirsig, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance (New York: Bantam Books, 1975), p. 94.

<sup>7</sup>By monopoly power, we mean faculty control over the transmission of knowledge and skills.

In order for that to happen, more political interventions must occur. Within the university there can and should revolve around a fundamental discussion on pedagogical concerns: how learning takes place and what one should know as a result of some collegiate learning experience. For it is through pedagogy that the dominant beliefs about knowledge and human nature are mixed into academic practices.

To a large extent, this is (or should be) part of a cyclical debate.<sup>8</sup> For over half a century, academicians have been engaged in a haphazard exchange around pedagogic principles. Today, traditionalists are calling for some rebirth in general education--some determination of a unity of knowledge or discovery of a basic, core curriculum which every student should experience somehow. On the other hand, reformers and educational radicals remain derailed. They do not seem to have any clear, concise principles to counter with. In other words, they are unclear about their own ideology.

Nearly ten years ago, Warren Bryan Martin labeled this the essentialist-existentialist confrontation. In Martin's words, essentialists "are concerned for that which goes beyond time and place--for that which is permanent, uniform, rational and sure."<sup>9</sup> The existentialists interpret education in much more personal terms. They say, in a sense, that whatever external truths are to be discovered must occur on an individual basis through self discovery.

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<sup>8</sup>We discussed the earlier phase of this debate in Chapter One, "Seeds for the Sixties: The Progressive Legacy."

<sup>9</sup>Warren Bryan Martin, Alternative to Irrelevance (Nashville, Tennessee: Abington Press, 1968), p. 49.

This is one key political battleground for the decade ahead. Whether the forces of academic retrenchment thoroughly reassert their conventional definitions of knowledge and education will be largely determined by how well present day change advocates understand, accept, and defend existentialist pedagogic principles.

In summary, the old agenda (access, power, and ideology) continues to be important. To this list, however, one must add a critical issue which can link higher education more directly to the dominant culture.

### From Pedagogy to Payrolls

If you recall, we stated earlier that transitional strategists must present issues which confront contradictions in the larger cultural milieu. Why? Henry Levin, among others, argues that educational reform can best occur as a byproduct of social change in the larger society. He goes on to say that there are three ways in which the "structure, organization, and values" of the total system may be altered.<sup>10</sup> These are: (1) natural disasters (earthquakes); (2) external factors (oil crises, wars, immigration, etc.); (3) internal contradictions (civil rights, the Vietnam War, etc.).

Ted R. Gurr, in his massive work Why Men Rebel, made a similar point. A central thesis in his cross cultural analysis suggested that people come to expect certain things from their society. Therefore, when a major discrepancy exists between what is and what ought to be,

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<sup>10</sup>Henry M. Levin, "Educational Reform and Social Change," Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, X, No. 3 (1974), p. 313.

tension will surface in the form of dissatisfaction, alienation, and even violence.<sup>11</sup> The American system, for example, either knowingly or unknowingly nurtures expectations about the quality of life which one ought to experience within it. Generations have come to associate certain things with this good life: upward mobility, materialistic acquisitions, and a sense of personal achievement. Slater, you remember, mentioned the importance of understanding these motivational roots inherent in the larger system.

Another way of providing a fulcrum for viewing that issue is to simply ask: Education for what? In a recent survey, based on 218,890 first year undergraduates, seventy-one percent said they thought college attendance would help them get a better job.<sup>12</sup> These undergraduates obviously see the university as a certification station--a stopping off point before employment and upward mobility. For them the end of higher education is simply: Work.

In this sense, educational reformers have ignored a central factor. While they established living-learning centers and pass-fail options, students were preparing to barter their lives away. The majority of the student population either recognize, or blindly accept, the fact that education is something one exploits to gain preferential treatment in the employment market. At this early stage, whether work is meaningful or not is far from an issue. Simply stated, the myth is that one just

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<sup>11</sup>Ted R. Gurr, Why Men Rebel (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 22-58.

<sup>12</sup>See The American Freshman: National Norms for Fall 1976 (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1977).



needs a degree to get a job and that part of the myth is increasingly true.

There is nothing new to this discussion. It has long been recognized that America's educational institutions have become diploma mills for "cognitive vocationalism."<sup>13</sup> Despite the rhetoric of liberal arts champions, career and vocational education rule today's colleges and universities. One need only follow the migration of students to the disciplines and majors with projected employment payoffs or job opportunities to know this.

In practice, if not in theory, higher education functions on social efficiency assumptions.<sup>14</sup> Its role now is principally to adapt students to the priorities and values of the corporate structure.

According to the current interpreter of this position, Willard Wirtz (former United States Secretary of Labor), education's main goal is to match preparation with employment opportunities. Wirtz and his colleagues at the National Manpower Institute see education in the service of the corporate establishment. For them, education is the cultural mechanism for fitting student aspirations and abilities to the need for economic progress. Of course, all this is veiled in the ideological language of rational planning, material prosperity, and greater economic

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<sup>13</sup>Edgar Litt, The Public Vocational University (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1969).

<sup>14</sup>See Arthur G. Wirth's "The Philosophical Split" in Dyckman W. Vermilye (Editor), Relating Work and Education (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1977). Wirth documents that since the turn of the century American educators have been moving more and more towards social efficiency justifications for education.

efficiency.

In the meantime, students seek to acquire the skills and personal style necessary to appear competitive (employment wise). Why? Because one must be able to see one's self as 'labor' in order to secure the necessary resources required to fulfill other needs--food, shelter, transportation, leisure, marriage, and so on. The contradiction begins once the degree is granted. First one must go through the often degrading experience of peddling--finding, getting and keeping a job (in some cases, any job). Then the reality of work sets in. Most entry level positions are at or near the bottom of the organization. People learn quickly that the new employment system nurtures specialization, status differences, hierarchy, passivity, repetitive activities, and alienation. Nowhere in all this do you find educational change agents questioning to any significant degree the meaning or quality of work that the student is likely to find upon graduation. For all the popular strategies for change are divorced from the realities of economic life. As we have stated elsewhere, the major objective has been to alter the internal processes and structure of higher education, not confront the contradictions of work under advanced capitalist conditions. What the student has to go through in his/her search for a livelihood and a sense of personal identity is really immaterial in this situation.

But, work becomes important to any discussion about social change because it is one of the basic institutions in life. As a recent HEW Report acknowledges, work "plays a pervasive and powerful role in psy-

chological, social, and economic aspects of our lives."<sup>15</sup> It becomes crucial to the transitional strategist for other reasons as well: (a) work demonstrates the inter-relatedness in our lives; (b) work is an issue that touches everyone; (c) work provides a logical focus for examining and exposing the full scale failures of the economic system.

### Choice Points

Recent reports<sup>16</sup> on the nature and quality of work in America have shown: (1) that more people are being credentialed than there are adequate and available employment opportunities; (2) that increasing numbers of people are now educated beyond the challenges of their work; (3) that the hierarchical and specialized nature of work limits people's ability to feel fulfilled by their work; (4) that a majority of workers are dissatisfied with their work; (5) that a majority of workers desire more control over their employment environment.

The question(s) of how and in what ways our society chooses to respond to these facts provides a major social change agenda for the decades ahead. The choice points which will have to be faced impact not only on the nature of our economic system but also on how we form organ-

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<sup>15</sup>James O'Toole, et al. Work in America (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1973), p. 2.

<sup>16</sup>Study after study has recently documented the general population's dissatisfaction with work. See, for example, the comprehensive report published by a special task force to the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare entitled Work in America. Or read the critical research of Michael Maccoby and Katherine Terz, "Character and Work in America," in Brenner, et al., Exploring Contradictions (New York: David McKay and Company, 1974).

izations and make decisions about products and services. For to deal with work is to struggle in very fundamental ways with the very vision of what constitutes a good society, and also which values are to dominate its just and fair operation.

If we are to establish a society dedicated to humanistic principles, the vision must deal with economics, social organization, decision-making, and ideology. Marcus Raskin, as an illustration, captured the parameters of the vision when he said:

People must find those social forms and develop social institutions which link freedom, liberty and self-sufficiency to the practice of sharing, empathy and cooperation.<sup>17</sup>

Implicit in such a vision is a different definition of human nature, a new ideology, and the establishment of more participatory power relations. At its core must be the goal of redefining and controlling the institutions which influence the lives of an entire citizenry. In particular, any new vision must confront the nature and quality of work in America and the economic and political system that sustains those arrangements.

There are several paths one might embark upon with regards to all this. Most transitional strategists, however, believe that to truly eradicate the powerlessness which permeates our lives a long range goal must be set that calls for the establishment of economic democracy in this society. Economic democracy has been defined as "the right of every person to have cooperative and democratic control over the condi-

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<sup>17</sup>Raskin, in Brenner, et al., Exploring Contradictions, p. 19.



tions of his or her work, the product of work, and the income and profits from work."<sup>18</sup> The term, of course, is utilized here (and by its supporters) as a more palatable phrase for socialism or workers' capitalism. Still, in its present usage, economic democracy does not necessarily mean increased public ownership of the means of production on a centralized state planning model, as in Russia or China. What is being advocated now in the United States is a more organic and evolutionary expansion of worker control at the local community or plant/work setting level.<sup>19</sup> According to Maccoby and Herrick, this means reconstructing the work place along four dimensions: (1) security--developing programs which deal with health and safety, guaranteed work and income, pensions and job attrition; (2) equity--establishing fair pay differentials, profit sharing, fair promotions and job assignments; (3) individualization --dealing with work related boredom, promoting craftsmanship, ongoing educational opportunities to develop skills and abilities, and respecting the needs and interests of individuals; (4) adopting varieties of participatory management, autonomous work groups, self management which foster democracy in the work place and insure the rights of free speech and assembly.<sup>20</sup> This is the substance of an economic democracy

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<sup>18</sup>David Olsen, "The New School for Democratic Management," in The New Harbinger, Volume IV, No. 2 (May, 1977), p. 33.

<sup>19</sup>There are exceptions to this. For two conflicting examples, see Peter Clecak's "The Future of Socialism" in Radical Paradoxes--Dilemmas of the American Left: 1945-1970 (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1974), pp. 273-299 and Michael P. Lerner's "Socialism: The Only Alternative" in The New Socialist Revolution (New York: Delta Books, 1973), pp. 287-300.

<sup>20</sup>Michael Maccoby and Neal Q. Herrick, "Socio-Psychological Princi-

strategy.<sup>21</sup>

We know that the major social experiments which have been accomplished along these lines have occurred largely in pre-industrialized settings. To some extent, that is why the Americanization of this vision is likely to be unique. Not only must this experiment be conducted under conditions of advanced capitalism, but the cultural and political heritage of this country will direct the outcomes.

Granted, the task itself is extremely complex. One could brush that aside by simply saying economic democracy is a long range goal and thus cannot be achieved overnight. That response, of course, takes us nowhere. Naturally, such ideas (economic democracy, socialism, etc.) go directly against the power of mainstream beliefs, economic justifications, and corporate self-interests. These factors notwithstanding, economic democracy also suggests major implications for the present corporate legal structures, trade unionism and collective bargaining, the concepts of private ownership and property rights, and the nature of profit allocation. . .just to name a few.

Under these circumstances, the questions then become: Is economic democracy merely another adventure in tilting at windmills? Or, on the practical side, who will activate such visions? And, more importantly,

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principles for Reconstructing the Work Place," in Brenner, et al., Exploring Contradictions, p. 163.

<sup>21</sup>It should also be reported that most supporters of this approach are not calling for one party dictatorship, the establishment of a ruling elite, or excessive central planning on the part of the federal government. Nor are the more realistic transitional strategists predicting the demise of capitalism in the near future.

what role does higher education play in all this?

### To Each His/Her Own

The creation of an alternative economic system assumes: (1) that there are certain basic ideas which will serve as a foundation for such actions; (2) that a political movement can be established which supports these ideas; (3) that a system of institutions will emerge which puts the theory into practice at a local level.

The basic ideas underlying the proposed economic vision are democratic and humanistic in nature. Arthur G. Wirth has stated: "Fundamentally, what is at issue is the relation of democratic values to our economic system."<sup>22</sup> The issue, simply stated, is whether people will be treated (by their economic system) as ends rather than means.

The goal now is to create a system or set of institutions which will value the uniqueness of each human being and continue to seek ways to promote their holistic welfare, in terms of combining both personal development with the integration of quality work. This means that work must involve more than the creation of jobs which lead to materialistic fulfillment. It presupposes that each of us desires to work in ways which are personally fulfilling and also which we have some role in defining. Again, in Wirth's words, the goal is to relate work "to the human quest for potency in which the person may explore his potential, test his limits, be in touch with his powers, and discover his human

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<sup>22</sup>Wirth, "The Philosophical Split," p. 12.

dignity and worth."<sup>23</sup>

Who will activate this vision? Eventually, coalitions must be developed which are comprised of a cross-section of individuals--students, minorities, feminists, faculty members, workers and community members who see a need for such a movement. But before they surface, persons with ties to these sectors must begin to act as catalysts, to raise issues about the nature of work, the need for economic democracy, and education's role with regards to all this.

The last item implies that there is some role for higher education. First, let us assume that higher or post-secondary education, as it is presently organized, will have little to do with what we are discussing now. That is to say institutions--be they public, private, or community colleges--will not jump into this fracas. If anything, these entities (because they are part of the corporate structure and a subindustry themselves) will continue to oppose such talk. There is some evidence that higher education is more likely to construct programs which portray the merits of capitalism. Witness the development of Institutes on Constructive Capitalism at the University of Texas and elsewhere.

The role higher education can assume is one of providing a setting for personal and collective action. The contribution these places will make is largely as a shelter for discussion, reflection and organizing. For there are persons within these settings (faculty members, students, administrators, and others) who can and will contribute their energy to this struggle. And one can further assume that the actual strategies

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid, p. 13.



and tactics which they decide upon will evolve from their own experiences and interests. That is to say that the nature of the actions are not predictable.

Nonetheless, some strategies and actions need to be tied to efforts which prepare people to deal with the issues implied by the vision of economic democracy. The basic guidelines for this should be: (1) that these efforts help people understand and analyze the critical issues; (2) that the process by which this is accomplished facilitate the development of democratic leadership skills; (3) that it also encourages people to act on their ideas in ways which will add to their sense of personal and collective power.

The level of actions may range from the introduction of work-related topics into the structure of an existing course to the development of educational training programs for workers in participatory and cooperative management. One could also argue that university-affiliated advocates should use the current backdrop on vocationalism and "career education" to engage in a wide range of consciousness-raising activities. Two critical responses to this would be: (1) to establish labor education projects (programs and curriculum) that raise consciousness about the sources of job alienation; (2) the negotiation of pilot projects in economic democracy with workers and various types of work settings.

The final issue confronts the present realities: is the cultural climate right for such reasoning? Within the university and society, there have been budget squeezes, dismissals, and general unemployment. Such events normally are seen as weeding out the opportunity and demand for reform. There are also increased signs of neo-conservatism in the

general population.

Despite these developments, there are countersigns which give some indication of the possibilities.<sup>24</sup> Federal and foundation funding for work related issues are at an all time high.<sup>25</sup> More experiments with worker control are underway than ever before.<sup>26</sup> As just one example, the Department of Labor has recently initiated a project with six community colleges to establish local education-work councils. Though there is no assurance what these groups will actually deal with, it is conceivable that at least one of these may attempt some experiment in worker control.

The question of whether the time is right or not can only be answered in personal terms. Some people will see all this as senseless rhetoric. Others will respond as best they can. Those who choose to act will begin wherever they are because this struggle can be fought anywhere. In this sense, it is individuals who must choose to act or not.

The real priority is that we cease to continue personalizing the failures of the sixties. We have had our time of retreat and reflection. Both Toynbee and Confucius have discussed the benefits of such withdrawals and returns--meaning departure from action allows one to

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<sup>24</sup>Olson, "The New School for Democratic Management," pp. 32-39.

<sup>25</sup>The Ford Foundation has recently given nearly a million dollars in support of "Research, training, publications, and demonstration projects relating to the structure of jobs and to forms of worker participation in decision-making," Current Interests of the Ford Foundation, 1976 and 1977 (New York: The Ford Foundation, 1976), p. 7.

<sup>26</sup>O'Toole, Work in America, pp. 188-201.

meditate and be renewed. Now the time is upon us to go back, to pick up the lost dreams. For we should be wiser now: we recognize our own frailties. More importantly, we now know at least some of what we are up against.

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