

Metaphors in the
Educational Narratives
since 1945
with particular reference to
the Conservative Party

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Summary

Metaphors in the Educational Narratives since 1945 with particular reference to the Conservative Party

This study seeks to provide both a methodology and an application of that methodology in its account, partly historical, partly philosophical, of the metaphors in the educational narratives since 1945. It considers, in particular, selected texts of the Conservative Party and focusses on the paradigm shifts in the educational narratives in 1945 and again in 1979.

The study deconstructs these narratives, teasing out their constitutive metaphors: their characteristic representations of educational identities, realities and relationships. The ideological subtexts of these representations are described, as is the process by which they came to represent the 'common sense' of education as the metaphors which constituted them became literalised. The thesis, as a consequence, is intimately concerned with the politics of education and, in particular, the rhetoric used to 'spin' the desired educational story.

The first chapter contains much of the justification of the methodology followed in the study. In effect what this thesis does is to offer a narrative itself, or rather a meta-narrative. It does not offer, however, the kind of narrative that the Conservative Party, or indeed the Labour Party, has offered. They, the study will argue, offered dramas of self realisation, of life as a trial, leading to a final resolution in which the hero finds either salvation or some compromise in which there is contentment: a kind of hermeneutic epiphany in which the hero finds a way of interpreting the dominant, cultural narratives in order to find identity and some sense to life. As a consequence, the recurrent motif in the Conservative narratives described is the distinction between appearance and reality linked to an epic theme of personal salvation which is essentially individual, imperialist and moralistic. Dickens's *Great Expectations* is, in many ways, their paradigm text.

There are, however, other kinds of narrative, particularly in the continental tradition of Foucault and Baudrillard, and the American pragmatist tradition of Rorty. Though these philosophers would disagree on just about everything, yet they share something of a common narrative approach. The purpose of their narratives is their analysis of the conflicts and tensions between the reader and the text, a dramatic interplay not seeking resolution in self realisation but rather

a kind of reflexive, consciously ironic re-description of the self as the object, not the subject, of the text. The texts considered in this thesis, are what Jean-Francois Lyotard calls the '*legitimation narratives*' of education: the masked ideologies and the 'common sense' literalised metaphors which have fixed educational identities and relationships and formed educational desires in accordance with particular hegemonic cultural configurations. It is this kind of narrative the present study offers, not the closed position of what Henri Bergson called '*the illusions of retrospective determinism*' but rather the open, essentially tentative, ironic and inconclusive narrative of philosophy. It is a narrative which offers a different and, it is hoped, valuable perception, analysis and critique of recent educational history and educational theory rather than having, in itself, a closed theoretical position.

The thesis considers the Butler consensus on education in some detail, deconstructing from it its ideological subtexts and the way these subtexts were masked. It describes how in his narrative, metaphors of nature, ability and types of child became the common sense of education and educationalists, fixing educational identities and relations into a particular overall cultural hegemony.

The iconography of the grammar school and its status as the 'preferred' education in the Butler narrative is discussed and the subsequent tensions in the Conservative narrative analysed as the incipient egalitarianism of the 1960s began to create a desire for greater democratisation. The paternalistic Conservative ideologies, and in particular the Butler educational narrative which was an important reason for their continuing hegemony, was eventually to succumb to this desire and a period of narrative chaos was to occur. The traditional aspiration of the Conservative Party to act as the keepers of British Culture, as representing the 'host' narratives, came under great stress.

The Butler consensus was eventually broken and the thesis describes the dynamics of the paradigm shift. The narrative breakdown, what Jurgen Habermas called a '*legitimation crisis*', is described, beginning with the effect of the metaphorical re-description of education by the egalitarian counter-narrative of the Labour Party; though, it is argued, Labour's commitment to comprehensivisation was always ambiguous at best. However, the egalitarian narrative's threat to their continued hegemony was to create in the rhetoric of the Conservatives the virulent propagation of a sense of crisis in education. The success of the counter-reformation rhetoric of the reactionary voices of the Conservative Party, exemplified in the Black Paper writers of the late 1960s and 1970s, was however, a double-edged victory. There was to be no simple re-invention of Butler's classification.

The final breakdown of the Butler narrative was followed by the accession of the Thatcher narrative. The dramatic and spectacular decline and fall of Butler and the gradual accession of the Thatcher narrative - called in this study, '*the bourgeois narrative*' - is described. Her use of rhetoric and her individual, heroic style were vital to the success of the project. The use of 'soundbite' rhetoric to gain popular support for her reforms was an important ingredient of Thatcherism and was to have profound effect on subsequent social and

educational reforms. The metaphorical re-description of schools, teachers and pupils and the relationship of education and the state contained in this new narrative is analysed and the impact of the vocabularies of consumerism on fundamental educational identities and relationships is described.

The process by which the reforming bourgeois narrative and its metaphors gradually became the common sense of education is a central feature of the thesis. Thatcher's curriculum reform and the pivotal part played in this by the 1988 Educational Reform Act is discussed and the masked ideological underpinnings of this Act are made visible. The vital role in promoting this shift played by Thatcher herself and the nature of what was to become her narrative's distinctive rhetoric of society and of education is examined, in particular her re-description of teachers and the effect of that on the concept of teacher professionalism.

The study, using as a framing metaphor Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, describes the creation, through regimes of isolation, surveillance and control, of a new consensus. The keywords of the new educational narrative, freedom, choice, accountability and management are placed in the centre of this new consensus. Particular emphasis is placed on the maintenance of a popular sense of crisis in education in the media to enable the reforms, and on the creation of Ofsted as a means of policing and establishing the new narrative.

Finally the study considers the current state of the educational narrative under New Labour. It describes the new 'post-ideological consensus' claimed by politicians of both major parties. It examines the means by which New Labour, using the discourse of skills, appropriated the consumerist, bourgeois metaphorical redescription of society as Communitarianism and re-invented the Conservative bourgeois narrative in its own image.

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Metaphors in the
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The Respectable Story

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Part 1

The Respectable Story

"In every culture, what does the imaginative conservative aspire to conserve? Why, to conserve order: both order in the soul and order in the state. With Luke, the man of conservative impulses says to himself, 'No man having drunk old wine straightaway desireth new; for he saith, The old is better.' Out of the deep well of the past comes order..."

From revelation, from right reason, from poetic vision, from much study, from experience of the species - so the conservative argues - we human beings have learned certain ways and principles of order. Were we lacking these, we would lie at the mercy of will and appetite - in private life, in public concerns. It is this order, this old safeguard against private and public anarchy, which the conservative refuses to surrender to the evangel of Progress."

Russell Kirk, The Portable Conservative Reader
(New York: Viking Penguin, 1982) pp. xxxv-xxxvi.

Chapter 1

Language, Truth and Metaphor: The Stories of Education

"Where to start is the problem, because nothing begins when it begins, and nothing is over when it is over, and everything needs a preface; a preface, a postscript and a chart of simultaneous events. History is a construct" ¹

1: Of Metaphors and Meta-Fictions

"Any narrative is a phenomenon which extends considerably beyond the scope of literature; it is one of the essential constituents of our understanding of reality. From the time we begin to understand language until our death, we are perpetually surrounded by narratives, first of all in our family, then at school, then through our encounters with people and reading" ²

Educational debate is not about facts. Rather it is about the interpretation of facts, the understanding of them and their relative importance and position inside their frames of reference: narratives and their constitutive metaphors, their means of representing of reality. It is this philosophical position, which furnishes the broad methodology of this study, which is the topic of this first chapter. What this study seeks to provide is a meta-narrative, providing an exposition and critique of the paradigm shifts in the educational narratives since 1944. In particular, for reasons which will be made clear later, the study will generally confine itself to the educational narratives of the Conservative Party. Further, the study will limit itself to the English

¹Margaret Atwood, *The Robber Bride* (London: Virago, 1993) p.4

²Michel Butor, *The Novel as Research*, in Malcolm Bradbury (ed) *The Novel Today*, (Glasgow: Fontana, 1977), p.48.

educational system though there will be an occasional reference to Scottish education.

Statements, to reiterate, are not true simply by their correspondence to some vague undifferentiated concept like 'reality'. Reality is ineffable; it is represented metaphorically by language - the instrument of human intentionality - which attempts to describe it and probe its secrets. It is the narrative which provides the context and it is in terms only of context that truth may be ascertained - by correspondence to the view of 'reality' the story provides, by the internal coherence of the story and, pragmatically, by the usefulness of the 'fact' to the story as a whole.

British philosophy and social thought has been long in the grip of a bleak empiricism, a reductive pragmatic positivism. Yet Richard Rorty³ points out that the idea of a positivist philosopher is a kind of contradiction in terms. Taking science as the paradigm of intellectual activity, such philosophers attempt to discover the truth about the world, suggesting that the 'truth' is in some way 'out there' waiting to be discovered. The positivist philosopher is in effect stating that 'truth' is not a matter for philosophy at all but for other, 'fact' based, disciplines, relegating philosophy to the dubious status of a discipline for 'clarifying' language. Gilbert Ryle, for example, claimed that philosophy was to reveal the '*real form of facts*'⁴, in effect its purpose was to provide nothing much more than destructive and derisory critiques of non-positivist philosophers and to assert the primacy of 'common sense'.

This study takes a different view. Like Nietzsche it offers philosophy as the '*physician of culture*'⁵ where the philosopher is a critic of ways of life, offering critiques of what he or she sees as morbid features of the culture, providing the sand of dissent to create the pearl of a more vigorous culture. For philosophers like Ayer, however, philosophy does not value its patient; philosophy rather is either oblivious to the wider culture or destructively criticises elements of it - more like a butcher in an abattoir than a physician dedicated to preserving the health of her patient. As Ayer, with derisive irony, remarks: "*Thus we offer the theist the same comfort as we gave the moralist.*"

³Richard Rorty *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) pp 3-23 and passim.

⁴John Passmore, *A Hundred Years of Philosophy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957 revised 1966) p.443

⁵ibid. p.99

His assertions cannot possibly be valid, but they cannot be invalid either. As he says nothing at all about the world, he cannot justly be accused of saying anything false..."⁶

W.V.O. Quine, in Two Dogmas of Empiricism (1951)⁷, made a polemical attack on the narrowness of this kind of philosophy. He shows that the anti-metaphysical stance of the positivists actually conceals a rigid metaphysic in its apparent reification of 'logical truths'. This, argued Quine, though it had rather *"less to it than meets the eye"*, was still a crude metaphysic - a 'myth of meaning'. In Quine's view a scientist brings to an experiment a set of propositions, '*cultural posits*' in his terms, as ingredients of the test of experience. In his model of scientific theory, beliefs are caught up in an interconnected web with no one belief immune to revision in the light of experience, and no one experience demanding the falsification of a belief. Consequently individual experiments, and individual statements, are meaningless. Meaning attaches only to the story taken as a whole, not to individual sentences.

For Quine, science is a narrative: *"the unit of empirical significance is the whole of science"* and consequently the concept of truth becomes more flexible: *"..statements, apart from an occasional collectors' item for epistemologists, are connected only deviously with experience"*⁸ and the positivist desire to place empirical knowledge on a firmer foundation becomes a demand for an unobtainable, *"fanciful fanciless medium for unvarnished news"*⁹. Quine proposed pragmatic criteria for truth: that, *"our statements about the external world face the tribunal of experience not individually but as a corporate body"*.

Truth, Richard Rorty argues, is distinct from 'reality', the world 'out there'. It is a relation of the cultural production of meaning, of the common use of language based on a common way of life:

"Truth cannot be out there - cannot exist independently of the human mind - because sentences cannot so exist, or be out

⁶A.J. Ayer, Language Truth and Logic (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1936, reprinted 1971) p.153

⁷in W.V.O. Quine, From a Logical Point of View (New York: Harper and Row, 1961) pp.20-46: references are from this essay unless otherwise indicated.

⁸W.V.O. Quine, Methods of Logic (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1951)

⁹W.V.O. Quine Word and Object (Cambridge Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1960)

there. The world is out there but descriptions of the world are not. Only descriptions of the world can be true or false. The world on its own - unaided by the describing activities of human beings - cannot." ¹⁰

In this Rorty follows Wittgenstein's theory of language. Given Quine's theory of the indeterminacy of translation and interpretation: individual statements are meaningless unless they are recognised as part of a context, a narrative. Wittgenstein's 'language games' proposed the same sort of criteria for meaning. Meaning is dependent on the use of the sentence within the context of a particular activity or way of life.

The correspondence between language and reality is metaphorical, a Magrittean relationship between a picture and what it represents. Above all, it is a relationship mediated by human intentionality - by collective human purpose. The world has no preferred descriptions of itself; the preferences of human beings provide descriptions of the world. It is people who put form on the void. There is no one language game - or vocabulary - that provides any greater verisimilitude than any other. Language games are made, not discovered, and evolve as they are used in unpredictable ways as the social and cultural needs of the users change, as they need to adapt to different circumstances. The Ptolemaic vocabulary was 'superseded' by the Copernican because the Copernican was more useful and better met the needs of people, not because it was 'truer'. Rorty ¹¹ points out that we should think of the distinction between 'fact' and 'meaning' the way Ryle taught us to think about the metaphysically corrupt distinction, forged by mentalistic language, between 'mind' and 'body': as fundamentally a category mistake. Language does not come between us and 'reality', rather 'reality' is constructed and framed by language.

The claim that language is mind-dependent, rather than 'reality dependent', is open to the objection that it seems to suggest a kind of epistemological anarchy which might degenerate into solipsism. However the claim here is that it is not so much 'mind-dependent' as 'minds-dependent' or 'culture dependent'. Wittgenstein showed that the notion of entirely private languages descends into absurdity. Interpretation and synonymy are dependent on

¹⁰Rorty (1989), p.5

¹¹Rorty (1989), p.15 and passim

shared ways of life: shared history, shared social and cultural life, shared conceptions of what is important and what is not, what is valuable and what is not, what is sane and what is not. It depends on what Davidson¹² calls '*convergence*' - the conjunction of the cultural stories with which people collectively describe their worlds. The shared language game is the framework against which the 'truth' of individual sentences or propositions are assessed. In this sense criteria for truth demand a sentence is both correspondent and coherent, not to 'reality' but to interpretations of reality, framed in narratives, which have evolved during our social and cultural history.

Ultimately there is no fixed reality, only narratives about the world, each a relatively consistent network of beliefs about the world, embodying valuations which take the form of statements which make claims about what is 'true' and what is important. These narratives are, however, fictions: relatively plausible, and widely accepted, but still stories about the world and how it works. There are many such stories, some bound to particular cultures or to particular historical periods. Indeed the adoption of a particular story or group of stories, is, perhaps, close to what is meant by 'culture'.

We do not inhabit the world, but narratives about the world. These narratives provide us with our 'common-sense' interpretations of events. Narratives, once established, seem to have considerable cultural inertia. They become resistant to re-interpretations and attempts to provide counter-narratives, to reshape 'common sense', become full of tensions. It is this 'common sense', as we shall see, that the British empiricist tradition of interpretation trades on and which has bred such a distrust of theory in British educational narratives.

At the heart of these narratives are metaphors, so often uncritically used that they have become literalised, dead metaphors. This will become the main expository argument later in this and in succeeding chapters, but, as a brief example, Hobbes' social theories are firmly rooted in mechanical metaphors even though he proclaimed a violent distrust of metaphor as '*ignes fatui*':

"Seeing life is but a motion of limbs, the beginning whereof is in some principall part within: why may we not see that all Automata (Engines that move themselves by springs and

¹²Donald Davidson, *Thought and Talk* in Samuel Guttenplan (ed): Mind and Language. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975)

wheelles as doth a watch) have an artificial life? For what is the Heart but a Spring; and the Nerves, but so many Springs; and the Joynts, but so many Wheelles, giving motion to the whole Body, such as was intended by the Artificer? ... (So too) by Art is created that great LEVIATHAN called a COMMON-WEALTH, or STATE which is but an Artificiall Man..." ¹³

This metaphor represents not so much the universe as the then new and dynamic science of mechanics, so important socially and economically at that time. Such use of metaphor was so obvious and so commonly used that it had become literalised. This literalisation, however, masks the ideological dimensions and values of the narrative - in Hobbes' case, the forms of social organisation it takes for granted and so legitimises.

Analogous metaphors, such as the clockwork universe, were at the heart of traditional narratives of science of the time - arguing from machines to society as Hobbes did, though it could also be reversed, arguing from society to machines. Newton, for example, wrote in the clockwork tradition but ran into trouble in trying to explain gravity which had apparently no detectable mechanism. To describe the motion of masses towards each other he used metaphors from the social world, metaphors of 'attraction' and 'sociability', and then coined the word 'gravity', less obviously a personification than 'sociability', to explain the apparent mechanism. ¹⁴

Even scientific language games are as contingent on human intentionality, as minds-dependent, as any other language game. Thomas Kuhn ¹⁵, attempted to provide a meta-narrative of the history of science. Using both religious and political metaphors in his analysis, Kuhn describes progress in science as through revolutionary changes, basing his interpretation on sociological and cultural analyses of scientific communities. Science progresses in cycles: - 'normal' science - crisis - revolution - reformed 'normal' science - crisis and so on. 'Normal science' is scientific activity governed by a shared narrative: a

¹³Thomas Hobbes (1651), *Leviathan*: ed. C.B. MacPherson (Harmondsworth, Penguin/Pelican 1968) p. 81

¹⁴As discussed by David E. Leary in *Psyche's Muse*, in Leary (ed): *Metaphors in the History of Psychology*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) pp. 8-10

¹⁵Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1970)

structured and coherent theory about the world. What makes scientific narratives different from others is their claim to relative strictness and completeness. Kuhn calls it the 'paradigm'. The paradigm - the theory core, the constructive central metaphors which constitute the 'reality' of the theory - is resistant to falsification; falsifying experiences are regarded as anomalies, indicating some incompleteness remaining in the paradigm. The scientist, trained in the paradigm, inhabits the paradigm and is 'committed' to his story.

'Crisis' occurs when the paradigm seems to be unable to contend with competing narratives and causes scientists periods of '*pronounced professional insecurity*'. Kuhn quotes the physicist Wolfgang Pauli, in despair in face of the apparent contradictions of quantum physics in 1924: "*At the moment physics is again terribly confused. In any case, it is too difficult for me, and I wish I had been a movie comedian... and had never heard of physics.*" ¹⁶

This kind of characterisation of the scientist is not what the positivists like Popper portray. For them the scientist is the high priest of culture, dedicated to revealing sacred truths about the world, in the service of a higher authority. Yet Kuhn, when describing scientific 'revolution', explains that a scientist's switch of 'allegiance' from the old paradigm to its rival is more like a political revolution: "*Just as '...political revolutions aim to change the political institutions in ways those institutions themselves prohibit...' and 'political recourse fails' so the choice 'between competing paradigms proves to be the choice between incompatible modes of community life.'*" ¹⁷

Kuhn blurs the distinction between scientific narratives and other kinds: '*scientific knowledge, like language, is intrinsically the common property of a group or else nothing at all.*' ¹⁸. It is not the case, he argues, that the switch from one paradigm to the other is simply because it 'explains' the world better: he is sceptical about simple myths of 'progress'. Kuhn contends that no argument can be compelling to switch allegiance. The switch is more political and more radical than that. Revolution is not caused by the defection of one individual but of the 'conversion' of the scientific

¹⁶ibid p.84

¹⁷ibid pp93-4

¹⁸ibid p.210

community, more or less as a whole. Given sufficient anomalies to undermine the old paradigm, and given that the explanatory power of the rival paradigm is sufficiently and rhetorically persuasive, then there may be a shift in allegiance to include the majority in the scientific community. Scientists, like politicians, Kuhn's analogy suggests, have a primary interest in retaining the power and influence they have, and this power is vested in the narrative power of the paradigm itself. What the struggle with the rival narrative may create is close to what Habermas¹⁹ calls a legitimation crisis.

While apparent anomalies or contradictions do provide narrative tension and may prevent closure, they are not in themselves sufficient reason for the breakdown of a story. Those authorised with the power a story brings have a vested interest in maintaining that story. In science, for example, anomalies in certain circumstances may breed entirely new stories because the demand for logical consistency, completeness and coherency is very high in scientific narratives. Either the Boeing 747 flies or it doesn't. The kind of social and cultural stories which are being discussed in this study, however, are not quite like the stories of science. They do not require quite such a rigorous logic or fine detail. Science may determine what may be done, but other stories, like those which will be discussed here, determine what ought to be done. These stories do not conceive nuclear weapons, though these are the stories which might demand their use.

Habermas argues that parliamentary democracy depends on the political inertia, or civil privatism, of the majority of the society - of their relatively uncritical acceptance of the current narrative. However economic and social changes, perhaps even partly caused by government policy, 'anomalies' to return to Kuhn's metaphor, may create conditions in which government policy is seen to interfere with the normal lives of the people. Add to that the rhetorical attacks of a rival narrative then this can create a legitimation crisis.

This study will identify and discuss legitimation crises in the educational narratives since 1944 and argue that the switch of allegiance from one story to another was made largely for hegemonic reasons: the rival narrative configured social and political relations differently, locating positions of power and influence differently, by claiming to rescue the community from

¹⁹Jurgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, (London: Heinemann Educational, 1973)

crisis. The winning narrative reinterpreted or redefined the core educational and social metaphors - the re-identification of the relation of people to the state may change, from citizen to consumer, for example.

New metaphors do not just constitute new stories or re-interpret them in new ways, rather they signal a changing hegemony. A new culture is created, with new narratives writing over the old stories and consigning them to history. The succeeding chapters of this exercise will be intimately concerned with the changing educational metaphors and the narratives they constitute. The history of culture is, in effect, the history of metaphor.

Changes from one narrative to another are what Mary Hesse calls 'metaphoric redescriptions' and such changes, she claims, are accidental rather than necessary. They are not dictated by a better or more refined insight into the nature of reality, not 'designed' to bring narratives 'closer' to reality, not more 'true', rather they stem from what is socially or culturally important at any particular time, by the contingencies of history:

*"...think of the history of language, and thus of culture, as Darwin taught us to think of the coral reef. Old metaphors are constantly dying off into literalness, and then serving as a platform and foil for new metaphors. This analogy lets us think 'our language' - that is, of the science and culture of twentieth century Europe - as something that took shape as a result of a great number of sheer contingencies. Our language and our culture are as much a contingency, as much a result of thousands of small mutations finding niches (and millions of others finding no niches), as are the orchids and the anthropoids."*²⁰

The story and its metaphors provide a context and frame which allows for some understanding of otherwise bewildering chains of events; it provides some overall rationale, perhaps authorship, ordering experience and interpreting it. It also provides some drama and excitement, arenas for conflict and resolution. It provides a background for locating personal and social identity. It governs what is possible and what is not, what is sane and

²⁰Mary Hesse: *The Explanatory Function of Metaphor*, in Hesse Revolutions and Reconstructions in the Philosophy of Science (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980) p. 16

what is insane. Finally it provides an eschatology: a sense of an ending, a culmination of and a purpose for existence. The story becomes a form of life; its metaphors are lived and they give meaning to experience. Fact and meaning are not logically separable and are located in Nietzsche's '*mobile army of metaphors*'. This stresses the essentially socially constructed and competitive nature of claims for truth - claims for the ascendancy of one story rather than another as rival stories and rival interpretations clash.

Rorty makes the point that it is not the 'world' which decides which descriptions are true but rather the 'vocabularies' in which these sentences are framed. Different vocabularies, different language games in Wittgenstein's terms, provide different interpretations of the world, different narrative frames of reference. It is not a question of which provides better or worse interpretations - what Popper calls 'greater verisimilitude' - as this suggests that there are some external criteria by which to assess them. The adoption of a language game, Rorty states, is not a matter of specific criteria, but nor, however, is it arbitrary or really a matter of choice. Rorty states that it is a matter of the cultural and historical accidental tendency of using certain words and that the shift from the use of one language game to another is not a matter of choice or decision, but of losing '*the habit of using certain words and gradually acquiring the habit of using others.*'²¹

Ways of life are thus represented in not just intellectual, but also emotional commitment to a narrative and its metaphors. All this is persuasive but what both Hesse and Rorty tend to miss is the intimate connection between the narrative and power. Truth is story contingent, and contingent also on the widespread adoption of the story. Cultural narratives and their framing metaphors are intimately concerned with power. This study hopes to emulate the purposes of cultural analysis and criticism that Edward Said succinctly describes when he writes:

'We live in a world not only of commodities but also of representations, and representations - their production, circulation, history and interpretation - are the very element of culture. In much recent theory, the problem of representation is deemed to be central, but rarely is it put in its full political context, a context that is primarily imperial.

²¹Rorty (1989), p.6

Instead we have on the one hand an isolated cultural sphere, believed to be freely and unconditionally available to weightless theoretical speculation and investigation, and, on the other, a debased political sphere, where the real struggle between interests is supposed to occur. To the professional student of culture - the humanist, the critic, the scholar - only one sphere is relevant, and, more to the point, it is accepted that the two spheres are separated, whereas the two are not only connected but ultimately the same.

A radical falsification has become established in this separation. Culture is exonerated of any entanglements with power, representations are considered only as apolitical images, to be parsed and construed as so many grammars of exchange, and the divorce of the present from the past is assumed to be complete. And yet far from this separation of spheres being a neutral or accidental choice, its real meaning is an act of complicity, the humanist's choice of a disguised, denuded, systematically purged textual model over a more embattled model, whose principal features would inevitably coalesce around the continuing struggle over the question of empire itself.'²²

What narratives provide are discursive arenas: vocabularies of influence and power, which initiate some into the structures of power, which allow some to speak and which force others, to remain silent or ineffectual. The discourse determines the 'real' world: only in the discourse does the speaker have meaning: to be excluded is effectively to be denied the power of meaning. Power is meaning, and meaning power. The vocabularies generated by the narrative and its constituent metaphors create the discursive domain - an empire - and consequently demand that those who would be speakers in the discourse share the same interpretation of the world that the stories and their ideological sub-texts provide. Consent is defined by the shared use of the vocabularies of power; dissent is an attempt to question or to revise these vocabularies, or to attempt to introduce a different vocabulary which would

²²Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism (London: Vintage, 1994) pp. 66-67.

alter the patterns of domination and consequently to disempower those who have vested interests in maintaining the dominant story and its metaphors.

Prior to Butler's revision of the educational narrative, the Conservative Party had a fairly uncomplicated view of the purposes and form of education. This view had been the established, dominant educational narrative in the pre-war years. What follows is an analysis and critique of that narrative, partly to give some substance to the theory which has so far been expounded and partly to provide a grounding to the discussions of Conservative educational narratives which form the content of the rest of this study.

2. The Respectable Conservative and Human Nature: What Every True Englishman believes...

*"It is remarkable how the custodians of culture reach for their Nature when under threat."*²³

Levi-Strauss in *The Savage Mind*²⁴ uses the term *bricolage* to describe how primitive man, the *savage*, relates to the world around him. The *savage's* unrefined perceptions provide the foundations of what Levi-Strauss calls a *science of the concrete* which authorises the ordering of experiences through the classification and arrangement of it into structures - myths - through which to interpret his experience and give it significance. These mythical structures, he argues, are essentially the *savage's* improvised and arbitrary responses to his environment, a *bricolage*, which establishes metaphorical analogies - working on the twin axes of representation and metonymy - between the representation of nature and the ordering of society:

*'The savage mind deepens its knowledge with the help of imagines mundi. It builds mental structures which facilitate an understanding of the world as much as they resemble it. In this sense savage thought can be defined as analogical thought.'*²⁵

²³Terry Eagleton in a review of *'The Story of Britain'* by Roy Strong in *The Guardian* 26/9/96

²⁴ Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1966).

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 236

Through these fictions the world is explained and made a comfortable place in which to live and they offer a means by which culture and nature can be made to mirror each other, the one logically justifying and authorising the other. The 'savage' mind operates on analogical thought, through metaphorical transformation in what Levi-Strauss calls '*totemic mode*', the *totem* being the means by which the world is classified.

Such orderings of nature are not restricted to primitive societies. It was commonplace in renaissance times, for example, that the world could be represented hierarchically as a great chain or ladder of being. The King was head of state, then his nobles and so on. In cosmology, the Sun was sovereign with the other planets ordered under it. The Lion was the Lord of the Beasts. The father was head of the household. In Plato's Myth of Metals, Gold was superior to Silver and Silver superior to the base metals. Analogical metaphors representing the King as the sun, or the father of the nation, or the Lionheart maintained the 'naturalness' of the social order, the common sense. The Sermon of the State of Matrimony from The Elizabethan Church Book of Homilies said: '*Let women be subject to their husbands, for the husband is the head of the woman as Christ is the head of the Church*'.

Such analogical thought is the common sense of culture and makes the social orderings it demands appear 'natural'. Its metaphors predicate consensus and a unity of experience. As literary figures, metaphors may provide some unexpected insight or they may challenge 'normal' perceptions, but as Hawkes points out: '*Metaphors affirm, in the end, as much as they challenge. We might even conclude that if they sometimes seem to rattle the bars of our cage, it is often only to demonstrate how firmly, how comfortably, these are fixed.*'²⁶

Analogical inversions of the 'natural' order were used to represent evil and pernicious ideas. Walter Raleigh, for example wrote in his *Preface to The History of the World*: '*..the greatest and most glorious kings have gnawn the grass of the earth with beasts for pride and ambition towards God.*'²⁷ A metaphor works by contrasting and comparing: it allows an object to be allocated its place in the accepted order of things, or it may exclude that

²⁶ Terence Hawkes, *Metaphor* (London: Methuen, (1972)) p. 91.

²⁷ in. (ed.) A.M.C. Latham, *Selected Prose and Poetry* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965) p. 183.

object as foreign. It is like the culture's immune system: ejecting what it sees as harmful ideas or stories. Discussing Levi-Strauss's contrast between what a culture classifies as 'edible' and 'inedible' as a means of glimpsing the distinctive way of life a culture and how it perceives the 'natural' world, Hawkes²⁸ describes that the use of the metaphor 'frogs' to deride the French has its source in the classification of frogs as 'inedible' in English culture. To eat frogs is to be un-English and consequently suspect.

This study will concern the *bricolage* of the Conservative Party, in particular their myths of 'nature' and 'human nature' and their use in justifying a particular social order. The pre-war educational narrative, a discussion of which follows, was influential in the creation of Butler's narrative and provides something of the narrative tension in the educational discourses which followed Butler.

Before Butler's time, and indeed during it, the Tory Party was dominated by what Andrew Roberts has described as '*The Respectable Tendency*'²⁹. They were the patrician wing of the party, old fashioned, One-Nation Tories, for whom politics was a duty rather than a career, or at least that was their public presentation of themselves, perhaps yet another fiction. It was a guilelessly presented philosophy of service, loyalty and personal non-aggrandisement. It is part of the narrative rules of this One Nation Toryism that those in power should not enjoy it, or at least be seen to enjoy it; that rhetoric should not be too high flown, but low key though obviously sincere; that standards in public life should be seen to be irreproachable; and above all that the traditional values and institutions vital to the preservation of their way of life, such as patriotism, the essential distinctions of class, property, education, and the Church, are held sacred - and any other values which conflict with these, such as egalitarianism, made profane.

The 'Respectable' Conservative's rhetoric was typically presented as a 'common-sense', a transparently obvious, pragmatic description of people and society. "*So far as philosophy or doctrine is concerned, the wise Conservative travels light*"³⁰ wrote Ian Gilmour, stressing the typical distrust

²⁸ Hawkes (1972), p. 87

²⁹ Andrew Roberts, *Eminent Churchillians* (London: Phoenix, 1994) Chapter 3 and passim.

³⁰ Ian Gilmore in , (ed) Zig Henry Leyton, *Conservative Party Politics* (London: MacMillan, 1980) Foreword, p. xii.

of abstract theory and traditional essentially anti-expert, anti-intellectual stance of the Conservative Party - or at least of the 'Respectable Tendency' of the old style One Nation Toryism. Lord Salisbury warned:

*'No lesson seems to be so deeply inculcated by the experience of life as that you should never trust experts. If you believe the doctors, nothing is wholesome. If you believe the theologians, nothing is innocent. If you believe the soldiers, nothing is safe. They all require to have their strong wine diluted by a large measure of common sense.'*³¹

Even Butler himself, when he exhibited some disturbing intellectual pretensions, was warned by Stanley Baldwin that, *"the sin of intellectualism was worse than death."*³² The 'Respectable Tendency' are characterised by this lack of a specific, and to them potentially restrictive, philosophical or political doctrine: Arthur Balfour, when asked what his political principles were replied: *"I suppose the principles of common sense."*³³ A.J. Davies describes the source of this 'common sense':

*"...as early as July 1793 that grand Tory, Samuel Johnson, assured Boswell that 'human experience, which was constantly contradicting theory, was the great test of truth'. This emphasis on Experience, on Tradition and Authority, is a feature of British Conservative thought, even if it does not address the question of which Experiences, Traditions or Authority are to take priority"*³⁴

The 'test of truth' of the 'Respectable' Conservative's *science of the concrete* was, then, how far their own immediate experience, mediated by their trust in the authority of traditional epistemological and cultural values and, crucially, their desire to maintain those values, confirmed a belief: a test which threatens to become circular, if not solipsistic. Since Respectable Conservatism had, at its core, the maintenance of culture and traditions - the 'authorised' and 'established' stories - and those cultural institutions which nurtured them so well, then it is unlikely that they will find meaningful, never

³¹ Lord Salisbury, cited in Andrew J. Davies, We, The Nation: The Conservative Party and the Pursuit of Power (London: Abacus, 1995) p. 49

³² cited in Andrew J. Davies (1995) p. 42.

³³ David Dilks in 'Baldwin and Chamberlain' in Lord Butler (ed), The Conservatives (London: Allen & Unwin, 1977) p. 273.

³⁴ Andrew J. Davies (1995), p. 42/3.

mind truthful, a belief in a social narrative that would threaten the stability of the stories, the institutions and social structures which maintained that culture. Certainly it is a test that is unlikely to lead to any radical change.

Their own understanding of their experience is itself a product of the culture which nurtured them, and their desire for the authority of particular 'established' cultural stories is what gives their experience meaning. What is granted truth, and thereby meaning, is what is granted power to change the narratives and their discourses of society - intellectually, socially, economically and politically: but at the bottom of this Conservative well of 'Truth' lies desire for the authority of the culture and its institutions, such as the nuclear family, the church and the hierarchical social order of education and schooling.

The 'naturalness' of a hierarchical social order is central to the 'Respectable Tendency' of Conservative desire and 'realist' thinking. And, at the core of such thinking are what might be described as necessary fictions about human nature and society. Quintin Hogg³⁵ came close to making an explicit reference to these stories which underpin this thinking, fictions which he believed were necessary due to the inevitable tension between the need to maintain of some kind of social order and the essential 'individuality' of people and their 'natural' resentment of restrictions on their freedom. Hogg's book begins with the fall of Rome and the French Revolution and it is the fairly constant allusion to such social turbulence that maintains the narrative tension.

Zygmunt Bauman³⁶ writes of how the *focus imaginarius* of a particular narrative, its constituting metaphors, provides a kind of ideal experiment which, though it will never be achieved, nevertheless provides the structure, purpose and context of the narrative. This *focus* is a filter through which experience and observation are counterfactually sifted to justify claims for knowledge. The *focus imaginarius* embodies and characterises the theory core of the narrative, its ideology and epistemology and provides its vocabulary. It also provides the terrain for the discursive dynamics of the narrative,

³⁵ Quintin Hogg, The Case for Conservatism (West Drayton: Penguin, 1947) Chapter 3 and passim.

³⁶ Zygmunt Bauman, Intimations of Postmodernity (London: Routledge, 1992) pp. 217 and passim.

organising and directing the critique of observed reality - or another competing narrative - in terms of how far it is from the ideal. The *focus* is metaphor, an representation of the world from a particular frame of reference which structures the narrative. Tension is generated though the metaphor, by perceived similarities and differences between the observed reality and the hermeneutic overlay which the fiction generates.

Hogg's fictions of society are rooted in the desire to avoid immanent anarchy, by "*preserving the mystique of traditional authority*"³⁷. The focus imaginarius of Hogg's narrative is the England of a pre-war Agatha Christie novel, an idealised class ordered England, with each class following its own traditional pursuits, the society itself at the pinnacle of its evolution:

"Our ancestors had a simple expression... they called it 'progress', and by this singular phrase they meant in the broad a theory of the history of the last six hundred years which on the whole has been true.

Of all the things we recognise nowadays as being on the side of the angels the greatest part have had their origin at a comparatively recent point in time.

*Hospitals, schools, religious institutions of all sorts, friendly societies, debating societies, art and music circles, athletic clubs, sporting associations, social centres - yes, and the small sweet and tobacco shop round the corner - none of these existed, except in rudimentary form, in the Dark Ages...."*³⁸

There remains a tension in the Conservative narrative between accepting the continuing, gradual processes of evolutionary social change and the presentation of England as having reached the perfection of something like Hogg's cosy picture here and consequently that all that was required was the maintenance of that order. Hogg does accept slow changes in the social order and he does not denigrate the rising bourgeois class or the aspirations of the working class, rather he appears to embrace them and their respective cultural pursuits, albeit at a distance and with more than a suspicion of a patronising tone.

³⁷Hogg (1947) p.27

³⁸ibid. p. 83/4

In the 1940s, the political climate was dominated by the need to satisfy the public desire for greater equality and it was not politic to acknowledge directly their privileged existence. When he does go on to discuss what he calls '*the ruling classes*' he is careful to state that '*men are born equal in the sight of God*'³⁹ and then to remark that though the class system exists - and that he ingenuously argues is a historical reality which cannot be altered - it so happens England is uniquely fortunate to have a very honourable, dedicated and decent aristocracy who take their responsibilities and duties as the ruling class very seriously indeed.

Hogg's view of society is of an organism and his discussion of society is pseudo-Darwinian. His use of this biological metaphor allows him to discount 'socialist' planning which, he argues is too mechanistic, but which, at the same time does, he thinks, allow him to theorise about how a scientific study of the society could allow that its members "*be bred for certain characteristics, or trained in certain aptitudes*"⁴⁰ and that the society itself may be '*operated*' upon to cure it of defects. The society can only change healthily if such change "*is in accordance with its acquired and inherited character and at a given rate*"⁴¹. Unrest in society, grievances and protests, are to be understood as '*symptoms*' and should be treated - but in the '*treatment*' of such social ills the government must never lose sight of the essential, natural 'character' of a 'healthy' society in any proposed reform or it will risk resultant chaos.

It is not hard to see why such metaphors are attractive to politicians. Such medical metaphors narrow the scope of political discussion and thinking. The initial statement of a symptom immediately limits the discussion, narrowing the agenda and the perception of the state to specific things that might have gone wrong, rather than considering that the problem might be an inherent part of the constitution as a whole - that children do not learn is because of the feckless teacher rather than built in class disadvantage in education, for example.

The statement of symptoms guides the political activity into a narrow empirical search for relatively simple clinical signs of cause and effect

³⁹ibid p.146

⁴⁰ibid p.25

⁴¹ibid p.25

leading to an 'informed' diagnosis and cure. That the 'cure' does not work can be blamed on the patient rather than the treatment - politically motivated education authorities, for example, refuse to act over incompetent teachers. The impersonality of the doctor might suggest that politicians also have a kind of detached view of the world and, while they may hold strong beliefs, they have an even stronger attachment to reason and logic. The identification of the politician with the doctor also perhaps grants politicians some more respectable status and might give greater weight to their 'professional' knowledge and practices. Further it creates the image of the busy and pressurised practitioner, whose time is valuable and who should not be bothered by trivial complaints.

What Hogg calls *'the mystique of a traditional authority'* is the fiction which preserves and defends the *'national character'*. It is a kind of sanitising filter which may be used to sift out potentially harmful aspects of any proposed constitutional or cultural change. Only such reform that will preserve the *'national character'* will be allowed to affect the constitution of the state. 'Constitution' is to be understood not as a legal term but a medical one: and any change must be: *"sanctified by traditional authority and institutions... and must be effected in a manner conformable to the traditional methods of procedure...by a group of men known to be devoted to the traditions of their country..."*⁴²

Hogg, however, rather dimly recognises the circularity of his story. What is authorised is what every true Englishman believes, and what every true Englishman believes is what is authorised. What Hogg does is to identify the authorised Culture with national character in a transitive relationship, they are to all intents and purposes indiscernible: anyone who might disagree with any substantial part of the 'traditional culture' is no 'true Englishman' and what makes a 'true Englishman' is the acceptance of traditional authority. Hogg makes it clear that only Conservatives, almost by definition, accept traditional authority and consequently they alone are 'true Englishmen'. While this kind of crude propaganda was one of the manifest purposes of Hogg's book, he is clearly aware that this 'true Englishman', character is also a fiction, as is the story of Conservatism that he relates, but it is, in his terms, a necessary

⁴²ibid p. 27

fiction: it is the fiction upon which society rests and without which society will, he firmly believes, be destroyed:

History records many examples of the circle unwinding itself and what we call civilisation descending into barbarism or savagery...

*Conservatives claim to see in the history of progress two factors which make it possible - the factor which brings into the world good things which are new and which we call enterprise, and the factor which enables us to preserve them when brought in. This second factor we call continuity."*⁴³

Though this 'history' is a fiction, it has mythic power. Through it meaning and identity are conferred, the purpose of society is made clear, power is located and the social order - an attenuated great chain of being - is justified. Ironically, it is this fiction that lies at the heart of Respectable Tory 'realist' thinking and their pragmatic 'common-sense': and it is on this paradox that Hogg's story of Conservatism stands. His pseudo-biology, history and metaphysics ultimately provide an epic story that can be sold to the public at the same time promising and yet resisting social reform.

Yet at the same time this is not an entirely cynical exercise. The story is held in the metaphysical and epistemological limbo of unfalsifiable fictions, by the willing suspension of disbelief, for example, that is so characteristic of how certain Anglican clergy apparently hold their Articles of Faith. It is not a true story, nor is it particularly consistent or coherent, but it grants purpose, meaning and identity and it is uplifting, dramatic, patriotic, comfortable and flatteringly convincing to those who share it and towards whom it is directed. Hogg states that what is important to maintain is not simply the authority of these cultural stories, but, crucially, the 'mystique' of the 'traditional' authority.

The 'true Englishman' fiction exists to maintain the Conservative narrative and to gain public acceptance of the elite social order of Conservatism which is the object of desire that lies at the root of the Respectable Conservative story. The formation of desire to maintain the 'natural' class-structured social order, rather than truth, is what is important. The fiction preaches the importance of class, class distinctions, class privilege and, consequently,

⁴³ibid p. 84

forms the desire for social advancement. Kipling caught the essence of Conservatism in *Pagett MP*:

*"The toad beneath the harrow knows
Exactly where each tooth-point goes;
The butterfly upon the road
Preaches contentment to that toad."*

Hogg's The Case for Conservatism provides the ideological sub-texts of the story of Conservatism. The 'traditional authority and institutions', iconically represented by chapters on religion, country, empire, law and order, individual liberty, property, enterprise, competition and incentives, profit, the Land, selective education and public schools - are justified in terms of a pseudo-Darwinian fiction - an idealised representation of the unique 'English' character and its culture as it has 'evolved' through history, with the underlying imperialist sub-text that this character is somehow superior to others.

This is not just the triumph of an evolutionary process, but of a special evolutionary process which, because of the stability of the religious, political and cultural stories that have been maintained over the centuries, uniquely has had a most fertile cultural environment and a healthy, sturdy stock with which to work. This evolutionary process was assisted by the careful breeding programme that was, in metaphor, the class ordering of society. This was expressed by Stanley Baldwin ⁴⁴, for example, in farming metaphor: the politician as an avuncular gentleman farmer, who cares for his stock. The historical, traditional and 'natural' hierarchical social order is, Hogg claims, responsible for the creation and maintenance of this prime stock, particularly through the cultural processes of the education of the ruling classes:

"Wealth and power inevitably breed narrowness and arrogance. But, subject to this, the British ruling class was probably less narrow, less arrogant and less selfish than any other that has ever existed. For this very largely the public school must receive the praise. So far from manufacturing a generation of little snobs, as is so often charged against them, the public schools took a generation of small boys whose position and means would inevitably have turned them out

⁴⁴ as described in A.J. Davies (1995), p. 51 and passim.

*little snobs if the public schools had not got hold of them and dinned into them the truth that, since men are born equal in the sight of God, wealth and position carry duties as well as privileges, and in the end can be justified only by the example of public service and honour presented by those who have them. This was the doctrine of the public school.... they instilled into those they taught a greater measure of humility and decency than any Christian aristocracy has been able to achieve before."*⁴⁵

Education, in its purest form, transmits the culture of the ruling classes, the farmers of the state. The derisive use of the metaphor '*manufacturing*' here is in opposition to Hogg's preferred organic metaphors of society and education; the ideal model for the education of the upper classes, is described in quasi-religious terms. The '*natural growth*' metaphor allows for gradual social change but at the same time denies justification for state intervention in social matters, considering them '*unnatural*', '*artificial*' and '*mechanical*'. The danger lies in thwarting the '*natural*' outcome of the evolutionary process, and denying England its ultimate, and glorious, destiny which comes closest to defining the Respectable Conservative narrative's sense of an ending. Ironically, however, the metaphor of evolution tends to be seen as a mechanical process, a form of social engineering. Hogg's view of evolution has no blind watchmaker, however, rather the process is mediated by the breeding programmes of the stockmen of the elite classes with a clear social design in mind.

Hogg sees the Gradgrind production line model of schooling as antithetic to maintaining the cultural hegemony of the upper classes - though appropriate to the '*lower*' classes - and contrary to their characteristic aristocratic '*natural*' disdain for utilitarian or vocational education. The gentleman farmer does not soil his hands with his livestock, he employs the lower classes for this. He, more importantly, presides paternally over the process, ensuring the maintenance of the well being of his stock and protecting the process from harmful influences which would agitate them and affect their yield. Hogg's plea is not to throw away what he sees as self-evident political, social and cultural advantages in the search for greater equality, a quest which he considered had so enfeebled other nations. Hogg uses the excesses of the

⁴⁵ Hogg (1947), p. 145/6

French Revolution to illustrate this 'enfeeblement' of the 'national character', a narrative motif which originated with Burke and which has been echoed by so many right-wing theorists since.

It is 'realist' thinking which, Hogg argues, has maintained the social stability of England throughout the past', and he urges that 'common-sense' be the basis of educational policy. It is not 'common sense' to demand greater social equality, what he calls '*identity of opportunity*', but rather to seek '*equality of opportunity*'⁴⁶ though this is to be understood as opportunity for everyone to aspire to the ruling elite - the maintenance of hope of 'betterment' was a powerful means by which to maintain control over the narrative of class; that only a few could hope to achieve an advancement in their station made the control only more solid, like the smallness of the chance of winning the National Lottery is the necessary condition of selling more tickets. Even then, he points out that this narrow sense of equality of opportunity is only part of what education is about.

The 'real' purpose of education "*is primarily moral, and only secondarily secular*".⁴⁷ His use of religious language in this chapter underlines the '*mystique*' of the traditional institution of education - its part in the greater story. Though schools are there to provide 'secular' education, they also have a significant part to play in the building of the 'English character' and through this, by definition, maintaining the traditional cultural values and institutions of the Conservative state. At the same time, however, education makes visible some tensions in the Conservative story: "*Conservatives regard society as composed of families and individuals, which, however much they may be subordinated to the authority of the state, remain the foundation upon which civilised society rests, and must retain their independence and variety of outlook if a national community is to develop its full richness and variety of human experience.*"⁴⁸

Equality of opportunity applies only to 'secular', vocational education, the moral education of a child is not primarily the responsibility of the state except insofar as the state insists on a '*adequate moral background*' for each child, but will directly intervene only when dealing with the feckless: in the

⁴⁶ibid. p.144

⁴⁷ibid. p.145

⁴⁸ibid. p.144

case of "*orphans and the children of criminals and such like... and ... those who to a greater or less degree neglect the moral education of their children.*"⁴⁹ While stressing the virtue of individual liberty and the cultural enrichment a 'variety' of beliefs might bring, there is only so much divergence from the 'traditional' cultural stories that will be allowed: "*the state has means and methods of ascertaining or prescribing a moral minimum*".⁵⁰ However, rather than using brute state coercion to demand homogeneity, Hogg is relatively liberal, relying on the 'mystique' of the traditional stories, and the incentives that acceptance of these stories brings, to ensure broad cultural conformity.

It is not, however, vital that everyone be uniformly inducted into these cultural stories. A degree of cultural divergence is acceptable in the 'lower' classes. Hogg conceals the elitism of his story, that only those admitted into the freemasonry of the 'mystique' will have access to the places where the real power and glory lies. It is interesting, and ironic, that in his discussion of public schools he stresses their fundamental role as the nursery of the ruling class, providing the moral and spiritual development of their children, yet the focus of state schooling is to be fundamentally vocational. The wealth and social position of the children of the elite will, he tacitly accepts, place them eventually and irresistibly in the ruling class. Consequently, narrow vocational education will not be appropriate for them: they have to learn '*humility and decency*' and the '*duty*' of '*public service*'.⁵¹ For Hogg it is of vital importance that the up-and-coming ruling classes be thoroughly inducted into the traditional values of the culture - the Respectable Conservative story: to fail to develop this 'mystique' among them is to risk the continuity of the preserving cultural stories and, ultimately, the very stability of the state.

That such education is so exclusive, that some children '*get a better start*' than others is '*nothing to get hot and bothered about*'. The state education sector, Hogg piously asserts, is striving to provide the best (vocational) education it can and all children will, eventually, have the same equality of opportunity. He then closes the chapter on a portentous note, reiterating the old Conservative chestnut about the freedom of the individual to choose - or at least to buy - a place in the social hierarchy of England, or even, in keeping

⁴⁹ibid. p.144

⁵⁰ibid. p.145

⁵¹ibid. p.146

with the religious tone of the chapter, Heaven itself: "...there is no law of nature or man which permits a man to buy his child lollipops or nice clothes, and forbids him to buy what he regards as the best preparation of body and soul for this life and the next." ⁵²

At the heart of Hogg's story is indeed a law of 'nature' - that everyone has their place, knows their place and is broadly content with that, given Hobbes' anarchic alternative in which life is solitary, nasty, brutish and short: "*The plain fact about unemployment, war, poverty, persecution, and most disease, is that they are caused by a deliberate disregard of the natural law.*" ⁵³ The 'mystique' of traditional values and institutions, the desire for their preservation, is at the heart of Hogg's story. As Enoch Powell puts it: "*The greatest task of the statesman... is to offer his people good myths and to save them from harmful myths.*" ⁵⁴

⁵²ibid. p.146

⁵³ibid p.22

⁵⁴ Enoch Powell, cited in Andrew Gamble, The Free Economy and the Strong State (London: MacMillan, 1988/1994) p. 69.

3: The Looms of Language

*Read and committed to the flames, I call
these sixteen lines that go back to my roots
my Cahier d'un retour au pays natal,
my growing black enough to fit my boots.*

*The stutter of the scold out of the branks
of condescension, class and counter-class
thickens with glottals to a lumpen mass
of Ludding morphemes closing up their ranks.
Each swung cast-iron Enoch of Leeds stress
clangs a forged music on the frames of Art,
the looms of owned language smashed apart!*

Three cheers for mute ingloriousness!

*Articulation is the tongue-tied's fighting.
In the silence round all poetry we quote
Tidd the Cato Street conspirator who wrote:*

Sir, I Ham a very Bad Hand at Righting.

Tony Harrison On Not Being Milton

This study is intimately concerned with the ownership and control of language. The metaphor translates the ineffability of the world into customised, manageable and, eventually, through time and use, into familiar narratives. The narrative - and the hegemony it naturalises - ceases to appear ideologically determined as the metaphors become literalised through time and use. It all seems just common-sense. What becomes lost to sight is that the world does not generate these narratives, and their metaphors and vocabularies: instead it is the narratives which generate the world. The narrative is the loom on which the world is knitted.

The deconstruction of any narrative will show how the world is distorted by them though, ironically, without stories the world is an undifferentiated, amorphous conglomeration of, to paraphrase David Hume, just one damn thing after another, without pattern or meaning. Hume in An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding (1748) acknowledged the importance of analogy, the metaphorical representation of the world, "*All arguments from experience are founded on the similarity which we discover among natural objects*". Hume the empiricist, the master of reducing the argument from

analogy to absurdity, had to acknowledge the essentially fictive nature of epistemological claims. Even Jeremy Bentham, no metaphysician, acknowledged that any interpretation of the world required stories: "In *the use made of language, fiction... becomes a necessary resource*".⁵⁵ This is the point made by Burke:

*"As the documents of science pile up, are we not coming to see that whole works of scientific research, even entire schools, are hardly more than the patient repetition, in all its ramifications, of a fertile metaphor? Thus we have, at different eras in history, considered man as the son of God, as an animal, as a political or economic brick, as a machine, each such metaphor, and a hundred others, serving as the cue for an unending line of data and generalisations."*⁵⁶

The *focus* of these narratives is metaphor, an examination of which is the central concern of this study. This definition of metaphor is a wide one: metaphor is considered as a kind of meta-fiction, and justification for this definition, it is hoped, will be made clear. It is a definition similar to that put forward by David Leary⁵⁷ in his analysis of the metaphors of psychology, though the method of analysis here is rather different in that Leary was content to examine the overtly ideological function of metaphors in the vocabularies of psychology but here the metaphors are also placed historically and structurally as the roots of the discourses and social narratives that give a meaning to the world, both rationally and, more importantly for this exercise, intuitively.

Indeed intuitive knowledge, the feeling that something is right or wrong is, in these terms, simply a knee-jerk response to the cultural embedment of particular stories, the literalisation of particular metaphors. Lobachevsky's non-Euclidean geometry 'feels' wrong because Euclid's story has achieved such a dominant position that it has ceased to be recognised simply as a likely story, but has become the only story: it has become, in Rorty's terms, literalised and the discourse has become closed.

⁵⁵ Jeremy Bentham (1841): *Essay on Language* in E. Bowring (ed) The Works of Jeremy Bentham, (Russell and Russell: New York, 1962), p. 331.

⁵⁶ Kenneth Burke, Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose (New York: New Republic, 1935/1965), p.95.

⁵⁷ David E. Leary, *Psyche's Muse*, in David E Leary (ed) (1990), pp.1-79.

The metaphor gives meaning though it, in itself, is nothing more than a representation of another likely story. Abrams continues to argue that such metaphors are constitutive: they "*select and mould those 'facts' which a theory comprehends*".⁵⁸ Facts then are perhaps better understood as likely fictions, not discovered truths. Incidental to this, this argument also throws open to question the 'fact value' gap so beloved of British empirical philosophy in its quest to present its theory as ideologically free. The view expressed here, in effect, makes everything ideological, asserting that perhaps there should be a test - a critique of rhetorical technique - to establish the persuasiveness of a propositional sentence or statement, rather than a principle of verification or falsification to determine whether or not it is true.

The metaphors at the core of narratives, their focus imaginarius, may, as we have seen in Hogg's account of the Respectable Tory narrative, become hardened into mythic formations, insisting on their own completeness, demanding closure. This distinction between metaphor and myth is made by Frank Kermode: '*It is also why literary fictions die, lose their explanatory force; and why fictions that do not change never even begin to live but sink into myths and satisfy nobody but critics who lack the critic's first qualification, a scepticism, an interest in things as they are, in inhuman reality as in human justice*'.⁵⁹

Yet, at the same time, it is not the intention of this exercise to build a metaphysical dimension to this method. In many respects the method is as literary as it is philosophical. Abrams⁶⁰ states that metaphysical systems are in themselves essentially metaphor. Plato's world of Forms can be understood as fiction, as a myth of explanation. This study rather ironically half agrees with Plato's assertion that the noumenal world is only a half-reality, a fictional representation of the eternal Forms which are, in principle, unknowable. It agrees that the world we inhabit we only know as a likely story; but rather than add another layer to an already crowded metaphysic, it argues that we only get to our shadowy half truths through the fictions we construct and live - not through higher 'realities' like Plato's Forms but through meta-fictions -

⁵⁸M.H. Abrams, *The mirror and the lamp: Romantic theory and the critical tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), p31

⁵⁹ Frank Kermode, *The sense of an ending: studies in the theory of fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 64.

⁶⁰ M.H. Abrams (1953), p. 31.

like Plato's forms. Kermode acknowledges the discomfort of the realisation that the 'reality' of the world is not, in principle, ever able to be established: that the sense of an ending in representations of reality is something necessarily endlessly deferred: *'It is not that we are connoisseurs of chaos, but that we are surrounded by it, and equipped for co-existence with it only by our fictive powers. This may be, in the absence of a supreme fiction or the possibility of it, a hard fate...'*⁶¹

This study is in itself a meta-fiction, but that is merely another way of defining philosophy. It does not demand or even seek closure, nor does it attempt to mask its own ideological position, but rather it attempts to offer a critique of stories and, reflexively, of itself. In Rorty's terms it seeks to provide an open, 'edifying' discourse, essentially ironic in nature:

'I shall define an 'ironist' as someone who fulfills (sic) three conditions:

- 1) She has radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses, because she has been impressed by other vocabularies taken as final by people or books she has encountered;*
- 2) she realises that argument phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve those doubts;*
- 3) insofar as she philosophizes about her situation, she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others, that it is in touch with a power not herself.'*⁶²

The opposite of irony, Rorty describes, is 'common sense': the shibboleth of those who uncritically use the 'final' vocabulary of the narratives to which they have become habituated. Such habituation might be unconscious as in the vocabularies of Hogg and, as we shall see, Butler and Thatcher, who had so absorbed the vocabularies of the narratives they had grown up with and been initiated into that they could not see the ideological and hegemonic dimensions of their 'common sense' ideas about society and nature: or it might be conscious, as in the egalitarian narratives of Bowles and Gintis, for example, for whom the vocabulary of a fairly crude Marxism, was axiomatic.

⁶¹ Frank Kermode (1966), p.64

⁶² Richard Rorty, *Contingency, irony and solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1989), p.73

It is this method, a mixture of philosophical, cultural and literary analysis, which is used in this exercise. There is apparently, a keenly felt temptation that writing about cultural matters requires a highly specialised vocabulary of its own in order to mimic and compete with the authoritative vocabularies of science. However it is the intention here to avoid becoming '*constipated by the minutiae of theory*', as Robert Hughes⁶³ puts it, and to resist as much as possible the blandishments of the seductive but ultimately sterile vocabularies of post modernism which seem bound up more in the processes of academic capitalism than in providing any real contribution to the discourse⁶⁴. It is, for example, at least arguable that recent educational analyses - such as Stephen Ball's Education Reform or Ian Stronach and Maggie MacLure's Educational Research Undone⁶⁵ - though full of valuable insight are both rather obfuscated by the esoteric vocabularies of academic post-modernism. This exercise will attempt to avoid, as far as possible, the abstract neologisms and technicalities of these vocabularies in the interests of clarity.

The study will concentrate on the educational narratives of the Conservative Party because of their determined effort in to represent their stories of social reality and human nature as the 'host narrative', as EP Thomson called it. They consistently represented themselves as speaking for everyone, attempting to incorporate 'Britishness' and 'Conservatism' as one and the same story, as has been illustrated by Hogg in this chapter. The study will illustrate how indeed they have had considerable success in representing themselves in this way - as the only 'common sense' social and educational story.

In effect, this study analyses educational debate as concerning changing educational and social narratives and their core metaphors. This interpretative process is rendered more difficult by narratives which have become literalised, obscuring their fictive origins behind a narrow vocabulary and a curtain of intuitive 'common sense' claims to truth. The analysis will attempt to illustrate how certain educational narratives have gradually lost their

⁶³Robert Hughes, The Culture of Complaint (London: Harvill, 1993) p. 64

⁶⁴as argued by, for example, Harold Fromm, Academic Capitalism & Literary Value (Athens, Ga: University of Georgia Press, 1991)

⁶⁵Stephen Ball, Education Reform (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1994); Ian Stronach and Maggie MacLure, Educational Research Undone (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997)

rhetorical force and how the function of educational debate, and the nature of educational theory, has gradually become narrowed in the quest for the power that comes from the commitment shown towards a currently dominant story, not necessarily an educational one, where neither scepticism, nor an interest in how things are, nor an interest in human justice are required nor, indeed, have they become entirely welcome.

Chapter 2

Butler's Story: The 1944 Education Act

*'There was a huge erosion of class differences...
In terms of income, in terms of consumption of food, in terms of jobs and
hours of work,
in terms of taxation, there was a tremendous levelling which reached,
I suppose, its extreme point in 1944-5, and the fact that it worked I think did
have a great effect on public opinion. People felt that if these things could be
done in wartime, why shouldn't they, at any rate the best of them, be done in
peacetime.'*¹

J.G. Ballard² points out the social narratives founded in the immediate post-war period have laid the blueprint for the world we now live in and the vocabularies through which we describe it. The narrative of education and society which underlies the Butler 1944 Education Act, it will be argued, marked a paradigm shift in the educational narrative of the Conservative Party and for years dominated educational thinking in England. This, and subsequent chapters, will attempt to analyse the discursive impact of this narrative on educationalists and policy makers and the power of its central metaphors on shifting paradigms of educational thinking, discourse and policy making up to the present time.

By the end of World War 2, conditions had become ripe for an educational reformation. A legitimisation crisis in the prevalent educational narratives had been created by a general, popular sense of dissatisfaction with the existing wider social and economic narratives. This reformation, it will be shown, was not brought about through one of Rorty's or Habermas's '*domination-free conversations*': the emergent discourse of education was not an '*edifying*' one

¹ Douglas Jay, cited in Paul Addison, Now The War Is Over: A Social History of Britain 1945-51 (London: Pimlico, 1985/1995) p. 8.

²In The Observer, *Sign of the Times*, 31/12/95

in Rorty's terms; though it seemed to encourage open and free discussion and it did appear to seek to maximise consent. The creation of the post-war 'consensus' on social and educational policy, an examination of which will form the central part of this chapter and the next, it will be argued, is, in effect, a discourse of containment and control.

1. A Narrative of Hope

*'a victory for the massed ranks of social democracy'*³

What makes the 1944 Education Act the preferred starting point in this study is that this Act refined and rigidly established the vocabulary of education, firmly locating the discursive domain of then and future educational debate, fixing the real world of education and the realm of the 'possible'. It had, and still retains, significant rhetorical power. It has crucially affected the course of educational thinking in Britain, not simply through the reforms of educational policy it proposed, but in the grand narrative of society that discursively underpinned those reforms and the manner in which the Act was created by Butler, in particular how consent for it was claimed. The Act has since achieved a kind of mythic status. It has become an icon of consensus and national unity of purpose: to illustrate this many references to the Act in this chapter will be taken from current media coverage of Butler and his Act .

Butler's Act more closely defined and, crucially, institutionalised the purposes and types of schooling and education and tied the story of education closely to the dominant economic and social aspirations of the time. There was nothing particularly new about tying the story of education to the needs of the state, but what was different then was how the rising social expectations for what education could accomplish, allied with greater state control and an expansion of educational administration and bureaucracy, gave the emergent story an added tension and yet, as we will see, at the same time closed down the boundaries of the 'possible', narrowing and fixing the vocabulary of educational theory and educational discourse inside increasingly rigid permissible limits.

³ Addison (1985/1995) p.10/11

Popular confidence in the old social and educational narratives had been brought to crisis by the Second World War. The popular response to the war was that the debt to the old economic and social structure, with all its inequalities in wealth, education, housing and health, had been paid. It was this popular mood which is reflected in the Beveridge Report (1942) which identified, in a clearly demotic and populist story, those areas in the life of ordinary people which were no longer tolerable. Silver⁴ describes how the 1944 Education Act was the product of a heroic period, a time of the people's newly restored confidence in political structures to provide a new world, of opportunity, employment and welfare. It was a time of renewed moral and political confidence and optimism. Addison argues that it was through the popularity of the Beveridge Report that many of the post-war reforms owed their existence. Beveridge held out the promise of a New Jerusalem at the end of the war and that promise was redeemed by the people with the election of the Labour Government in 1945 but in the meantime, Butler's *Educational Reconstruction* was published in 1943 and laid the groundwork for the 1944 Act.

Tony Benn, in a typically unironic, optimistic socialist analysis of the election win, locates the victory of the Labour Party in 1945 in the popular will for change, stemming from the intolerable social conditions for ordinary people of the time and their realisation that socialism was their only answer. In a speech to the troops on a transport ship back to Britain, while he was still a serving officer in the Air Force, Benn gave a clear, if terse, description of the Labour Party manifesto and the narrative of hope and reform it contained:

'After the war the needs of reconstruction, too will call for tremendous efforts. But if the problems of economic planning are not faced, a great slump will follow that boom and we shall all over again witness all the misery that it involves.'

The Labour Party's policy is simple - take over coal, power, transport and steel, which employ such a large number of our people: by directing investment all along the peaks and depths of the vicious trade cycle it can gradually be ironed out. By maintaining employment at a steady relative level the ensuing prosperity will gradually raise the absolute level. The incentive of work under these conditions would be far greater

⁴ Harold Silver, *Education as History* (London: Methuen, 1983) p.264.

than under the old system - when the role of an employee was to enrich his employer in booms and live on the dole in slumps.

Opportunities for bettering yourself would be just as great, with the added advantage of an assured job and the knowledge that your efforts were directed to raising of the general standard - our old friend, the spirit of service.' ⁵

From a different perspective, the politicians of the right also acknowledged the need for reform. For them, however, the process of reform was perhaps driven more by fear than any narrative of justice or social progress: it was as much a matter of avoiding revolution as for any altruistic motives. Lord Woolton, the Minister for Food in 1940, for example, wrote in his diary:

'We are telling them now that they are heroes for the way in which they standing up to the strain of the mighty bombardment - and it's true. I think they will keep on being heroes, but when the war is over they will demand the rewards of heroism: they will expect to get them very soon...

I think there's going to be grave trouble, and the danger is that if the machine of government which can spend money so recklessly in engaging in war, fails to be equally reckless in rebuilding, there will be both the tendency and the excuse for revolution.' ⁶

It is this Grail Quest for a fairer society which provided the rhetorical impact of the popular social narrative which led up to the 1945 election victory and which provided the narrative backdrop for the 1944 Education Act. It was, however, more a rather vague and thin popular narrative than ever it was socialist one; it had little depth of political philosophy and not much beyond the immediate rhetorical and discursive power of a politician's electioneering speech. The source of the narrative of hope was partly, perhaps even largely, located in the war-time government's desire to create through the popular media, a climate of the expectation of a prosperous future to outweigh current constraints and sacrifices and to promote an ethos of national unity to

⁵ Tony Benn (edited by Ruth Winstone), Tony Benn: Years of Hope: Diaries, Papers and Letters 1940-1962 (London: Arrow, 1995) pp. 94/5.

⁶ Lord Woolton, Diary for 1st November 1940, Bodleian Library: cited in Addison (1985/1995) p.55

aid the war effort. Artefacts of popular culture, in particular the cinema were, quite guilelessly, purveyors of this message of hope: in Sherlock Holmes Faces Death⁷, Holmes says to Watson in the traditionally propagandist, upbeat, patriotic ending: *'There's a new spirit abroad in the land. The old days of grab and greed are on the way out. We are beginning to think of what we owe the other fellow, not just what we are compelled to give him. The times are coming, Watson, when we shan't be able to fill our bellies when other folk are going hungry, or sleep in warm beds while others are sleeping in the cold...'*

This kind of propaganda helped form the popular narrative of hope for a better, more just society which became so characteristic of the times. That this narrative later backfired on the Conservative Party in the 1945 election is an irony that to this day has not been lost on them, but that is a matter for a later chapter. The popular depiction of the stagnancy and debilitating inequality of the pre-war social landscape, in this narrative context, was the result of the neglect of the state, its culture, its institutions, its people and their aspirations, by a moribund political and institutional leadership which, like the Fisher King, sat idly by while the country degenerated into a wasteland. The new narrative called for a fairer, more equal society and a greater distribution of wealth and social benefit through an expansion of opportunity for all.

Addison⁸ charts the pre-war politics of education. He describes how, prior to the 1944 Act, educational provision in England had been differentiated along quite strict class boundaries. The upper classes sent their children to the public schools. Children of the working class would attend an elementary school until they were fourteen and then the vast majority of them went on directly to work. The middle classes paid for their children to attend grammar schools. A small number of free places were available in grammar schools for working class children who showed some exceptional talent. Addison's account centres on the inequities of the pre-war system. He, for example, describes the double standard of the grammar schools: the limited number of scholarships to working class children denied many bright working class children the opportunities that were afforded to the children of the middle classes who entered grammar school, not as a result of the

⁷Sherlock Holmes Faces Death (Directed by Roy William Neil for Universal Pictures, 1943)

⁸Paul Addison (1985/95) Chapter 6, pp.140-170

intensive competition the working class children had survived but because their parents could pay the fees. Education was entrenched in the class system and the public perception of the best education was the public school system.

The educational system prior to Butler's Act had been unashamedly elitist and had paid only lip service to attempts to widen access. Such small reforms as had been instituted had done nothing much to strike at the heart of the system. The popular will to reform was a desire to widen access to the educational system, for universal health services, for better housing and so on. Bowen⁹ describes how the 1944 Act emerged as the product of popular economic and social demand. The dominant story of economics at the time was, though not undisputed, the Keynesian one, with its central metaphor of the social market and the command economy - a metaphor which became an important feature of Butler's Act. Bowen describes how victory in the War had given fresh dynamism to the story of market capitalism - and added dynamism to the story of education which emerged from it. Liberal democracy and the economics of the market had become identified with each other as the saviours of the West. In response to the perceived threat from the East, the metaphor 'the Free World' had been coined and Education was seen to have a central role in preserving and maintaining it, and forming a first line defence against totalitarianism and the communist menace.

Mannheim¹⁰, for example, argued that education was a first-line defence against totalitarianism, though the sociology of knowledge which underpinned his argument was more complex than the anti-Communist rhetoric of the politicians. Mannheim aimed to extend the traditional Marxist vocabulary of society. Mannheim's contribution was to argue that the nature of knowledge was often unconsciously conditioned by ideology - by the determining influence of particular narrow interests and desires which were a product of the structure of society. These interests and desires were not, in Mannheim's view wholly reducible to just the economic relations of the class structure of capitalism, though these were important, but also a result of other 'life conditions', religious, biological and psychological.

⁹James Bowen A History of Western Education: Vol 3 The Modern West (London: Methuen, 1981) p. 526 and passim.

¹⁰Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia (London: Routledge, 1936/1960)

To this theory he characteristically excepted the claims to knowledge of science - science won the war as graphically illustrated in the ruin of Hiroshima and held out marvellous prospects for an idyllic future - maintaining that they were not open to sociological analysis. However, Mannheim believed that his view of the social construction of knowledge was a liberating one, potentially delivering people from their unconscious subservience to hidden forces and allowing them to make ideologically free, rational and responsible choices for themselves. This sociology of knowledge, he claimed, could arm people against often harmful totalitarian, anti-democratic myths, like the Nazi Aryan myth, and if an educational system could be devised with this as its principle then it could produce a kind of cultural de-toxification, allowing free discussions about the nature of society and guiding political action in a true democracy. By its nature, such an education would be necessarily elitist, creating a kind of Gramscian class of intellectuals; but Mannheim's elite would be, he expected, essentially classless, able to rise above the ideological mire of current political and cultural narratives and who would then be free to plan the evolutionary, not revolutionary, progress of society towards a social utopia. For Mannheim, this narrative, was not an ideology; he reserved this term to describe, always pejoratively, conservative idea systems.

Mannheim's theory was predicated on the state taking an active role in social planning and demanded an expansion of the role of the state in directly managing economic and social conditions and progress. This active role for the State was the focus of the political narrative of the Labour Party of the time and also the focus for dissension within the Tory Party in the 1940's. This modernist, structural approach to society placed education as a central focus of both social progress and change. Education was seen as a means to eradicate social evils and to socialise the young and to foster the right values and habits: in Durkheim's phrase, *'to instil inclination for the collective life'*, to develop a morality informed by the social, collective interest. Social cohesion was the central metaphor of this narrative, and the role of the teacher was thus to serve first the state and the state planners and only secondarily the individual interests of the pupils.

Butler's Act was primarily concerned to maintain social cohesion and to create an educational narrative that could be perceived as reflecting the public demand for increased opportunities in line with their increased

expectations. He was constrained to place education much more within the public domain, but he was also at the same time determined to undercut the collectivism of the socialist narrative, to retain traditional forms of schooling and at the same time to provide a diversity of educational provision.

2: Butler's Metaphors

'The central Ministry shall not only gird on the sword of resolution, but shall hold aloft the torch of true learning'.¹¹

In Addison's interpretation of the education policy of this period, he identifies it as the history of a popular and political struggle for increased justice and the widening of educational opportunity. These two central themes of the struggle were, however, not altogether fused in the Butler Act. Michael Barber identifies the central concern of Butler's proposed reforms:

'Only one-in-five elementary school leavers received any kind of further education after 14. Britain's class-ridden society in the first half of the 20th century wasted talent monumentally.'¹²

Rather than the rhetoric of justice, however, Barber's interpretation focuses on Butler's rhetoric of 'waste' and the economic commodification of education which he interpreted, for rhetorical reasons perhaps more pertinent to the present than to Butler, as characteristic of the emergent discourse of the time. Butler did not seem to take such a narrow view. Butler did have some concern for justice, as we shall see shortly a paternalistic desire for a more humane system was a sub-text of the Act. It is clear, however, that the rhetoric of economic necessity and renewal was more convincing, especially to many on the rather sceptical right wing of the House.

The rhetoric of economic renewal and growth of Butler's discourse, a rhetoric which was a result of his concern with practical political necessity,

¹¹R. A. Butler to the House of Commons, January 19/20 1944 in *"Bill of rights for a better world"*: the text of the second reading of the Education Bill by R. A. Butler to the House of Commons, January 19/20 1944: Times Educational Supplement (Scotland) (TESS): 6th May 1994, sec. *'The 1944 Act; 50th Anniversary'* p.vi.

¹² Michael Barber, *"1944 and all that," The Guardian* 18/1/94, sec. Education Guardian: p.2.

did however relegate the theme of social justice to a lower priority. The consequent demands on the emerging story of education were twofold: the need to supply a literate and adaptable working class to meet the needs of the market, which was driven by the economic imperatives of mass production and expanding consumption and which required a more highly skilled and more adaptable workforce; and, secondly, to re-interpret the existing cultural and ideological structure of society to accommodate, if not to exploit, the popular demand for reform and to re-instate it as the preferred way of life. The role of education had gained a sharper and more dynamic sense of purpose and immediacy.

The war had shown the virtue of a command economy and close partnership between the state and industry, and education, it was envisioned, would also become an integral part of that partnership: '*...education will oil the wheels of industry, and will bring a new efficiency - the fruit of modern knowledge - to aid the ancient skill of farm and field.*'¹³ Butler ruthlessly used the rhetoric of partnership between the individual and the state to push through his reform though, ironically, his reform saw the state take more control over education than before: '*As the reforms... are made effective, we shall develop as never before our most abiding assets, our richest resources - the character and competence of a great people; and, as I believe, in a manner not unworthy of our people's greatness.*'¹⁴

While the metaphors 'assets' and 'resources' emphasise the positive side of the proposed reform though they carry also the clear implication that the old educational system did encourage waste. At the same time these economic metaphors are rhetorically linked to a patriotic and imperialist slogan. To do less than approve the Bill would be unpatriotic. Earlier attempts at reform had foundered on the question of cost. The knee-jerk response of many Tories to Beveridge, for example, was that he was, '*a sinister old man, who wishes to give away a great deal of people's money*'¹⁵ and they needed convincing that the money would be well spent. The advantage Butler's Act had was that the popular will to social and institutional reform allied to the sharp focus that the war brought to the concept of democracy and the

¹³ TESS: 6th May 1994, op.cit., p. viii

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. ix

¹⁵ as cited by Michael Barber in, *The prime of R. A. Butler*, TESS 14/1/94, sec. Review: p.2.

enthusiasm with which many educationalists greeted Butler's White Paper gave politicians little choice.

At the beginning of his address to the House, Butler, a good classical scholar, quoted Plato: education had as its aim, *'...to make the citizens as happy and harmonious as possible'* ¹⁶. The rhetoric of the 1944 Act was of social cohesion and economic growth through the expansion of educational access. The phrase 'equality of opportunity' was the code by which the reforms had been popularly promulgated:

'The phrase on everybody's lips today is 'equality of opportunity'... What does it mean?...Do we really desire it?

The fact is that the educational system we have built up has been a most efficient safeguard of the social stratification we in all our heart of hearts bow down to and worship... All the reasons against granting equality of opportunity will be fought for: openly, subtly, or, most dangerous of all, unconsciously. ¹⁷

Dent very clearly identifies the rhetoric of social equality which was current in the reformist narratives of the time, and he was not unaware of the difficulties to be faced in creating it. This concept was coded by the more opaque phrase, 'equality of opportunity', in Butler's Act. There was in the resultant Act, however, no consideration granted to any real prospect for greater social equality: *'The rhetoric was of 'Equality of Opportunity', but there were no illusions that this was the same as 'Equality'. Another phrase was translated from the French - 'the career open to talents' - which instantly spoke of meritocracy rather than equality. Wartime idealism did not exclude wanting a better-prepared workforce: wider opportunity also meant better vocational and technical education.'* ¹⁸ Maclure continues to point out, the rhetoric of the act was firmly based in the hierarchical class structure of Britain. It is clear that Butler was concerned to preserve traditional

¹⁶ TESS 6/5/94 op. cit. p.vi.

¹⁷ Harold Dent, June 28th, 1941: in Patricia Rowan, *Journalist with a hand in history*, TESS 9/5/94, extracts from the Times Educational Supplement leaders of former editor, Harold Dent: p.x.

¹⁸ Stuart Maclure, *Act of faith amid the heat of battle*, TESS 6th May 1994, sec: *The 1944 Act: 50th Anniversary* supplement: p. ii.

educational privileges and to maintain the differentials in cultural capital which they represented.

*'In the new attitude to secondary education we have two main objectives: first that provision of many varying types should become accessible to all, and, secondly, that standards and traditions so far evolved should, so far as possible, be preserved.'*¹⁹

Rather ingeniously, Butler re-inforced these privileges by pretending that his Act could be seen to threaten them. He began by anticipating criticisms, acknowledging the apparently controversial nature of some sections of the Act. He claimed, for example, that the Act could, mistakenly, be seen as an attempt to widen access at the expense of standards or to attack the high standards of existing grammar schools. He looked forward to *'discussions on the best method of preserving the standards and traditions of our secondary schools'* suggesting that wide discussions on educational provision were possible but adding that he had, however, inserted a caveat in the Act that compelled the Minister to *'have regard to the manner in which the school has been conducted heretofore'*. He closed the discourse with the unambiguous: *'Thus there is to be no breaking with tradition'*.²⁰

His appeal was to tradition but the only tradition he seemed to find worthy of preservation was the public school and its imitator, the grammar school. For example, Butler was not going to make a *'heavy handed'* decision to prohibit fee paying in all direct grant schools. This, it was considered, would be counter productive: *'We intend to preserve tradition and variety, and for that purpose to keep in existence a direct grant list. At the same time, these schools must be accessible to all...'*²¹ Butler's fear was, he claimed, that such schools would then move out of the state sector altogether and raise their fees to compensate for the lack of a direct grant. At the same time, showing a pale spark of even-handedness, Butler announced that public schools would be registered and would be compelled to be inspected.

¹⁹TESS 6/5/94 op. cit. p.viii.

²⁰ibid., p.viii

²¹ibid., p.viii.

Butler's stated intention was to avoid decisions which would: *'accentuate social divisions and widen the gap between schools'* ²². The perception of class, however, was so built in to the concept of schooling that there was never any real chance that the gap between schools would be narrowed. His appeal to tradition disguised his intention to leave, more or less intact, the existing system with all its social inequalities, in particular ensuring that the social cachet, prestige and autonomy of the public schools were left at least intact, if not actually re-inforced through his, admittedly tempered, eulogies.

The second class nature of the technical schooling he proposed is a corollary of his consistent implication that the public schools and their pale echoes, the grammar schools, provided a more desirable and prestigious education. His justification for preserving traditional privilege hinged on the notion of desert: children who were more able deserved to be included in the ranks of the privileged elite, those who were less able deserved something more appropriate to their future, more subordinate, role in society. Consequently only those children who had the 'natural capacities' to take advantage of the opportunity were offered it. The educational vocabulary that emerges from the Act is an ideological construction from a complex story in which justice in education is justified by reference to essential features of human nature and character.

Butler introduced his Act to the House in his *'modest'* proposal that the framework of the educational system proposed by his Act would *'permit of the natural growth and development not only of the children but of the national policy itself'* ²³. Butler's metaphorical use of 'nature' here is complex and ambiguous. It is used both psychologically and biologically to characterise and essentialise the person in order to justify a highly selective educational system which maintained all the traditional educational privileges and inequalities while claiming to create greater opportunity for all. In the new system the 'nature' of the child determines the education that he or she can derive some benefit from: it is a kind of theory of natural justice or desert. The respective 'nature' of the child creates an obligation on the part of the state to provide an appropriate education. However 'nature' is used at other times to refer to the nurturing of the child and to the processes of the moral, social and cognitive development and maturation of the child,

²²ibid., p.viii

²³ibid., p.vi to ix.

and at yet at other times he uses it to categorise or classify the child by type or, to extend his metaphor, genus. Moreover, along with the botanical metaphors he refers to '*progressive development*'²⁴ meaning at times the discrete stages of a child's development and at other times implying a kind of evolutionary progress which he then links by analogy to the evolutionary progress of state itself - a conceptual leap characteristic of the discourse of late 19th century social Darwinism.

Plants are relatively simple organisms, easy to manage and closely dependent on clear and unambiguous growing conditions. Furthermore, it is easy to predict their potential for growth and when they may be harvested. As a metaphor for children this has obvious attractions: it makes the educational process the relatively simple matter of matching the child to the correct nurturing regime and in making sure that the gardener is sufficiently well skilled to make the garden bloom. That the child may not bloom, or only blooms in a small way, is not the fault of the skilled gardener; growth is ultimately conditioned, all other factors being equal, by environmental and biological determinants outside direct control.

This paints an attractive and picturesque portrait of the educational process, one which is easy to understand and easy to manage. Moreover it is a wholesome image, removed from the cynicism of political intrigue, ideological debate and thorny issues of teacher's pay and the control of the educational processes. Through this metaphor, education is in effect removed from the material and political world and, at least at first sight, it is seemingly innocent of ideological or hegemonic connotations. It conjures an idyllic picture, an anti-type of Eden and of classical pastoral myths, a Miltonic picture: '*I will point you out the right path of a virtuous and noble education: laborious indeed at first ascent, but else so smooth, so green, so full of goodly prospect and melodious sounds...*'²⁵

The image created is the antithesis of socialist narratives of class struggle and is a world removed from the harsh educational realities of post-war inner city squalor and rural poverty it was intended to rehabilitate. The botanical metaphors suggest education is a process which can be nurtured up to a point

²⁴ *ibid.*, p.vi

²⁵ John Milton (1644) *Areopagitica and Letter on Education* (London: Cassell & Co., 1891) pp. 121/2.

but which is in important ways essentially outside direct control. Taking a generous interpretation of this metaphor, it suggests that while the development of the child will occur, as in a plant, anyway, through interventions this growth may be nurtured to create the most healthy and vigorous plant possible, given the innate potential the plant has, the relative fertility of its location and skill of the gardener.

The metaphor borrows its rhetorical impact from its foundation in a romantic view of the world, of nature as a vast, unified organism where each person may find his or her place to thrive and to contribute to the overall growth of the entire organism. This may imply an active, rational and enlightened process, as in Rousseau's *Emile* where the child wakes from '*the sleep of reason*' by learning through observing and experiencing the world and interacting with it under the essentially non-interfering guidance of a mentor: learning through nature. However it may also, as it does in Butler's Act, suggest a much more passive and more organised process in which the pupil's experience is not so much guided as controlled, as the gardener may choose to plant in the sun or in the shade, feed or neglect his plants. The wider aspects of education are reduced to a much more mechanical system of 'natural' selection for different kinds schooling, where the pupils receive their treatment in a relatively passive, non-reciprocal relationship with the teacher. The children do not learn through nature but rather their learning potential is conditioned by their 'natural' capacities.

Crucially, at the root, so to speak, of these botanical metaphors of growth and development is the notion of 'natural' capacities or 'natural' abilities: limiting conditions for potential growth through selective descriptions which essentialise and which in turn may be used to categorise the child. The critical feature of the educational process is the innate capacity for growth of the child - the gardener can only do so much. Different plants require different conditions and treatments to thrive. Consequently Butler's Act makes imperative that children are identified by a vocabulary of 'natural' selection, through talk of 'natural' capacities, dispositions and abilities. The state intervenes but can only hope to nurture growth as far as the natural capacities of the subjects will allow: '*... the secondary stage will be designed, not to provide an academic training for the select few, but to give*

*equivalent opportunities to all children over 11 making the most of their natural aptitudes.'*²⁶

The critical identification of potential can then allow the state to give the correct quality and quantity of treatment appropriate to the efficient and effective growth of the child. Consequently how vigorously a child will grow depends on what the 'natural' capacity of the child is. Each child should receive '*...an education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude*'²⁷. If children could be grouped and classified by genus, to extend Butler's metaphor, then the whole process would work more efficiently: there would be little need to consider the needs of each child individually.

This classification of children was viewed unproblematically. Butler's concern was that '*children may pass to whatever kind of secondary education may be most suitable for them.*'²⁸, adding in a rather portentous tone, in which can be discerned the shadows of British imperialist ambitions, that the reorganisation of educational provision was necessary '*...to make our children healthy, happy and worthy of their destiny*'²⁹.

He was concerned, apparently quite genuinely, to provide the best kind of system possible. Butler implies parity of esteem for each part of the tripartite system of education he has instituted and which he had taken uncritically from the Norwood Report.

'The evolution of education has in fact thrown up certain groups, each of which can and must be treated in a way appropriate to itself. Whether such groupings are distinct on strictly psychological grounds, whether they represent types of mind, whether the differences are in kind or in degree, these are questions it is not necessary to pursue. Our point is that rough groupings, whatever may be their ground, have in fact established themselves in general educational experience, and the recognition of such groupings in

²⁶TESS 6/5/94 op. cit. p.vi.

²⁷ibid., p.vi.

²⁸ibid., p.viii

²⁹ibid., p.vi.

educational practice has been justified both during the period of education and in the after-careers of the pupils.'³⁰

The vocabulary of 'natural' capacities, notwithstanding this partial disclaimer, was a central feature of the typology of the Norwood Report where children were differentiated in terms of their essential nature. It differentiated by behavioural criteria: the 'grammar school' pupil would, *'be able to grasp an argument... (be) interested in causes... (be) sensitive to language... be interested in the relatedness of related things..'*³¹; 'he' would also have distinctive character traits, *'he can take a long view and hold his mind in suspense... he will have a capacity to enjoy, from an aesthetic point of view the aptness of a phrase...'*³²; and furthermore 'he' can be distinguished, in a curiously retrospective logic, by the kind of career 'he' will follow later, in *'the learned professions or... higher administrative or business posts'*³³.

Certain other categories of children - and girls are explicitly admitted only in this section - are similarly classified into *'those whose interests and abilities lie markedly in the field of applied science or applied art'*³⁴ and they are destined by their 'nature' to go to technical schools where they might be prepared, *'for taking up certain crafts - engineering, agriculture and the like'*, adding in justification a direct appeal to 'natural capacities', *'...it is usual to think of the engineer or other craftsman as possessing a particular set of interests or aptitudes by virtue of which he becomes a successful engineer or whatever he may become'*³⁵ Rousseau's story of 'nature' was benign if nothing else: his claim was that, *'life is the trade I teach'*; it is ironic that this part of Butler's Act might be summed up as 'trade is the life I teach...'

The third category consisted of those children who would go to secondary modern schools. The use of the word 'modern' was largely euphemism, a rhetorical disguise for an education that was far from new and which

³⁰Report of the Committee of the Secondary Schools Examination Council on Curriculum and Examinations in Secondary Schools (The Norwood Report) (1943), section: Tripartite Organisation, in J. Stuart Maclure Educational Documents England and Wales, 1816 to the present day (London: Methuen, 1965), p. 201

³¹ *ibid.*, p.201

³² *ibid.*, p.201

³³ *ibid.*, p.201

³⁴ *ibid.*, p.201

³⁵ *ibid.*, p.202

followed the traditional path of education for the masses - it was relatively cheap, it was widely available, it went little beyond elementary level and it provided no real or transferable qualifications. Such children are identified by their innate incapacity to think logically in anything but the most simple and concrete terms. The language of selection here concentrates not on the ability of the child but on the child's perceived disability: a negative selection - an identification not of limited ability but of specific or general inability - as opposed to the positive selection for the grammar school. Characteristically this child cannot defer gratification: *'Because he is only interested in the moment he may be incapable of a long series of connected steps; abstractions mean nothing to him...he must have immediate returns for his effort....his horizon is near...'*³⁶

The preferred vocabulary of educational selection and classification of the time appeared to be a rather curious metaphorical mixture of Plato's Myth of Metals and a simplified sub-Piagetian vocabulary all bound up in a mesh of the 'common sense' perceptions generated by the middle class, public school backgrounds of the Ministry politicians and officials, and given 'scientific' justification by the IQ test which had gained much prestige in wartime. Toby Weaver, in 1946, a civil servant in the new formed Ministry of Education, sums up the prevalent doctrine of the 'natural' differentiation of children by aptitude and ability:

*'There was a general belief, I believe totally false, that children were divided into three kinds. It was sort of Platonic. There were golden children, and silver children, and iron children. The golden children were capable of going to a grammar school, they had minds, they could have abstract thinking. The technical children, the silver children so to speak, were technically oriented, and all the rest, they couldn't handle ideas, they had to have concrete notions.'*³⁷

Consequently, at a very early stage, the child is labelled, typed and categorised, then provided with an kind of education which was deemed appropriate to the perceived 'natural' capacity the child has, and this provision is then justified retrospectively by the kind of occupation the child later goes

³⁶ibid., p.202

³⁷cited in Paul Addison (1985/95) p.146/7

on to take up - an occupation that has been largely determined by the education the child has received. Michael Apple³⁸ refers to this type of classification citing the justice system of the Red Queen from Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking Glass, where punishment is ruthlessly applied before the trial, and before the crime has been committed. The punishment is justified by reference to the greater common good, since the persons so punished would then not commit the offences it is judged that they would inevitably have perpetrated, and society was therefore better off. The identification by the state of the potential to be criminal was sufficient reason to punish. The argument hinges on the questions of what criteria are used for the identification, how persuasive this identification is and, granting that these questions are sufficiently answered, who should have the authority to judge. According to the traditional tenets of natural justice which both Norwood and Butler would accept, such judgements should be made openly and impartially and be applicable to all: consequently a further, more critical question would have to be asked, are these judgements just and in whose interests are they made? In Carroll's case the criteria are arbitrary and the judge is clearly deranged.

Applied by analogy to their educational system, in Butler's and Norwood's argument, the State, through its educators, would have the authority to select and to determine the future educational provision to which the child had entitlement: that was a clear intention of Butler's Act. The criteria of selection was the common sense categorisation of the 'natural' ability of the child which would be objectively and scientifically ascertained by the IQ testing of the child at eleven years old, criteria which were at that time thought to be generally persuasive. However, the selection process was never applicable to everyone and the testing regime was certainly biased in favour of the more fluent and verbally proficient children of the middle classes. The process could be side-stepped altogether if the parents could afford to pay public school fees and even though Butler abolished fee paying, the hidden costs of a grammar school education - uniform, games equipment, musical tuition - would have been prohibitive for many. It is on the question of justice that Apple bases his objection to labelling theories. He exposes the ideological roots of the process through a discussion of Williams and Gramsci, arguing that common sense categories often disguise economic and

³⁸ Michael Apple, Ideology and Curriculum (London: Routledge, 1990) Chapter 7, pp. 123-153.

political manipulations of social realities, allowing for one story of society to dominate alternative narratives. He shows how discourses which appeal to nature characteristically appeal to common sense.

For example, Butler and Norwood might attempt to refute the charge that they were representing the hegemonic interests of a cultural and economic elite, by claiming to offer an education to each child appropriate to his or her potential. The Norwood Report made a claim to be child-centred: *'The time has come, we believe, when the real meaning of secondary education, the significance of child-centred education, the value of the Grammar School tradition, the difficulties of the present Secondary Schools should all be admitted and recognised... Accordingly we would advocate that there should be three types of education, which we think of as the secondary Grammar, the secondary Technical and the secondary Modern...'*³⁹

It is not, however, clear how 'child-centred' this system could be when the categorisation was to be made using such an inflexible vocabulary, especially when the categorisation criteria were so vague and so reliant on the traditional perceptions of a system which, ironically, even Norwood had shown to be flawed. Apple points out how the claimed neutrality of such apparently objective classification systems were used to develop *'categories and modes of perception which reify or thingify individuals so that they (the educators) can confront students as institutional abstractions rather than as concrete persons...'*⁴⁰ and through such categorisation to obscure the perception that there could be other material and social factors which might inhibit educational success.

Indeed selection became a fundamental part of schooling, perhaps even the fundamental aim with 'streaming' as the central organising metaphor. Apart from the academic 'streaming' by ability into the grammar school, children were selected into sub-'streams' both in grammar and secondary modern schools. John Partridge in Life in a Secondary Modern School describes streaming within a secondary modern school where children were streamed by their relative disability:

³⁹The Norwood Report, in Maclure (1965) p.203

⁴⁰Apple (1990), p.133

'In ascending order of literacy the next group (the 'D' stream was divided into those who could and those who could not read) is a large one composed of the remainder of the 'D' boys and most of the 'C' boys. This group have below average reading ages but at least they can make some sense of simple prose... A few boys in the 'C' stream, perhaps most of the 'B' stream and the lower half of the 'A' stream, are boys who can read, in many cases well, and they are able to write comprehensible English... Our most erudite boys are the ten or fifteen who compose the top half of the 'A' stream. These are the boys who will do well in the Secondary Modern leaving certificate, who will pass certain subjects in the GCE O-Level examination, and for whose benefit much of the school timetable is designed.' ⁴¹

Partridge here shows how common place and entrenched was the vocabulary of selection and how children were categorised and 'streamed' ad absurdum. Even 'streams' were further sub-divided. Only the 'A' stream, and then seemingly only the top half of that stream, were considered to be worthwhile, the rest were judiciously consigned to educational oblivion. Selection and labelling had become the means of organisation and of control, both internally in the school and as a means of controlling the public perception of what schools were about and of controlling pupil expectation. It became the 'common sense' of schooling and educational success became dependent on how far up the educational stream the child was allowed to paddle.

Peter Mauger ⁴² attacked the principle of selection and of the criteria used by Butler and Norwood for selection in an article characteristic of the egalitarian discourse of comprehensive education, which for a time attempted to succeed Butler's discourse. While his argument is passionate, and perhaps a little lop-sided in places, he nevertheless makes some telling points. He points out that the psychological evidence used in this discourse was oversimplified, at best crude, and that it was out of date even in Norwood's time. There was no evidence offered that the age of eleven marks

⁴¹ cited in Bell, Fowler and Little (eds) *Education in Great Britain and Ireland*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul/Open University Press, 1973) p.120/1

⁴² Peter Mauger, *Selection for Secondary Education*, in David Rubenstein and Colin Stoneman (eds) *Education for Democracy*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970)

a definite or critical stage of growth, or that there were three types of mind discernible in children at eleven or at any other age. He condemns the vocabulary of Butler and Norwood with some fury:

*'It is hardly surprising that people with such an artificial, compartmentalised notion of human beings should advocate apartheid in education (though apparently they viewed with equanimity the thought of their own sons in public schools mixing with the other two types - or perhaps public school boys all belong to the first type?).'*⁴³

The pseudo-botanical/organic metaphors provide such a vocabulary in which politicians and educators could redefine essential educational relationships and obscure the perception that educational policies were a result of particular political and ideological choices. Tellingly, not only did neither Norwood nor Butler offer criteria by which to differentiate clearly defined natural kinds of children, nor did they ever seriously try to, and they both cheerfully acknowledged that omission. While they both vaguely refer to psychological evidence they do not seriously offer a psychological justification for their categories: the 'common sense' of their categorisation rendered that kind of theory unnecessary.

The vocabulary of natural selection explicitly used by both Norwood and Butler allows, perhaps even demands, the de-personalisation of educational relations between the individual and the institution, categorising and labelling the child with apparently little more justification than the opinion of a teacher. There was no actual evidence offered for these categories. Norwood says that these were '*questions it was not necessary to pursue*', presumably because the answers were so blindingly obvious to him and his committee, so indelibly were they written in the common sense story of human nature of the time. They were intuitively and experientially justified by the perceptions of 'common sense' because they accorded with the types of child that educators had traditionally perceived in the classroom. That the categories were also highly ideological, their use and meaning dependent on a more deeply embedded story of society, was, however not so much disguised by the Committee as perhaps simply not visible to them. Their

⁴³Mauger (1970) pp. 133/4

assertions were made heroically, with little concern for evidence or theory, so confident were they that their perception was the true one.

Metaphors, like Butler's 'natural ability', for example, fixed the discourse of selection into the 'common-sense' of the then established educational narrative and with its continued use it amassed a weight of significance and signification which was to create a forbidding inertia.

Chapter 3

Great Expectations and the Discourse of Containment

... the general liberal consensus that 'true' knowledge is fundamentally non-political... obscures the highly if obscurely organised political circumstances obtaining when knowledge is produced.'

Edward Said *Orientalism* ¹

1: Butler's Voices

'He do the police in different voices'

Charles Dickens: *Our Mutual Friend*, Chapter 16

Historically in England it has been characteristic of the Conservative Party to grant social reforms, at the most minimum level possible, to avoid the threat of social unrest. The speed of the industrial revolution, for example, took the politicians by surprise. The then tradition of laissez-faire politics prevented direct state intervention: the mechanisms and institutions necessary to administer an effective and universal education system did not exist even if the political will had. Only when the mounting social problems reached crisis point, against the threatening background of continental popular uprisings, did the government intervene and then only as minimally as would alleviate - or at least show their concern and apparent willingness to attempt to alleviate - the worst of conditions. Even then, state intervention in education, for example, was little more than a matter of encouraging the Victorian philanthropic conscience of a few liberals and providing some basic state funding than in taking any direct control. The state relied heavily on the Church of England and people like Andrew Bell and Joseph Lancaster to provide a basic education for the ordinary people of England. The education

¹Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1978) p.10

of the children, the boys in particular, of the economic and ruling elite was, of course, another matter and was otherwise provided for.

In Conservatism, Ted Honderich² describes how the Respectable Tendency of the Conservative Party habitually represent themselves as not a political party in the sense that they prefer if possible not to advocate or attempt to live some grand narrative of society in the way that the Labour Party or even the Liberal party do. Rather Respectable Toryism presents itself as the representative and custodian of a way of life, of a particular social system and the cultural values which legitimise it. The Party came into being, as Honderich points out, as a result of the French Revolution in order to defend the traditional privileges of the then ruling class. Honderich points out that it began '*in disapproval, shock, fear and resistance*'³ and is perhaps characterised quite simply as being against change. This reverence for traditional values and institutions and the established moral and social order permeates Butler's Act. Nothing communicates itself more clearly more than his reverence for the class system.

Yet at the same time his was not necessarily a crass greed for wealth or position. Essentially the Act sought to preserve the hegemonic status quo - something like Hogg's myth - and those wider, more general and more diffuse social and cultural narratives which underpinned it, using the concept of service to do so: those most advantaged were at the same time under an obligation by virtue of their superiority, burdened with what almost amounted to an unalienable duty to serve and defend the people through their leadership of the institutions of the state and the culture. The essentially Respectable Tory narrative of Butler is invisible. It lies behind the rhetoric and the discourse of common sense. It is slippery: it does not even, perhaps, exist as a coherent story in itself, but rather it is a reactionary, politically expedient, response to change which seeks to protect and preserve its hegemony and the traditional cultural narratives in which that hegemony resides.

This elite is not a meritocracy. In spite of Butler's attempt to redefine the educational narrative, admission to it is rather more like Hogg's cultural initiation, described earlier. Hogg's myth serves as the *focus imaginarius* of these more diffuse social narratives in which the then Tory Party was located.

² Ted Honderich, Conservatism (London: Penguin, 1990) .

³Honderich (1990) p. 1

Authority is located in tradition, or at least in the traditions and culture of the dominant class and the value of this initiation ensures that the system is essentially self-policing, according little discursive space to dissent or change.

The challenge that had faced Butler was to reform, or at least to reinterpret, the existing dominant discourse of education in a way which would gain the consent of both wings of the House and the educational authorities and educationalists, and which at the same would fulfil the popular demands for greater access and have popular support. His Act had to reflect the heady optimism of the hope of the time, even if he and the then educational establishment did not, themselves, entirely unambiguously share it. Indeed Butler did much to exploit the popular will for reform in obtaining wide consensus for his Act. The traditional more hands off, *laissez-faire* educational discourse was not an option; the rhetoric of post-war reconstruction which had been so effectively used to bolster morale in wartime had created a popular acceptance, if not demand, for cradle to grave state provision, for social planning, reform and change which was later clearly expressed in the victorious social narrative of the Labour Party in 1945.

Williams⁴ describes how in forming what was to become the emergent dominant story of education there were present contesting elements of quite different educational stories. These stories Williams called the *Democratic*, with its emphasis on widening opportunity and education for all; the *Industrial* with its emphasis on training, technology and vocational skills allied to the needs of the economy; the *Liberal* with its focus on respect for traditional cultural values and to these might be added the *Progressive*, with its stress on the individual needs of the child. Butler's Act attempted a kind of multiple appeal: he has a different voice for everyone. Each story came with a long pedigree. Each had its own focus imaginarius - its own idealised representation of the character of education and educational identities - and each provided its own characteristic metaphorical construction of reality.

The challenge facing Butler was to forge a consensus among these rival stories - a consensus in which not only was any radical reform of the education system ruled out, but also a consensus in which some discourses which had championed a particular story would lose out and where their

⁴ Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Pelican/Penguin, 1961) p.161 and passim.

rivals would gain. Butler's stated intention, and in the political circumstances he could not have said otherwise, was to reform the educational system in order to lessen the class differential in educational success and to provide greater educational opportunity. Using this democratic voice, Butler effectively undercut the more socialist voice of the Labour Party. Full blooded egalitarianism was not on his menu however, he spoke, though even then vaguely, of equality of opportunity. He even went so far as to voice his concern about the education of girls: '*I hope all opportunities open to boys will be equally open to girls*'⁵, though again he does not voice this concern with a full-blooded objective that the bias towards boys in current educational provision should come to an end, but rather he opted to voice only a weaker, more vague aspiration.

Perhaps Butler's tentativeness towards creating greater educational opportunities for girls was an indication of his rather less than fully democratic principles. Earlier in 1942 he was asked in an amendment debate to consider making equal pay for women teachers a feature of his Bill. The amendment was passed by a very narrow majority though it had been opposed on the government benches. This was the only parliamentary defeat the wartime coalition government suffered. Butler would not consider any such change to the pay scales; in his view it would have created a precedent and would be followed by similar demands from the civil service and that, he said, would be financially disastrous. Butler was furious and gave the impression that he would stall the Bill, if not resign his position. His response was to have an artfully managed tantrum: '*I am not going to tumble round my cage like a wounded canary. You knocked me off my perch. You have to put me back on my perch otherwise I won't sing.*'⁶ His threat, though it was not specific, intimidated the reformers and threw them into a panic. They had so long anticipated a new educational system that even the National Union of Teachers, who had for years campaigned for equal pay, asked their supporters in the house not to demand that the amendment be implemented. The success of such intimidation was not lost on Butler: '*it paid a handsome dividend*', he said, and it allowed him thereafter to dominate the committee stages of the Bill. Equal pay for women had to wait until 1955 and even then it had to be phased in over six years.

⁵R. A. Butler to the House of Commons, January 19/20 1944 in TESS 6/5/94 op. cit. p.viii.

⁶cited by Michael Barber, "Crisis of Conscience," TESS 6th May 1994, sec. The 1944 Act: p. xvii.

By abolishing fee paying in grammar schools and by expanding the assisted places scheme, Butler intended the impression of an educational meritocracy: selected solely on the basis of ability but, as has been discussed, the concept of ability was a mechanism which would, inevitably, protect and preserve the traditional class boundaries of educational achievement. Butler's educational meritocracy did, however, in a limited fashion, have some effect. Addison⁷ describes a significant trend in increasing numbers of working class children at grammar schools from beyond the previously statutory 25% upwards to at least 40%, even more in areas which had traditionally been more generous to the aspirations of the working classes. However, though there was an increase in the number of children selected to grammar schools, and while this educational expansion was generally welcomed, the whole schooling system envisaged by Butler was never fully implemented.

The identification of 'technically minded' children was problematic and when attempted proved to be such a small number that in effect those children who did not qualify for grammar school entry were condemned to an secondary modern schooling. This effectively left them without any negotiable qualifications. And it would have been very costly to create the technical schools. However, Butler surely was ingenuous in hoping that his system could achieve 'parity of esteem' or that it could actually lead to greater educational opportunity. It was, indeed, the perceived lack of esteem for any other school than the grammar school, that was one of the main reasons that the technical school was strangled at birth.

While Butler's democratic voice at times rings with conviction and sincerity, at the same time it is the voice of someone who was always on the outside of the social world which he was attempting to regulate. Neither he, nor his officials then at the Board, had much intimate knowledge of the lives of the people they discussed so lightly and, on occasion, so caustically. Butler and his officials at the Board of Education were all successful products of quite a different educational system and as products of that system their perceptions of what education was, its purposes, what to change and how to change it was limited. Even James Chuter Ede, Butler's Labour deputy at the Board of Education and an invaluable ally, was a product of a minor public school and

⁷Addison (1985/95). p 165 and passim.

Cambridge, though he had been a teacher at an elementary school. Addison records⁸ that nearly twenty-five percent of Labour MPs had a public school education and that the Atlee government had retained the traditional deference for 'the old school tie'. Stuart Maclure⁹, the former editor of *The Times Educational Supplement*, remarked that a separate selective and non-selective school system was the received wisdom, the common sense of the time, even on the Labour benches.

Under the succeeding Labour administration the received educational story was unequivocally that of selection by ability. Though 'parity of esteem' was part of the rhetoric it was not convincingly part of the story. Ellen Wilkinson, the Minister for Education after the 1945 election stated: *'Not everyone wants an academic education. After all coal has to be mined and fields ploughed, and it is a fantastic idea that we have allowed, so to speak, to be cemented into our body politic, that you are of a higher social class if you add up figures in a book than if you plough the fields and scatter the good seed on the land.'*¹⁰

The narrative expectation of the story of education was one in which a grammar school education - except when a public school education was not possible - was clearly acknowledged to be not just superior but really the only type of education that mattered, the one which opened the door to the privileged strata of society. This narrative expectation created in effect the elitist ethos of the grammar school: that ability was a privilege and created consequent obligations to duty and service as well as offering the possibility for subsequent initiation into the cultural elite and potentially opening the doors to opportunity, wealth and social position. Though Wilkinson does attempt to undermine that story, deriding the middle class white-collar aspirations of the grammar school educated, even using unctuous biblical allusion to try to assert the equal value and dignity of the labour of the working classes, her argument is glib and unconvincing.

Her argument is not, though, quite the same as Butler's. His argument pivots on the notion of desert: those most able deserved an education appropriate to

⁸Addison (1985/95) p 167

⁹Stuart Maclure, *Act of Faith Amid the Heat of Battle* in *TES(S)* 6th May 1994, sec. The 1944 Act: 50th Anniversary: p.iii.

¹⁰cited in David Rubenstein and Brian Simon *The Evolution of the Comprehensive School 1926-1972*, (London: Routledge, 1972) p. 38

their ability and one which will give them the opportunity to serve the larger community to the best of those abilities. Wilkinson's argument is organised around the concept of need and of a sanctimoniously disingenuous, egalitarian view of the value of labour. The appropriate education is the education the child needs and wants mediated by the economic organisation and needs of the larger community, and the needs of the child are largely established by the perceived ability of the child. This perceived ability meant that sixty to seventy percent of children would be denied what was seen as a worthwhile education, an academic education. While this might have caused some Labour politicians, like Wilkinson herself, some private qualms, it did not influence their public policy. Addison cites David Hardman, a junior minister in the then Labour controlled Education Department, who wrote: *'The minister wanted to eliminate the direct grant list, the response being protests in my ear from Labour backbenchers who had important DG (direct grant) schools in their constituencies. She also ventured the opinion that public schools should be taken into the State system and even the universities. Nothing came of this though I heard Herbert Morrison describing the idea as 'female tantrums'.*¹¹

The succeeding Labour Party which was dominated by a very similar Respectable Tendency, differing in degree rather than kind from their Tory counterparts, adopted much the same story. Their manifesto had promulgated a vision of a more equal society but this was interpreted when they were in power as the maintenance of much the same traditional institutions and values as the patrician Respectable Tories, though with some erosion of some property rights and some amelioration of the lot of the common people with the creation of a welfare state. Apart from the privatisation of some large industries, though they would agree with the Keynesian motivation, and the cost, though not the principle, of the welfare state, there was little that the Tory Respectable Tendency could complain about.

The Labour Respectable Tendency exploited Butler's democratic voice in the '44 Act to postpone their new Jerusalem, put off until the blueprint for an educational meritocracy could eventually bear fruit. Though there were voices of dissent in the Labour Party, as Butler had artfully used or cynically ignored his backwoodsmen so did the Respectable executive of the Labour Party - and

¹¹Addison(1985/95) p. 151

if those dissenting voices made their complaints privately rather than publicly, and if their complaints could be brushed aside with the machismo and the patrician condescension of Morrison's dismissal of Wilkinson, so much the better.

The disingenuous democratic voices of the Respectable Tendencies, of both the Right and Left, were designed to give the appearance of greater equality rather than actually to deliver it and ultimately to maintain the hierarchical class story of society. This gap between their rhetoric and what they did is perhaps best summed up by Oliver Van Oss, a housemaster at Eton: *'I think a shudder did run through and people would say, 'We can't see how anyone who believes in the public schools can support the Labour Party' etc., etc... It didn't worry me because I thought it was all my eye and I didn't think they would abolish the public schools because they were educationally so good.'*¹²

There was to be some tension in maintaining the superiority of the academic education in later years when it was perceived that the lack of scientists and a weakness in science teaching was having a detrimental effect on the economy. Though Britain, in the 40's and early 50's had not yet become quite as enthralled by science as it soon would, there were discernible stirrings of this particular concern: the connexion between education and the economy had long been part of the traditional discourse of education but as yet it had only been addressed through half-hearted and piece-meal initiatives. Butler's Act appeared to set out to correct this deficit once and for all. His industrial voice repeats the metaphors of waste and economic renewal yet, while he wills the end - an educational system which would aid the economic recovery of Britain - he fell far short of willing the means.

His voice was very much in accord with the times, and certainly the years following the 1945 Act saw substantial renewal of school buildings and facilities. These new schools were built but their educational character was largely unchanged. The new building programmes tended to focus on the Primary schools and the building of new secondary moderns - interestingly the grammar schools tended to prefer to inhabit their old buildings: redstone, no matter how eroded, was more symbolic of the old, traditional educational

¹²ibid., p.167

order maintaining, through a kind of architectural semiosis, their links with their past and echoing in their architecture something redolent of the spires and dreaming groves of Academe. For them their crumbling old buildings were more appropriate than the airy, bright modern glass and steel structures in their presentation of themselves as the apex of the established educational order. Neither the rhetoric nor the architecture of modernity did anything for them except to provide them with contrast, emphasising their symbolic identity. More importantly, their curriculum too remained largely unchanged, their pedagogies and academic aspirations unaltered.

The old elementary schools were revamped and renamed secondary moderns but, even though Butler might have had the best of intentions, these schools could not throw off their second-class status. Nor had Butler very clearly enunciated the aims of these schools. They were not to be academic, that was about all, in effect, the aim they had. It was more of a suggestion that they should aim at a more pragmatic, technical and scientific kind of education than a stated aim. The Education Minister, Ellen Wilkinson, published a pamphlet in 1947 on *'The New Secondary Education'*. She wrote: *'The schools must have freedom to experiment, room to grow, variety for the sake of freshness, for the fun of it even. Laughter in the classroom, self-confidence growing every day, eager interest instead of bored conformity, this is the way to produce from our fine stock the Britons who will have no need to fear the new scientific age, but will stride into it, heads high, determined to master science and serve mankind'* ¹³. Yet there was no sign of any curriculum development, no central view of what the processes of education should contain. Instead things were allowed to continue in much the same way as before. Addison ¹⁴ describes how some of the more innovative Secondary Modern schools began to tinker with the curriculum, devising thematic studies and relating their curriculum to the social environment and the practical needs of their children - studying local housing, looking at transport and such like and even going beyond that to have the child look at their citizenship in concrete terms. Addison, however, describes how this kind of curriculum innovation was short lived and how enthusiasm for such projects soon waned and manual and technical skills became the focus of the Secondary Modern curriculum.

¹³Quoted in H.C. Dent *Growth in English Education 1946-1952*, (London: Routledge, 1954) p. 89

¹⁴Addison (1985/95) p.161 and passim

The possibility of a technical school, Butler's model of industrial education, was subject to a curriculum squeeze. The carpet was pulled out from under this idea even further when some Secondary Moderns began to enter some pupils for public examinations: there was, in the end, little apparent justification for a yet another kind of school. In effect the industrial voice of the '44 Act was muted and all that happened was that the bi-partite school system which evolved only further emphasised the value and exclusivity of the grammar school, tightening the conceptual ring-fence that Butler had already thrown up around it. It is ironic that the rhetoric of One Nation, so strongly advocated by the Respectable Tendencies of both the Right and the Left should seek to maintain and to strengthen a two-tier state educational system and to exclude any meaningful discussion of the private sector from any state planning about education.

The unwillingness of Butler and his successors to contemplate curriculum change, which might perhaps have made his categorisation of children more educationally effective, sounded the death knell for their industrial education aspirations, and it was this unwillingness to consider the curriculum which also stifled his progressive voice. Wilkinson in *'The New Secondary Education'* stated that education should come *'out of the interests of the children'* and both Butler and Norwood were careful to state that their system was *'child-centred'*. However this kind of bald statement was about as far as they went. They excluded from their considerations any reference to progressive theory which typically argued that the school should be fitted to the needs of the child and not the child to the school.

According to Montessori, for example, children are the victims of adult suppression and they have been compelled to adopt defensive mechanisms alien to their real nature in the struggle to hold their own. The first move toward the reform of education in her view was to re-educate the educators: to enlighten them and to eliminate their perception of their own superiority - to make them more humble and passive in their attitudes toward the child. This kind of characterisation of children certainly did not accord with the received educational story of Butler's time: it was not that it was not known about, rather it was excluded from debate because it was not respectable. It did not just go against all common sense but by revolutionising the whole story of education it threatened the very fabric of their respectable society. In a sense

it was just not British so much did it conflict with the established perception of essential educational and social identities. The kind of revolutionary educational relations which it suggested were anathema, unthinkable to the public-school educated policy makers of the 1940's - policy makers, like Butler, whose own sense of purpose and duty was to protect and maintain the traditional educational story and so preserve the hegemony of the ideologies of the respectable social narratives which underpinned them.

Both the industrial and child centred voices of Butler in effect stifled the possibility of any radical revision of post-war education. Butler's Act is perhaps more interesting for what it does not say than for what it does. His discourse consistently and implicitly condoned elitism and the inadmissibility of progressive theories. The thorough democratisation of education was never on the menu, nor was the greater democratisation of society through education. Some stumbling steps were taken to broaden educational opportunity but the class base of society was too strong a story, too embedded in common-sense, to be respectably challenged. Butler exploited the vocabularies of other educational discourses to fix an ideological framework for thought so that it was impossible for the educationalist to think otherwise, or at least impossible to both think otherwise and to retain influence among policy makers or retain intellectual or political respectability. To be respectable, to be admitted into the discourses of power, required a pragmatic conformity with the 'real' world... the 'common-sense' narratives of a 'common culture'.

2: A Culture of Consent

'As on the one hand it should ever be remembered that we are boys, and boys at school, so on the other hand we must bear it in mind that we form a complete social body... a society, in which, by the nature of the case, we must not only learn, but act and live: and act and live not only as boys, but as boys who will become men.' ¹⁵

The recurrent natural imagery and the metaphysic of human nature and 'natural' social forms that this imagery concealed suggests that Butler's most passionate and most convincing voice is his liberal one. The key to liberal philosophy, John Gray ¹⁶ points out, is that the individual can only flourish within a culture of consent, a 'common' culture, where accepted and deeply embedded personal and social narratives provide clear moral and political authority for the shape and quality of the common life. The narratives show what kind of life and what quality of life may legitimately be expected or aspired to and of these narratives that of education is vitally important in both inducting the citizen into the culture and in conditioning and reconciling the citizen to his or her expectations.

The grand liberal narrative of High Culture, which Butler exploited though it will later be argued that he also weakened it as he did so, had its roots in the rationalism of the Enlightenment, but not the Enlightenment moral and political theories of Natural Rights which had thrown so many continental political and social discourses into crisis. The political home of this liberal narrative became the Tory Party which, at the time of revolution on the continent, originated to counter these revolutionary discourses through an essentially reactionary discourse which sought to maintain the hegemony of the privileged classes by containing the aspirations of the masses for constitutional and social change. The rhetoric of this counter discourse sought to preserve the cultural hegemony of these classes through the narrative of liberalism, presenting as common-sense a romantically idealised story of English culture in which to locate and justify their position of power. The rhetoric of common sense, the assertion of this one common cultural story as 'natural', observably and instinctively true and beyond need for any further

¹⁵ from Rugby Magazine: the frontispiece of Thomas Hughes (1857), Tom Brown's Schooldays (London: Puffin/Penguin, 1971)

¹⁶ John Gray, After Social Democracy (London: Demos, 1996) p. 16 and passim.

justification, masked the social, economic, and religious ideology of the narrative.

A strong 'common' culture in which to locate the primacy of individual freedom and choice is a necessary condition of the social discourses of the liberal narrative, where a clear and common-sense interpretation of the public good arbitrates between individual freedom and public responsibility. This 'common' culture should be shared by everyone, though in the discourses discussed, some people only may be spectators, knowing the rules and but not actually participating.

Consequently one of Butler's chief aims was to create a consensus around his Act in order to maintain the authority of the liberal narrative which underpinned it. He claimed that: *'...this Bill owes its welcome to an appreciation of the synthesis which it tries to create between order and liberty, between local initiative and national direction, between the voluntary agency and the State, between the private life of a school and the public life of its district, between manual and intellectual skill, and between those better and those less well endowed.'*¹⁷ This rhetorical dialectic charts the pretensions of the traditional liberal approach: a careful, winding middle way of compromise, avoiding the broader road of 'ideological' extremes, and by avoiding open conflict to better preserve and protect the existing, traditional cultural stories. Gray writes that even after the social democratic years of the sixties and seventies and the Thatcherite reformation of the eighties, liberal individualism is still deeply embedded into the political and social psyche; it is, he comments, *'an historical fate, which we can hope to temper, but not to overcome'*¹⁸. If it remains so deeply embedded now, it was even more so in Butler's time. What Butler sought was, through an educational policy, to reinforce the traditional moral and social order and to contain the impact of dissenting narratives, especially those narratives which threatened to reinterpret, widen or replace the cultural institutions and canons which the liberal narrative held sacred.

For example, the great hope of the socialist narrative was to compete effectively with, or possibly to supplant, the dominant liberal vocabulary. The liberal vocabulary, with its constituting metaphors, provided, however, a deep

¹⁷R. A. Butler to the House of Commons, January 19/20 1944 in TESS 6/5/94 op. cit. p.ix

¹⁸Gray (1996) p.56

cultural meaning: it reflected the patterns of domination of one particular way of life over others, excluding those who were not so inducted into the dominant vocabulary. The institutionalised elitism of public schools and the grammar schools could then be seen as primarily concerned with providing and maintaining this form of induction or initiation into the vocabularies of power. This is well illustrated in the metaphor of the glass ceiling for women attempting to break into social and economic institutions hitherto dominated by men. They may mimic the dominant vocabulary of men, the metaphors of war and battle for example, as a kind of protective coloration to disguise their differences and gain admission, but the essential differences in forms of life between men and women will in the end prevent complete synonymy and will ultimately exclude them. Only when women are wholly inducted into the form of life of men, not just attempt to mimic the surface meaning but to encompass the deep meaning which is the vocabulary that represents the whole of the culturally determined socialisation and maturation process of men, could they hope to succeed on those terms. This is not possible, consequently the only way for women to succeed is to change the vocabularies of power, change the underlying social narratives and forms of authority which maintain men in power.

The socialist narrative, of society and of education, centres round the central theme of the struggle for justice. Benn writes: '*Change takes place when the people have decided they will no longer tolerate injustice or unfairness.*'¹⁹ and he characterises the post-war victory as the rejection of the social conditions of the Thirties and the demand for a fairer society. It is the quest for a fair society which provides the focus imaginarius of the socialist narrative: it is struggle and the built-in perception of the inevitability of victory through the justness of its cause which gives it its dynamism - and the always present spectre of past betrayals which haunt any prevailing hope of progress which gives it its tension and pathos.

The optimism of politicians such as Benn that they might then be building the foundations of a New Jerusalem helped to create the intellectual and emotional backdrop for these post-war years. Benn, later on, called them in his Diaries '*The Years of Hope*', perhaps setting up the narrative tension for the inevitable betrayal to come. Benn may perhaps be accused of gilding the

¹⁹ Benn (Winstone ed.) p. xii

lily of hope, or at least of not clearly representing the complex social forces which created it, to give his story greater narrative impact. A simple theme makes for a better story. His account is of an unambiguously socialist victory on an unambiguously socialist programme of reform. While there is no reason to doubt the popular will for social reform, it is not at all clear that there was overwhelming popular support for socialism.

Yet, notwithstanding Benn's account, the late 1940's socialist narrative was a complex one: it prospered on the popular hope for change but at the same time many in the Labour Party - the Respectable Tendency - harboured a distrust of socialism becoming the all-embracing grand narrative of society. Consequently, this element of self-doubt present in the post-war narrative weakened it, the doubters perhaps having as their focus of unease the disastrous and inhumane effects of grand social narratives in Nazi Germany and in the USSR. It was, for example, the time when Orwell's *Animal Farm* was published with its warning about the corruptive seductiveness of Grand Narratives.

Animal Farm with its central, unromantic and deliberately unsophisticated metaphor of the farmyard, struck at the heart of the matter. It was more than a warning about the potentially corrupting effect of power; it was a warning not so much about the betrayal of politicians as about placing uncritical trust in the fictive attractiveness of the big story which does the thinking for you, and thereby being blind to the smaller, individual stories of ordinary people. It is not without its ironies that *Animal Farm* is a product of these years of hope: behind the pessimism and the warning lies a sub-text of hope in the common people which Orwell later echoed in *1984* when he wrote the anti-climatic and not entirely unironic message: that if there is any hope, it lies with the proles. That the Labour Party did not on gaining power enact a more egalitarian educational policy is perhaps explicable in that the Butler Act did speak with the echo of an egalitarian voice and also by the unease with which the grand narrative of socialism sat with 'respectable' Labour Party politicians who saw as their cultural tradition not Marx but the conservative, and respectable, religious non-conformism of their predecessors.

It is, incidentally, this theme of intellectual and emotional conflict and subsequent betrayal which so pervades the history of romantic and idealistic narratives of society, and which may rescue them from accusations of

simplicity or naiveté, that has perhaps so attracted Twentieth Century novelists and artists to humanism or democratic socialism away from the benign paternalism of the Victorian novelists. The theme has considerable fictive attractiveness which has proved irresistible in the discourses of many politicians, from Benn on the left and to Thatcher on the right. The theme of betrayal is perhaps the single theme which characterises the modern novel, for example. It is, as we shall see in later chapters of this exercise, an important theme in modern social and educational narratives bringing to an end the rhetorical persuasiveness of grand narratives of society.

The 1944 Act began this process of cultural disestablishment of not just the grand socialist Narrative, which will be dealt with later, but also, ironically, of the grand liberal narrative too. The liberal voice of Butler has echoes of the discourse of Matthew Arnold and anticipates some of the discourse of G.H. Bantock. Bantock and Arnold both contributed to the grand liberal narrative of education and culture, offering discourses of education legitimated by the authority of their interpretation of classical sense and sensibility, though their less charitable critics may consider an allusion to another Austen novel more appropriate. However the grand narratives to which Arnold and Bantock subscribed were very much weakened in and, en passant by, the discourse of Butler's Act.

The social context of Butler's Act was mirrored in the unrest of Arnold's time and for both of them education was a means of protecting the traditional values of the state from revolutionary change. Yet for Arnold, and arguably for Butler too, the expansion of education to the masses was not to better acquaint the masses with the riches of the culture, rather it was primarily a response to the threat of civil unrest, a preventative measure rather than a positive social policy. Arnold proposed: *'Education, in the common sense of the word, is required by a people before poverty has made havoc among them; at that critical moment when civilisation makes its first burst, and is accompanied by an immense commercial activity.'*²⁰ Arnold's concept of Education is proposed as a pragmatic response to growing unrest but, like in Butler's Act, there is no serious suggestion in his discourse that education should be in the interests of the economy or that education should attempt to create greater egalitarianism or that the needs of the child should be the

²⁰ Matthew Arnold, in a letter to the *Hertford Reformer*, cited in Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (Harmondsworth: Pelican/Penguin, 1958) p. 123.

fundamental priority. Arnold's vision of culture was a product of his distinctive middle class background, family and education and he never really seemed to envisage it being acquired by the 'lower' classes to any significant extent. Arnold's hope, and Butler's, lay not in the proles, the hope of the socialist, democratic narrative, but in the emergence of a cultural elite, educated to defend the sanctity of the canon and institutions of the liberal narrative and to continue to maintain its hegemony and exclusivity.

The history of all hitherto society is, for the liberal narrative, the history of the cultural struggle. In the construction of this elite, neither Bantock nor Arnold are narrowly class conscious and appear to share some of Butler's idea of meritocracy: however not Butler's crude - and to them vulgar - meritocracy of 'ability' but rather an aristocracy of 'sensibility'. In each class, they would argue, there are a few people - '*remnants*' as Arnold calls them in Culture and Anarchy²¹, survivors of the cultural wastelands of the classes - who are not led by their class interests but by '*a general humane spirit, by their love of human perfection*'. In an implicit analogy to the priesthood, the attainment of ones 'higher' nature is in principle open to members of all classes who have a 'calling' to spiritual devotion rather than the vulgarity of the worship of material goods. Both call for a kind of freemasonry of the cultured few, with highly selective and exclusive admission procedures, arduous initiation rites, ritualised reverence of cultural symbols and icons and all wrapped in the trappings of the English established church. Like the Freemasons they would justify their hegemony by something like Hogg's mythology of obligation and benign service to the excluded masses.

This metaphorical contrast between the mechanical and the organic is a characteristic of the liberal discourses. Arnold criticises as 'mechanical' the instrumental reasoning applied almost algorithmically to social institutions such as education. He employs his 'mechanical' metaphor to criticise the educational system: he describes an over reliance on 'mechanical processes' and too little emphasis on 'intelligence'. He describes the examination, created to allow for payment by result, a 'mechanical' examination which inevitably gives '*a mechanical turn to the school teaching, a mechanical turn to the inspection..*'²². As Butler also did, Arnold saw society in 'natural' organic

²¹in Matthew Arnold, Essays in Criticism (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1906)

²²Matthew Arnold (1867) Inspector's General Report to the Council in J. Stuart Maclure Educational Documents: England and Wales: 1816 to the present day, London: Methuen

terms, not reductively as the sum of its constituent parts but as a whole organism. His elite would not necessarily provide the 'mechanical' brain of the society, but would provide the moral and emotional centre: not the ego but the super-ego.

Bantock, too, despised the social 'mechanisms' of educational and social theorists. He is particularly brutally scathing of Mannheim and the idea of state planning. He is disturbed by Mannheim's metaphors: he quotes Mannheim: '*It (social planning) is not the treatment of symptoms but an attack on the strategic points, fully realising the truth*'²³. He criticises Mannheim's use of mechanistic and military metaphor with considerable effect and contemptuously dismisses Mannheim as a '*social mechanic*'. His description of Mannheim's educational 'plan' is both telling and incidentally amusing. He describes Mannheim's vision of society as '*a society of termites*' where education moulds the child into a mode of life that places value in the collective rather than the individual will. The core of his disagreement is that such metaphorical descriptions of society create a view that is too impersonal, too restrictive of the freedom of the individual: '*There must be system - but an organic not a mechanical one; there must even be tradition*'²⁴. The individual, stripped of their individual spiritual and cultural identity and aspirations, is submerged in the notion of community and becomes an anonymous cog in a state 'machine'.

These framing metaphors of health suggest that certain social forms or conditions can be diagnosed by someone suitably qualified as a particular problem which is inherently bad, and that it can be 'cured' by some remedy. Egalitarianism is a kind of infection that might spread if not treated, presumably, with large doses of Culture. The metaphor conceals the ideological process involved: who makes this interpretation and in whose interests? What this ideological process does is to problematise those social narratives which dissent from the 'established' authorised view. They are, however, not just problems but potentially dangerously debilitating if not 'treated'. The most sinister diseases might require the most radical surgery. Neither Arnold nor Bantock directly consider dissent. Bantock airily suggests

1965, 1973) p82/3

²³G.H. Bantock, *Freedom and Authority in Education* (London: Faber & Faber, 1952) p. 33 and passim

²⁴ibid., p. 181

that the notion of Culture is not a complete one, it is open to modifications. However, for Bantock the process of modification demands that the modifier be part of the cultural elite, there is no other access, and consequently there is no access to the core of the canon to any kind of radical dissent, nor will he allow alternative forms of culture any authority.

Although Bantock would assert that *'education should be primarily deterministic'*²⁵ this he would construe as a 'natural' determinism rather than a 'mechanical' one. The 'natural' sensibility or ability of the child as assessed by the teacher would determine the child's educational future, not some 'mechanical' state educational policy which aims to try to create some form of educational equality, for example: *'like Guild Socialism... which is a reduction to the lowest terms - nothing higher than which now is, only lower... It is necessary to get the germ of a new development towards the highest, not a reduction to the lowest'*.²⁶

Bantock discusses the 'natural', 'organic' philosophy of D.H. Lawrence in order to give weight to his attack on the 'mechanical' approach to educational and social policy, to rise above the philistinism of middle class morality, of petty organisational rules and regulations and get to the heart of the educational matter, personal freedom. This he defined as freedom from the tyrannies of 'mechanical' state planning and 'mechanical' pedagogies and 'mechanical' theories; and, on the positive side, the creation of educational conditions that give children freedom acquire the values and sensibilities of the cultured elite. Bantock reiterates Arnold's criticism of crude means and ends reasoning and, like Arnold, contrasts the 'mechanical' with the 'vital' and Lawrence's - and his - use of organic metaphors, of development and of the state, which Arnold idealised as: *'the organ of our collective best self, our national right reason'*. Bantock's critique of Mannheim is counterpointed by his own 'organic' metaphors of society and education: *'It is chiefly because the English body politic, partly no doubt due to its insularity, has succeeded in retaining a certain **organic** (as opposed to mechanical and imposed) quality of interrelated social obligations that planning is less popular here than elsewhere.'*²⁷

²⁵ibid., p. 59

²⁶ibid., p. 158 (Bantock's emphasis)

²⁷ibid., p. 34

There is more than a trace of cultural and national imperialism present in Bantock's narrative: he is implacably against the 'importation' of 'foreign' ideas and he on occasion does exhibit anti-Semitic tendencies. It is ironic, for example, that he dismisses Mannheim's ideas by equating them with the evils of Nazism when it was to eradicate the possibility of just that kind of evil recurring that Mannheim proposed his system of educational and curriculum planning. Bantock's organism, like Hogg's, is above all else an English organism. Bantock, for example, is scathing about what he sees as an attempt by Mannheim to dilute canonical English culture with foreign artefacts: he finds Mannheim's remarks on the cultural significance of jazz, for example, distasteful. He resents any popularisation or 'watering down' of the Culture. He speaks of the danger of the *'semi-literates'* and the popular *'quizzes and public forums'*. He fears education has *'gone down to meet the people'*.²⁸ His fondness for D.H. Lawrence is perhaps the fondness for a soul reclaimed from the pit of barbarism that is his, and Lawrence's, view of working class life, except when he indulges in some metaphysical whimsy about the dignity of work and working class *'intimate togetherness'*.

Bantock himself indulges in flamboyant metaphysical metaphor, creating the 'natural' division between *'higher'* and *'lower'* moral and aesthetic *'planes'* of distinction and of existence in order to maintain his exclusive, authorised canon. On a fundamental level what he finds so objectionable in Mannheim is his lack of metaphysics, his materialist inability to see what must remain sacred or profane. He accuses Mannheim of propagating a *'simplified social mythology'* which places political and cultural power in the hands of *'those not conspicuously capable of undertaking the responsibility'* - sharing Arnold's fear of the egalitarian story diluting 'real' culture, trivialising the sacred canons. The sense of an impending cultural Armageddon permeates the liberal discourses and gives them their vitality.

Bantock however is explicitly conscious of the metaphysical dimension of the metaphor and of the need to offer some kind of justification for them. His metaphors are used aggressively to attempt to counter the increasing persuasiveness of the emergent educational discourse of the egalitarians. He adopts a robust liberal discourse. Behind his, and indeed the relatively more conciliatory discourse of Butler, is the perception of 'lower' and 'higher'

²⁸ibid., p. 169

natures, perhaps redefinable in terms of 'natural' ability in Butler's Act, but essentially categories of sensibility. The metaphysical baggage of 'best' and 'worst' selves, 'higher' and 'lower' consciousness or 'planes' of perception, 'types' of mind or child, and 'natural' abilities categorise in order to justify the exclusion of certain items from a canon or certain children from access to certain kinds of education.

The 'natural' metaphor implies essential differences between people. It imposes a classification of natural kinds, as if these kinds and their essential differences were just the way the world is and in no way ideologically constructed, neutral categories like the classifications of botany or zoology. The metaphor implies that no factors other than unalterable biological or psychological or, more importantly, spiritual necessity limit educational progress - the metaphors suggest at different times different formulations of human nature. Both Bantock and Arnold ultimately appeal to the moral sense and sensibilities of their readers - as Butler does to his listeners - to justify their ideas. Indeed their vocabulary excludes those who do not share their 'common' sense of moral and cultural superiority.

What is, however, most important for the liberal discourses is that they counter effectively the egalitarian argument that social factors are the determining ones. The metaphor has at its ideological and metaphysical roots the fundamental premise that since people are essentially different then they are categorisable into different types, some more valued in these discourses than others and then characterised by different needs and desires, different beliefs, different habits and even different habitats. Butler favours three types of classification, both Arnold and Bantock, more exclusively still, favour two: a small elite corps of cultured people and the barbarian or philistine masses. The distinction is not presented, though, as simple 'common sense' assertion. It is justified through a quite complex conception of human 'nature'.

Through the process of attaining 'higher' culture, people may attain their true, 'higher' nature. The texts of Arnold and Bantock are testaments to their faith: they each use religious metaphor and each locates their respective elites in a missionary position within a hostile, barbarous society. Butler, too, uses religious imagery to describe his Act, the words '*devotion*' and '*zeal*' recur as he describes the qualities teachers must have and school inspectors are

reserved a special place in his litany of saints: '*... HMI Inspectors, themselves the special apostles of widening and humanising content.*'²⁹

Bantock also uses religious imagery - like Arnold, his 'nature' is essentially religious - to describe the necessary and essential process of what he would describe as real learning which may only occur with the acknowledgement of the authority of knowledge - that is the authority of traditional canonical forms of knowledge - and the learner's own sense of deficiency, '*of rightful submission*'³⁰ to that authority:

*'Learning always involves a determination to grasp after what is yet uncomprehended. It requires, on the part of the learner, a respect for the unknown, a reverence before the unattained; inevitably therefore, a transcendence of self. All learning presupposes an act of faith...'*³¹

Butler's Act, for example, does not address pedagogic issues or attempt to describe or circumscribe the role of the teacher. Indeed on teachers' professional status he remains silent. He seems content with the traditional Mr Kipps image of the teacher as a distant, vaguely benign, authority figure there simply and impersonally to transmit right reason and right feeling. Bantock's education, too, is a sober process. He constructs the identity of the teacher as a reserved, cold authority: a mentor who is concerned only with the inculcation of knowledge and sensibility as laid down in the sacred canons. Bantock objected to the 'fun and frivolity' which he narrowly saw as characteristic of progressive education. The teacher is not, he jeers, a '*Big Friend*': the teacher should determine what is taught and to whom it is taught, and should not pretend that learning is not hard work followed by more hard work.

Civilisation, for Bantock, is serious, not a subject for irony. It is made up of ritualised acts of submission to proper authority, and that authority in education is not the teacher but the canon, though a certain degree of authority, he acknowledges, inevitably is transferred to the teacher. Bantock is concerned about this sub-Freudian transference effect causing teachers to have a misplaced perception of their own importance. Consequently he

²⁹TESS 6/5/94 op. cit. p.vi.

³⁰Bantock (1952) p. 203

³¹ibid., p. 189

characterises a metaphysic of teaching, where the teacher impersonally - the pupil should have no other Gods before him - leads the pupil to interface, a metaphor Bantock would loathe, with the sacred canon. The real educational relationship is that interaction: on such '*holy ground*', 'real' learning '*transcends the individual and social life, and that, informing its true spirit and its true essence there is the ultimate apprehension of the divine in man*'.³² It is this humble deference to authority, to the sacredness of the knowledge of the canons, that marks the truly educated, the truly cultured, rather than the attainment of any kind or degree of knowledge.

A curriculum designed by Bantock or Arnold would not be in any clear sense a 'common' curriculum. Only a few of the children would have the necessary sensibility to be considered educated in Arnold's or Bantock's terms. Bantock is, for example, caustic about the possibility of a 'common curriculum'. Speaking of the more democratic intentions of the Harvard Report, he writes:

*'The writers tangle themselves up into the most delightful knots when the problem of what to give the less gifted arises - how to turn the weeds into rose bushes. The curriculum for these people must not be simply watered-down versions of more complex courses but authentic and fresh vehicles of the spheres of general education - the world, man's social life, the realm of the imagination, the ideal - designed to implant the power of thought and expression, the sense of relevance and value.'*³³

Bantock is clearly not above using the odd mechanical metaphor himself and perhaps it is not just the writers of the Harvard Report that tie themselves up in knots. There are, indeed, some knotty problems with the botanical metaphors he uses here: how can 'the power of thought' be 'implanted'? What is a 'sense' of relevance? He clearly finds quite worthless those 'weeds' who cannot assimilate his cultural elite even though he patronisingly grants dignity to '*human beings, when they are being themselves; so that the most commonplace actions and the drabest of people acquire an immense richness*'.³⁴

³²ibid., p. 203

³³ibid., p. 168

³⁴ibid., p. 155/6

Like T.S.Eliot he does not see the educational world populated by '*mute inglorious Miltons*' but by the few who may be educated to be the worthy bearers and transmitters of the Culture, and those who are the recipients of the crumbs that fall from the high tables of their wisdom. What is required is that the many less gifted children are educated to understand their limits and to acknowledge the wisdom of their betters. He abhorred what he called '*false democracy*', citing Lawrence, '*where every issue, even the highest is dragged down to the lowest...*'³⁵.

Bantock asserted that such educational inequalities were not only 'natural' but were also liberating. He cites Lawrence for support: '*When, therefore he suggests that the masses are incapable of mind-consciousness, he is concerned to free them, not to enslave them. They are 'To give active obedience to their leaders and to possess their own souls in natural pride'*'.³⁶ Bantock's laudable intention was to remove what he saw as educational tyranny, but he interpreted that as to avoid thwarting the '*true nature*' of the child. He recognised the subtleties of cruelty, the way social democratic theorists might deny the individuality of the child, subsuming the child's desires and aspirations to the needs of the whole; and he recognised the potential for cruelty in the way that progressive theorists tend to give too much reverence to the individual child to the exclusion of all else. He perhaps vaguely recognised the need, as Rorty does, for the necessary detachment of irony to question the values of educational narratives, though he uses derision rather than irony in his polemics. He does not, however, employ irony in his discussion of his own preferred narrative. He does not, for example, and nor does Butler, address the hegemonic dimension of their vocabularies, which they rather tend to pretend do not exist. Neither do they consider the way that their discourse grants a small number of people power and influence and denies those to the many.

The liberal discourse requires the essential indifference of all concerned in the educational process to everything but the Culture, defined with some circularity as being whatever 'cultured' people believe it is - unless Bantock's and Arnold's metaphysical view is taken that it is a kind of Platonic realm of eternal truths and even then it is only the initiated who can discern it and communicate these 'truths' to less gifted mortals. All educational relationships

³⁵ibid., p. 161

³⁶ibid., p. 177/8

and methods are valid only if they are in the interest of the greater good, indeed the ultimate good, of the maintenance of established authority, the revealed Truth. Where Butler differs is that he seeks to maintain a particular way of life, one oriented very largely on middle class values, which Bantock and the others might well consider rather narrow and vulgar. In Bantock's narrative, education is a spiritual activity, the search for perfection, a Grail Quest. The freemasonry of the elite requires the initiation of the child into what are almost chivalric virtues, purity of purpose, spirit and mind.

Though Butler's discourse masks its essential elitism, Bantock's narrative is apparently unconcerned about creating social division and the potential for harm that this might cause. His concern is to inculcate, in only those pupils he defines as capable of it, the capacity for independent thought inside the framework of the pervasive authority of the canon: to establish, maintain, transmit and internalise in the pupils a culture in which values have been fixed by the elite. He, as Butler did, could rely on the 'mechanism' of the hidden curriculum with its inevitable emphasis on differential treatment and selection, ranking processes and labelling of success and failure, to create the necessary conditions for consent: the recognition by all the pupils that differential reward for different levels of achievement is fair and just - and 'natural'. That this system might create other kinds of cruelty, he offers no comment.

What is clear is that both Bantock and Arnold differentiate people in terms of sensibility, 'ability' being a secondary factor. However Butler's discourse apparently differentiated people in terms of ability, but then Butler did not consider that everyone would have to submit to his testing regime anyway: who he excludes is as important as who he has designed his system for. The only publicly perceived form of worthwhile education that Butler offered, the grammar schools, was the Respectable Tendency's interpretation of something like Arnold's ideals, though in many respects a travesty of them. Where the real hope of Butler's discourse resided was in the public schools.

The public schools, excluded from Butler's regime, educated their children without recourse to selective testing; for them the class background of the children ensured that since they would probably be economically secure in later life. They could then concentrate on their primary aim, to induct the child into the sensibilities, mores and culture of the ruling elite. 'Higher'

natures were ever considered more a matter of breeding and heredity than of 'ability'. The only practical determination of 'higher' nature for those not of the advantaged classes, was to test 'ability' and for those who passed that test there was some limited opportunity to develop their 'higher' selves.

Social and educational advantage was a necessary, though not sufficient, condition of a 'higher' sensibility or 'higher' nature. What grammar schools had to offer was not just the pragmatic considerations of a better education and better life chances but also the faint hope of admittance into the 'higher' culture, where the real power was. However, the degree of educational and social leisure time - time not directly related to the struggle to pass public examinations, for example - required to develop 'higher' planes of being ensured that those who had to struggle to make their educational ends meet were, of necessity, excluded. Also, since such 'higher' natures themselves are defined as the 'natures', the interests and aspirations of the privileged class, in effect 'higher' natures could only really be achieved through social, and therefore educational, advantage. Built into this concept of nature is the justification for privileged classes to reproduce their advantage. As a metaphysic the 'natural' distinctions have their educational feet in clay, though very privileged clay.

Bantock's narrative is about the need for educational freedom from what he saw as enervating fashionable educational theories which were adopted by politicians for expediency and popularity, and for the re-establishment of traditional forms of discipline and authority. In his narrative there is no freedom without authority, without some framework that makes the idea of freedom mean something - the authority of the Culture. His discourse attempted to influence educators and policy makers through the view he polemicised and the derision he heaped on other narratives. The danger he saw was the threat of the 'dilution' of culture, as if it were some kind of chemical solution, securely locked away in a cabinet, that would grow weaker if too many people were invited to share in it or contribute to it.

Carlos Fuentes, writing about Mikhail Bakhtin remarks, '*ours is an age of competitive languages*'³⁷. Bakhtin theorised about the novel, asserting that fiction was born because in essential ways we do not understand each other

³⁷ As cited in Christopher Norris, *Spinoza & the Origins of Modern Critical Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991) pp. 256.

any longer - the different vocabularies of different life-worlds, to borrow a term from Habermas, are in competition, preventing synonymy. The vocabulary of Bantock is designed not to reduce but to increase and to sanction such competition and to sustain it through education. He is not concerned to try to create synonymy: meaning is only for the few. The rest, by virtue of their intellectual, moral or aesthetic inability, are cast into the outer darkness. He has no truck with Butler's, admittedly hesitant, assertion of 'parity of esteem'. For Bantock, *'A mass-culture will always be a substitute culture'*³⁸: to settle for less is apparently like buying cheap cola when the 'real thing' can be purchased, though at greater expense.

Bantock has neither respect nor time for other life worlds, no time for anything but his narrow English volume of hallowed texts. Other 'foreign' cultures have nothing to offer him: he is secure in his insular, intellectual imperialism. Bantock's curriculum would be a narrow thing indeed with only those subjects legitimised and granted authority by tradition - social studies thus became a *'bastard subject'* - and rigid subject barriers. The traditional subjects, he claims, demarcate fundamental, epistemological distinctions, each marking out some 'natural' area of knowledge, and each with its *'own rules of verification proper to their own field'*³⁹. This epistemology is not really developed by Bantock, indeed it would not be an easy argument to justify; rather it seems to be the case that his claim for the necessity of such rigid boundaries of different 'natural kinds' of knowledge, just as in his assertion of different 'natural kinds' of children, is required in his story to assert the common-sense authority of traditional educational curriculum content.

Bantock's discourse is a monological one: he has his list of sacred texts, and unitary meaning which is dogmatic and demands complete conformity. There is no discursive space allowed for ambiguity or a plurality of viewpoints or narratives. He would have little sympathy with this exercise, engaged as it is in the analysis of political and social narratives in terms of a competition between vocabularies for domination. Where there can only be one narrative then there are no narratives at all: where there can be only one vocabulary there can be no debate, no dissent and no possibility of irony. Bantock claimed to have found the Truth. He emerged triumphant through the

³⁸Bantock (1952): p. 47

³⁹ibid., p. 198

assertion of spiritual values which neither of his opponents, as he constructed them, can match. His sense of triumph was like the victory of the 19th Century missionaries over the pagans: his sense of mystical purpose and spiritual power overcomes and converts the heathen, but like the missionaries, his mysticism renders invisible the gunboats of the colonial power of the British Empire which politically, economically and culturally exploited the mission of the priests.

Education policies lead to systems and stories that have profound cultural and ethical effects and surely deserve research, informed comment and objective and reasoned argument and logic. Yet Butler had little beyond a professional politician's expediently narrow view of education and what Bantock has to offer, in the end, is only a spurious mysticism masquerading as philosophy and a series of dyspeptic polemics about intellectually respectable educational theories which he has caricatured to make appear ridiculous.

For Arnold the end of reason and philosophy was the systematic searching for certainties, where Truth always has a capital letter. Bantock, too, is possessed by this same search and what he and those of like mind found True provided him with his certainties. Yet the end of philosophy, of literary criticism and of educational theory is not to find truth: there are no certainties no matter what Arnold, Bantock or Butler might assert. Rather, perhaps, the end of philosophy might be better understood as the discovery of irony: to locate meaning and to attempt to generate some kind of synonymy between conflicting vocabularies.

It is for this reason these chapters set out deliberately to ironise the narratives they discuss. Rorty recognised the need for irony: without irony there is no passion, without passion there is no commitment, without a shared commitment - some sense of solidarity - there is no meaning, and without meaning there is nothing but, at worst, deliberate or inadvertent cruelty or, at best, Cartesian solipsistic isolation and the Humean nightmare of one undifferentiated thing after another without shape, form or value. Greater understanding might reconcile competing stories and competing forms of life.

The imperialism and exclusivity of the liberal narrative of education, and the value it places on one form of life, one type of mind, one vocabulary above another, inevitably produces conflict unless it is maintained by some form of

social control. Hogg's myth, Bantock's authoritative canon, Arnold's sensibility and Butler's Act are all forms of control. Butler both saw, perhaps more pragmatically than Bantock, that the preservation of this privileged form of life - and the narrative that sustained it - required something more than rhetoric. He, with reluctance, saw the only recourse was to the state. Arnold's enlightened state was an idealised and impossible fiction so Butler made the best of what was available. But this state control could not be overt or repressive: a Gestapo would not only be offensive to Butler, Bantock and Arnold, but also ultimately self-defeating if the end is to maintain some kind of libertarian liberalism as they each did. What was needed was a more subtle means of control, over the discourse of education without infringing too much on personal liberties. This was Butler's challenge and to an extent he succeeded, at least in the short term, to manufacture educational consent, to borrow a phrase from Chomsky. Bantock's book is witness, however, to the crisis which soon was to develop.

Postscript

At the time of writing this study, we seem to be experiencing a paradigm change from 'commitment' politics back to some kind of 'consensus' model. The 1944 Act seems to have become reinvented as an icon of consensus politics, perhaps not so much the content of the Act though much of what Butler had to say appears to be in the process of being re-interpreted in more fashionable language, with more fashionable metaphor, but the method by which he gained consent and managed dissent

Even now, more than fifty years since Butler's Act, Butler is fairly consistently characterised in the present day educational discourses as a popular hero, a man of deep and humane principle who had outfaced Churchill's rage when he disobeyed Churchill's demand, when he was appointed President of the Board of Education, not to introduce any educational legislation. It was he who had driven through his Act despite the resistance of the Churches and many of the other members of the House and of the Cabinet; he who had worked assiduously, with humility and humanity, to gain the consent of educationalists and educational administrators; and he who had finally, with magnanimity and modesty, accepted his success.

As political skill has become in recent years much more professional he has become a kind of paradigm. His '*lack of obsessive insistence*', states Michael Barber⁴⁰, was his chief virtue: his political realism and his consensual approach, his art of compromise and his powers of persuasion through which he could turn potentially contentious ideas into a political reality with widespread support. This verdict on Butler and his Act was shared even by the educational press: '*...a masterly piece of work combining far-seeing statesmanship with acute political realism*'⁴¹

A. H. Halsey, in his doctoral thesis, too was filled with admiration for the Act: '*It was a marvellous step forward because it expressed a wonderful national unity, an emphasis on educational progress, an impulse that was sweeping through the nation which was very, very good.*'⁴² This, perhaps more than anything else, establishes the potency of Butler's voices or perhaps it is a reflection of the wishful thinking of the egalitarians that Butler spoke with something like their voice. It was Butler's skill in creating consensus which has so attracted writers like Barber and Addison. Butler titled his autobiography, *The Art of the Possible*. It is his pragmatism and skill in avoiding outright confrontation - at least confrontation that he could not exploit - that they find so attractive and which forms a central theme of their narratives.

For example, both make much of how Butler managed the thorny problem of Church control. In this part of his Act, Butler explicitly makes the acknowledgement that in considering the problem of the central control and funding of the educational expansion he envisaged and the unaccountability of church controlled schools he was '*fortified by the fact that we were a National Government and have made an all-party approach.*'. He outlined the problem of funding and management which had beset Church schools since the turn of the century and proposes a 'partnership' with them though he insists that increased state aid must entail increased state control. He gives the Church a stark choice. Their refusal to allow greater state control '*would...*

⁴⁰ Michael Barber, "Broadside from a backwater," *TESS* 6/5/94, sec. The 1944 Act: 50th Anniversary: p.iv.

⁴¹ Harold Dent, Dec 18th, 1943: in Patricia Rowan "Journalist with a hand in history," *TESS* 9/5/94, extracts from the Times Educational Supplement leaders of former editor, Harold Dent: p.xi.

⁴² A.H. Halsey as cited by Peter Kingston, "1944 and all that," *The Guardian* 18/1/94, sec. Education Guardian: p.3.

imperial its general acceptance and might bring about a reaction as detrimental to the Churches as to the cause of education itself.' ⁴³ As with industry, Butler uses the rhetoric of partnership rather than coercion though in doing so, given the prevailing climate, there was little chance that either the church or industry would make any serious or public objection. '*...education should be regarded as the ally and not the dreaded competitor of employment'* ⁴⁴.

Addison's interpretation places Butler as one of several main protagonists of the action. However, his admiration for Butler is tempered by an analysis of the history of the time in which he describes how a happy coincidence of events were also necessary conditions for Butler to succeed. He does praise Butler's political skills - '*a young Conservative politician of great subtlety and perseverance*' - but these skills were not sufficient on their own for him to succeed. It is, however, clear that Butler did, with great skill and diplomacy, steer the Bill through to completion, exploiting a fear here and a sense of justice there, obtaining at the end a remarkable consensus. Even the communist leader of the National Union of Teachers, C.G.T. Giles, the author of *The New School Tie*, and certainly no friend of the establishment, greeted the Act as a great step forward for democratic education which would achieve for children, '*a happier childhood and a better start in life*' ⁴⁵

Yet Butler's discourse obscured real educational inequalities and continued to reproduce inequalities. Butler, for a time, succeeded in preserving the old traditional loyalties of class and country, and the authority of the educational elite. Butler's rhetoric of equality was not a call for greater justice but was, in the end, a mechanism to justify the exclusion of the many ultimately from the social and economic goods the society had to offer. The ideological function of his and Arnold's and Bantock's, 'natural' metaphors is to attempt to remove educational methods and policy from the material concerns of political debate: the apparent ideological innocence of the metaphor removing education from the ideologies of power, class and the distribution of wealth and substituting 'natural' phenomena as excusing conditions for lack of complete educational success, just as the vagaries of the weather removes responsibility from the gardener or the owner of the garden for plants that fail

⁴³ TESS 6/5/94 op. cit. p.ix.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p.vii

⁴⁵ as cited by Michael Barber in, "The prime of R A Butler," *TESS* 14/1/94, sec. Review: p.2.

to flourish. It allows decisions about children's futures to appear to be objective, not a question of opinion but of fact. The 'common-sense' of their dismissal of proposals like Mannheim's state planning and social mechanisms as unnecessary interference with the freedom of the individual conceals their own fiction of natural selection: a mean doctrine of natural kinds of children, subsequent complex testing and labelling procedures and the organisation (though apparently not the 'planning', since 'planning' would suggest expert advice and theoretical justification) of the necessary regimes of schooling.

Butler's Act traded heavily on the social capital different forms of education would bring. The Act, whatever its stated intentions were, firmly embedded in the public perception that a grammar school education was best, unless, of course, a private school was affordable. Yet the Act, as we shall see, also contained the seeds of its own demise. The Act so raised educational expectations that when these expectations could not be met, when demand outran supply, the perception of the injustice of the relative denial of access or opportunity to a 'proper' education, ironically, brought Butler's liberal narrative to crisis.

By implying the cultural superiority of certain types of education, the notion of 'parity of esteem' never found much public acceptance, Butler's discourse inevitably implied cultural inadequacy, and obliquely legitimised privilege. Bourdieu⁴⁶ describes success in this kind of educational system as being dictated by the degree and extent to which the pupil or student has absorbed this dominant culture, in his terms, how much cultural capital they have acquired. Since those in power control the form the culture takes, they are then able to limit who may acquire it and so sustain their dominant position. It was, for example, from the distorted sense of reality created by such cultural hegemony that the concept of 'cultural deprivation' had acquired meaning and currency in the discourses of the egalitarians. This term has been, and sometimes still is, employed to offer an explanation as to why some children, from the working class, because they are female, or because they come from an ethnic minority, fail to achieve educationally as much as middle class or upper class children, in particular those children educated privately.

⁴⁶Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture, (London: Sage, 1977) Chapter 5 and passim.

It is a symptom of how deeply embedded Butler's liberal vocabulary was to become in educational discourses that this notion did gain such currency. Cultural inadequacy - a relative failure to acquire the sensibilities of the dominant cultural narratives - was discursively conflated with cultural difference, living a different story with different beliefs and different values: a distinction especially relevant to systems such as Butler's where schools were, by definition directed to, or allowed to, stress certain cultural values which were different from those of significant sections of the population.

The liberal discourses discussed in this chapter sought to banish other narratives, other cultural values: like Henry IV to *'Banish plump Jack and banish all the world'*. There was no space in Butler's discourse for Falstaffian extremes or even differences. Treading their mean Aristotelian middle path, their morality propped up by occasional self-indulgent stage-managed shows of moral indignation, they forged a fiction of education and society. Yet there was nothing woolly-headed about Butler's voice. It was clear, certain and authoritative. His narrative held out, somewhere in the myth of an increasingly meritocratic future, the promise of a final resolution. His Act made no explicit attempt to counter or deny any other discourse, on alternatives he maintained silence. It was presented as only a practical solution to practical problems. It adopted no explicit theory and had no philosophy except that masked ideology implied by the metaphors it employed.

Butler attempted to de-politicise educational debate and obtain consensus for his position by appealing to 'common-sense'. He disguised the fact that educational policies are moral acts which have significant consequences for the individual and for society by pretending that he was not really making moral or political choices at all, that he was just reflecting the way that the world was. The element of incompleteness in Butler's narrative, though it was fugitive, was to provide only the appearance of dynamic tension; rather it would be used to control the direction of future debate. It became the agenda on which future change would be built, at least for the next twenty years or so. Its vocabulary was the one which was preferred, its metaphors literalised as 'common-sense'.

Butler had created in his Act the terrain of educational debate and by so circumscribing the discursive arena he in effect maintained for his narrative a

considerable ideological degree of control over what direction educational debate could take. In particular, he had managed to attain and fortify the high ground in the immanent battle between those like himself and the egalitarians.

Chapter 4

The Iconography of the Grammar School and the Politics of Desire

'The element of envy, conscious or repressed, can for the most part be ignored. It is the reformers who cherish the highest ideals, who are emotionally committed to the concept of equality, that are the most dangerous. In the name of 'fairness' and 'social justice', sentimentality has gone far to weaken the essential toughness on which quality depends' ¹

It was the traditional intolerance of political discourses with radical disagreement that made the educational consensus of the post war years politically so apparently remarkable and which perhaps has made the objective of achieving consensus in present day educational narratives so apparently desirable to certain politicians. Interpreted with generosity, the post-war consensus could be seen as an attempt to pull the educational story out of the destructive ideological conflict of competing narratives, to make it somehow above and beyond the desires of power, or at least to appear to be so. Less generously it could be interpreted as an abdication of power by the respectable politicians of both wings who broadly agreed that the Butler narrative, particularly in its expansion of grammar school education, was probably the best of all possible educational worlds. However, rhetorically there were problems for both wings in being explicit in their desire for something like an evolved Butler narrative.

Even the educational consensus of the post war years had been riven by discursive conflict. A kind of consensus had been uneasily maintained by the 'Respectable' tendencies of both political parties, but more and more it seemed to have become perceived as only producing a directionless, static

¹ Angus Maude *The Egalitarian Threat* in (eds) C.B. Cox and A.E. Dyson Black Paper 1 (London: Critical Quarterly, 1968): p.7

narrative unable to offer the kind of educational expectations that were becoming seen to be necessary to Britain's cultural and economic future. The hard egalitarian narrative of the Labour Party demanded greater equality than the increased opportunity of the Butler narrative could provide and on the right, the Butler narrative was perceived to have conceded too much to the egalitarians. A quiet 'hands off' consensus, with no strident advocacy of alternative narratives, leaving the development of education and schooling in the hands of local authorities and the educational professionals was politically the course of least resistance. Comprehensive education, counterpointed by the vocabulary of disadvantage, became the dominant narrative, for a while at least, almost by default.

1. Managing Expectations

'A grammar school education for all'

Labour Party Manifesto, 1964

What Butler maintained was a narrative containing two discrete educational stories, one for the elite and one for the rest, maintained by the fiction of *'the mystique of a traditional authority'* for the elite and *'equality of opportunity'* for the aspiring classes; the tension of the possibility of class advancement for the *'most able'* keeping the social system in uneasy equilibrium.

These two educational nations are described clearly by Nigel Wright:

*'Britain has never attempted to offer one type of education to all children. In the nineteenth century the powers-that-be did not feel that the lower classes needed, or deserved, or could benefit from, the kind of education given to the privileged few. In the 1920s psychological theories of innate intelligence did open the way for the extraction of 'clever' children from the working classes on the basis that there was (some) 'gold in them thar hills'. This was institutionalised by the 1944 Education Act which proposed to offer a grammar school education to anyone whose 'innate intelligence' made them likely to profit from it. The rest of the population were to receive an 'equal but different' schooling.'*²

² Nigel Wright, Progress in Education: A Review of Schooling in England and Wales (London: Croom Helm, 1977) p.162.

However, on a more political level, the identification of the 'real nature' of the child became the problematic of even Butler's limited revision of the educational discourse: that some children had been excluded from opportunity in education for economic reasons was a feature of the pre-war hierarchical social order, and if that social order was 'natural' then the exclusion was also 'natural'. What Butler did, even if inadvertently, was to discursively weaken the 'naturalness' of that social order in his Act, in effect to further weaken the traditional, 'Respectable' Conservative's view of the 'real' world. Instead of the philanthropy of the rich allowing a few children of the lower order educational opportunity as an act of charity, Butler's Act granted them such opportunity, almost as a right - though, ironically, more a 'natural' right than a legal one - if they could meet the criteria of the selection process. The odds against success, however, still remained stacked against them. The 'nature' of the child, however, had shifted a little in Butler's pseudo-meritocratic discourse to become more a matter of the child's putative 'ability' than the child's social class.

It had soon become a material question as to how significantly Butler had widened the opportunities of children to the 'best' education possible: in his system the grammar school offered the most desired education but selection to it was clearly biased in favour of the middle classes. It was not just that by reason of their social background that children of the middle classes were advantaged in the selection process, but the traditional grammar schools, those most desired, were already geographically situated in middle class areas and further, educational expansion as envisaged by the Butler consensus was economically constrained and consequently the numbers of children who could be admitted to grammar schools was limited. The alternative technical schools, which were designed in concept to provide a different route of educational opportunity, were a victim of financial constraints. They never really featured on the educational landscape and the last of the few created closed in 1955.

Will Hutton, the economist and journalist, was educated in the nineteen sixties at Chislehurst and Sidcup Grammar school. His education perhaps exemplifies the discourses of desire of the Butler Act. He came from an enterprising middle class background and his parents were ambitious and wealthy enough that if the local grammar school had not been considered

acceptable, he would have been educated privately. In this he was not really the characteristic child of the Butler narrative who would typically and condescendingly be more accurately described as one of the deserving poor - yet, ironically, in many ways he was the typical child of the Act. The ethos of his school was egalitarian, but in a way that only a privileged educational establishment seemed to be able to understand the concept. He writes that:

*'...the Head's ambition for the school was to break the British class system and he was determined that his boys should be as clever, should get to Oxford or Cambridge in equal numbers, should be as well read and as soundly confident as public schoolboys... It was a very meritocratic environment. We were made to feel that there was nowhere that we shouldn't go, nothing that we shouldn't attempt and that what mattered was our brains and our articulacy...'*³

This is what seemed to have become of the egalitarianism of Butler's Act; it became narrowed to become simply an instrument with which to widen middle class expectations and opportunities and to break down, in some degree, the elitism of the English educational system. How successful this attempt was is perhaps exemplified by Hutton who was interviewed but not accepted for Cambridge and instead went to Bristol University.

Hutton's failure to enter into the privileged educational world of Cambridge is perhaps brought into ironic perspective by the experience of Julian Critchley, the present Conservative MP for Aldershot, in getting into Oxford some years earlier. Critchley, offering advice to his grandchild who, as a result of three 'A' Levels and a successful interview, had been accepted by Magdalen, writes:

*'In 1951, Pembroke was the only college not to require an examination; it was enough that I had been at Shrewsbury and had got my Higher School certificate. Michael Heseltine and I were briefly interviewed by some dull dons, and, as a result, we 'talked' our way into Oxford. You are to be congratulated on having done it the hard way.'*⁴

³Will Hutton, writing in TES(S) 12/7/96: *My Best Teacher...*

⁴Julian Critchley in a letter to his grandson, published in *The Guardian* 1/10/96

Critchley's wistful remarks include some advice about restaurants, girls, being nice to the dons, and avoiding spending too much, though he admits he was lucky in that his father gave him £400 a year, the average industrial wage at the time. He does, however, go on to offer a - possibly caricatured - picture of life at Oxford in the 1950's, a social world from which Hutton, in a further irony, would have been relieved to have been excluded:

*'In my day Magdalen,... seemed full of toffs, lanky young men in brown twill trousers and floppy fair hair. They spent their time beagling and bugging. I expect all that has changed, for public schoolboys are now a small minority among undergraduates.'*⁵

Critchley's nostalgia downplays the inequalities of educational provision and opportunity by his deliberately ingenuous description of the cultural and social value of his education. That entry to such universities is now somewhat more meritocratic is mentioned only as a slightly regretful afterthought. Hutton's headmaster's Butlerian meritocratic vision, *'that what mattered was our brains and our articulacy'*, was unquestionably naive.

Hutton's experience typifies the dogged resistance of the story of English education to interrogation or re-interpretation. Bantock, as discussed in the last chapter, exemplifies this resistance of the narrative to being interrogated. He gives the impression that the world, the cultured world or the truth of the world, is being spoken through him, by his voice, by his *desire*. He obstructed interrogation by using derision to undercut critical analysis and to threaten the analyst. His discourse was grounded in fear of the loss of control of the narrative.

Bantock's was a desire for mastery of signification - of meaning - that was the root of his 'authority'. He sought to control who can speak and what they might say. He seemed to see relationships - social as well as intellectual - in terms of power, with the relationships of participants inevitably characterised as master and slave, dominant and subservient - always in hierarchical terms. Bantock was not however naive, he saw that this hierarchy was inevitably a source of conflict: it contained the threat that it might become subverted or inverted so that the slave can come to dominate the master - a betrayal which

⁵Ibid.

was just what Bantock feared was coming in the educational narrative; that instead of the masses being led by the cultural elite, rather he foresaw the values of the cultural elite being subverted by those who should be doing the leading: the popularisation of culture, the watering down of traditional values and verities, the betrayal in which everything that has cultural 'meaning' was being challenged. It is this recurrent narrative motif of betrayal which sustained the rhetoric of the Conservative Party in their struggle against the egalitarian counter-narrative of the comprehensive movement.

Butler had re-established the clear symbolic order of education. His system of classification, categorisation and selection was unambiguously hierarchical: there was a place for everyone and everyone knew their place. It established a necessary fiction, the class educational story though within the relatively more mobile class system of the times it allowed for a certain degree of social and educational mobility. In this caste system, the grammar school - the public school reinvented for the lower middle classes - became the centre and the object of desire.

Though discursively the Butler Act appeared to assert the ideology of the post-war 'common people', in effect what it did was to maintain and even, perhaps, to harden social class differentials. Snobbishness and privilege were still prominent features of the educational landscape. Angus Maude, for example, complained that abolishing the grammar school as a means to attempting to create greater equality in education was: *'To try forcibly to prevent the emergence of an elite.'*⁶ The grammar school had become the middle class's route to economic and cultural power and it was in defence of this privilege that their power was exerted - as witnessed by the Black Papers which were militantly middle class - to combat what they saw as the threat of the comprehensive movement.

The grammar school symbolised history and tradition, assimilating post-war anxieties about the loss of social and cultural values and the certainties of the past, and granting in turn status and prestige. It preserved the *'mystique of traditional authority'* and, perhaps most importantly, it provided the middle classes with social power within a coherent symbolic order. It was sustained by the vocabulary of essential difference, establishing clear boundaries

⁶Angus Maude *The Egalitarian Threat* in Black Paper 1 : p.8

separating and making distinct the classes and their cultures and values. By so setting in concrete the essential 'natural' differences between children, Butler's Act attempted to free the educational system from any obligation to seek to become any more egalitarian. It was only when it was confronted by the aspirations to educational equality of the comprehensive movement that the grammar school was clearly revealed as the powerful icon of culture that it had become, the representation of the 'real' which granted signification and meaning to the educational story. Indeed the 1964 Labour Manifesto used the slogan '*a grammar school education for all*' to seek a popular mandate for the comprehensive school system.

For Bantock, the burgeoning comprehensive movement was essentially an act of blasphemy. Bantock's discourse was an attempt to hold back the post-war tides of egalitarian change and to attempt to reinstate the 'proper' educational order and protect it from the threat of this kind of hegemonic inversion. This emphasis on betrayal was to lead in lesser writers, as shall be seen in the Black Papers, to a much more crude rhetoric in which their totemic vocabularies of 'ability' and 'nature' and 'class' were to use the ideal of the grammar school as the central arena of their ideological struggle, in their discourses of privilege, envy and desire.

The ideology of selection and ability, though, had come under threat. The validity and reliability of the 11-Plus, the social cost of a divisive educational system and the perceived inegalitarian ethos of education and schooling had all undermined the simplistic 'common-sense' plot of Butler's Act. The egalitarians also exploited the class tensions which remained the foundation of Butler's narrative. With the Newsom Report as added justification - it found that only 21% of secondary modern schools were up to standard and 41% of schools '*seriously deficient in many respects*'⁷ - the egalitarian counter narrative had gained substantial cultural momentum.

Newsom's rhetoric, like Butler's, was of waste: '*the potential of these children (of average or less than average ability) is very much greater than is generally assumed and that the standards they could achieve could surprise us all*'⁸ but the rhetoric went beyond crude economics, it also

⁷ Chairman, John Newsom, Half our Future: A Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England) (London: HMSO, 1963) p.258, Table 28.

⁸ibid: p. xiv

invited cultural change. On social, moral and economic grounds, the report recommended: *'a change of thinking and even more a change of heart'* ⁹. Though couched in rather bland bureaucratic prose, the liberal demand of respect for persons is at the foundation of Newsom's revised story. It is a plea for a change in perception, to value those who it appears to him have been short-changed in their educational lives.

Newsom also challenged the construct of 'ability', the 'common-sense' of the current educational system: *'...we deduce that it is not possible to generalise about the capacity of the average and below average (pupil) until we have had the opportunity of keeping them at school for a longer period and in smaller classes.'* ¹⁰ Though Newsom did not speculate on any form of school re-organisation, he did distrust what he saw as premature judgements of 'capacity' in the current system. He makes a tentative attempt to shift the educational discourse from the concept of ability as a limited, inborn, 'natural' quality of the child, to the somewhat more rhetorically neutral ideas of 'capacity' and 'potential' which place more attention on the responsibility of educators and politicians to devise a form of schooling which might extract from children all that they may be capable of.

'Capacity' is, at least, a more optimistic metaphor, predicated on what any child might achieve given the opportunity, whereas 'ability' is in the discourse always a discriminatory criterion, a selective and limiting representation. Newsom's distinction however, does not seriously counter the ideology of 'natural ability', it does not address the metaphorical foundations of the narrative; rather the distinction pleads for a change in emphasis, between seeing the child as a 'half full' bottle rather than a 'half empty' one.

Newsom's report offered a platform for those seeking a new educational consensus. By 1964 the then Labour Government had become more sensitised to educational inequality. Inequality - in education, housing, health and social security - had been the central plank of their manifesto and comprehensive reorganisation had been their policy since the early 1950's.

⁹ibid. p. xiii

¹⁰ibid. p. xiv

In seeking to explain what he saw as the inept and politically disastrous introduction of comprehensive schooling, Dennis Marsden¹¹ comments that there was little public will at the time for comprehensive reorganisation and that claims for a popular mandate were '*eyewash*'. He accuses the Labour Party of failing to address the perceptions, the desires and the anxieties of those involved in the educational world, both parents and teachers, of failing to recognise the lack of public support, and of a failure of commitment to reducing structural and institutional inequality in England. He describes how the Labour leaders had: '*developed an overpowering coyness about taking any action which would curb or interfere with the existing maldistribution of power or resources.*'¹²

Yet in an alternative interpretation of events offered by George Walden¹³, he describes what he calls 'The Comprehensive Folly' and claims to show that the passion of the Black Paper writers had its match in the enthusiastic egalitarians of the comprehensive movement, especially in the Labour Party. He cites a choleric Anthony Crosland insisting: '*If it's the last thing I do, I am going to destroy every fucking grammar school in England and Wales. And Northern Ireland.*'¹⁴ It was the perception - or, perhaps, the construction - of the zeal of such egalitarians which provided the Black Paper writers with their enemy. While Walden complains about the crudity here, it is not that of Crosland's language, but of what he calls the '*congealed vocabularies*'¹⁵ of not just the egalitarian narrative but also of the traditional 'Respectable Conservative' narrative of the Black Papers.

What Marsden describes, however, is far from this kind of passionate intensity: he describes a policy vacuum and unconvincing rhetoric giving rise not to Walden's terrible beauty of egalitarianism but rather to a catalogue of indecision and deferral, leading eventually to a series of ineffectual initiatives. Certainly, the Labour Party, in office, displayed a reluctance to exert its control over the reorganisation: by issuing Circular 10/65, requesting authorities to prepare for secondary reorganisation rather than requiring it as

¹¹ Dennis Marsden, *Politicians, equality and comprehensives* (Fabian Tract 411, 1971); re-printed in (eds): Robert Bell, Gerald Fowler and Ken Little, *Education in Great Britain and Ireland* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973) pp. 123-128.

¹² *ibid.* p. 125

¹³ George Walden, *We Should Know Better: Solving the Education Crisis* (London: Fourth Estate, 1996) Chapter 8. p.145.

¹⁴ *ibid.* p. 145

¹⁵ *ibid.* p. 163

part of a new education Act; by refusing to instruct the Department of Education to enforce and supervise comprehensivisation, but instead to rely on grass root support - sympathetic local authorities - to see it implemented; by explaining in Circular 10/66 that the government could not afford to offer new funding to implement change and at the same time increasing the educational temperature by denying funding to proposals for any more bipartite schools; by postponing, in January 1968 the raising of the school leaving age legislation, a central recommendation of Newsom; and, in 1970, failing to ensure that the bill to proscribe the Eleven Plus was passed in the House. By 1970 the Labour Party had lost the election and further opportunity to enact legislation requiring comprehensive schooling had effectively been lost.

Benn and Chitty point out Labour's historical reluctance to reorganise education: *'In all its years of government, from 1924 to 1979 Labour has never implemented a major education act - nor introduced any major new academic qualifications. All such changes have been implemented under coalition or Conservative governments.'*¹⁶ However, they do not really attempt to explain this reluctance. It is clear that education is an important part of a socialist narrative of society but it clearly did not have the same significance in the thinking of the Labour Party. Education has long been recognised as means by which the society, its forms of social and economic relations, its culture and its institutions are reproduced from generation to generation. However, it does appear that the Labour Party never really has had a clear educational story to tell.

Historically, radical polemics such as Tawney's Equality¹⁷ were rhetorically important to the Labour narrative, but these were, however, limited in scope: they were mainly concerned with access to education and with protecting gains already made. Tawney's had been a significant text of the 1920's and 30's, in that 'equality' had by then become an established, central and unassailable tenet of the Labour story of society. However, this became translated in the educational story of the Labour Party policy as a struggle for wider access to education and schooling. In *Idealistic but not Visionary*¹⁸,

¹⁶Caroline Benn and Clyde Chitty, Thirty Years On: Is Comprehensive Education Alive and Well or Struggling to Survive? (London: David Fulton, 1996) p. 9

¹⁷R.H. Tawney, Equality (London: Allen and Unwin, 1931 revised 1964) .

¹⁸ cited in Education Group: Centre for Contemporary Studies, University of Birmingham, Unpopular Education: Schooling and Democracy in England since 1944 (London: Hutchison,

for example, Tawney uses metaphors of *'landings and staircases'*, *'cul de sacs'*, *'bridges'*, *'greasy poles'* and *'handrails'* to depict the struggle for access to the first division of the educational world - the grammar school - rather than the reorganisation of schooling on egalitarian lines, creating one educational story for everyone. Though Tawney attacked the May Committee (1931) cuts in education expenditure as a *'declaration of class war'* ¹⁹ the socialist rhetoric disguised the essential conservatism of the Respectable Labour story. The Labour Party in office was much more conservative and made little attempt to counter the established dualist educational narrative with any radical educational reorganisation.

Butler had, anyway, rather cut the feet from Labour's narrowed interpretation of equality: access to schooling was no longer a problem as such. Rather the problem became reinvented as access to the grammar school when the defence of the fiction of parity of esteem had become untenable. For the Left as much as the Right, the selective grammar school was the only real educational option. Benn and Chitty describe how the Fabian Society were inclined generally to take an elitist view of education and that Sidney Webb had, for example, backed the 1902 provision of free places in public schools. Even Tawney had acknowledged the need for different schools and types of schooling for different children.

The child's 'nature' and 'natural ability' had become the 'common-sense' of the educational narratives of both the Respectable Left and Right - the two stories of education for the two 'natural' kinds of children.. It is not, however, clear exactly what qualities of the child the metaphor 'ability' represents. 'Ability' was the product of a curriculum and an assessment regime which was designed to produce a spread of achievement. The validity of the testing was a question of whether or not the test results statistically reproduced the Bell Curve, a psychometric representation of the 'natural' distribution of human attributes, such as height, weight and, more importantly, intelligence. This Bell Curve would grant hard empirical justification to educational selection procedures of the Butler Act. By representing 'ability' as a 'natural' attribute of children, it required the interpretation of educational problems as the consequence of the individual child's nature. The pleasing symmetry of the curve reinforced the hierarchical, pyramidal world picture of the

1981) p. 29

¹⁹ *ibid* p. 12

Conservative Party. That 'ability' is not 'naturally' equally distributed, like height and weight, gave greater justification for differential educational experiences for children.

However in a recent study by Fischer et al ²⁰ it appears that the Bell Curve is more a product of the self-fulfilling prophecy than anything else. The authors have shown that IQ, rather than representing a fixed 'natural' capacity, has more to do with the impact of the social and cultural environment on the individual. What determines life chances is not the child's IQ, but the social experiences that shape the child's life: child's home environment, the quality of the child's schooling, the child's race and gender... They claim that: '*In practice psychometricians have defined intelligence **after the fact**: after constructing intelligence tests, obtaining the results, and interpreting what those results mean*' ²¹. Intelligence is defined, then, in terms of what they call the '*political arithmetic*' of the tester's view of the world and will then, reflexively, justify that view. Fischer et al cite the statistical gerrymandering performed by the original authors of *The Bell Curve*, Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray, to make the raw scores in their study fit neatly into a 'normally' distributed curve. They claim that IQ tests measure not 'natural' capacities but instruction - the quality of teaching and schooling has much more to do with it, as has the quality of the child's social environment. Cognitive functioning increases as the intellectual complexity of demands placed on it increases. It decreases as the tasks demanded are repetitive, undemanding and are perceived to be worthless.

It is the two educational stories, in a self-fulfilling prophecy, which create two kinds of children, not 'nature'. The common sense of the established narratives created the 'natural' differences between children. The children are read by the text, to borrow one of Roland Barthes's aphorisms. Inequality is a designed-in feature of the Butler Act rather than a 'natural' phenomena to which it responded. 'Ability' was not a politically or scientifically neutral concept but rather a means by which the selective process in education were justified and were sustained. It has long been the common-sense of the educational world picture of the Conservative Party justifying their dismissal

²⁰ Claud S. Fischer, Michael Hout, Martin Sanchez Jankowski, Samuel R. Lucas, Ann Swindler and Kim Voss, *Inequality by Design: Cracking the Bell Curve Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) p 45 and passim.

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 45

of the impact of social factors on the development of the child. That the child does not perform well is a 'natural' consequence of the child's inherited capacities, not the child's environment. That the environment is miserable is a consequence of the child's parent's limited 'abilities' which the child has, unfortunately but inevitably, inherited. The social order was 'natural', the inherited ability and capacities of the population scientifically measured and neatly displayed in unambiguous statistical form.

Interpretations from the Right and Left both agree that comprehensive reorganisation was disastrous, though for contradictory reasons. Interpretations like Marsden's point to the reactionary forces of the Respectable Tendency in the Labour Party and their reluctance to shift the established educational story in a direction they feared would be unpopular and in a direction for which they had, anyway, only a limited sympathy - they did, after all, continue to refuse to pledge the disestablishment of the public school system and they still, though reluctantly, for a time maintained the assisted places scheme. Though the official Labour story was that the tripartite system, and the bipartite system into which it evolved, did mirror and perpetuate unacceptable social class divisions in society, there was little will for radical change. Marsden discusses how Anthony Crosland, in a rather less irascible mood, hoped that, '*...slow changes at local level would provoke less hostility and permit time for the education of the public*'.²²

In this Crosland was not so far from the view of Cobban²³, though for differing reasons. Cobban, however, began his article by asking a question which was for him not rhetorical. He asked '*..is it always right to subordinate educational considerations to the ideals of social justice?*'²⁴ Many of the other Black Paper writers would have found this question too ludicrous to ask, believing that their view of society and the purposes of education was common sense rather than part of a political ideology and that the grammar school system was the best of all possible worlds. Since the socialist narrative subordinates everything to the principles of social justice, Crosland could only fudge the issue and could only reply something like that in theory social justice overrides all other principles, but that practical political considerations demanded moderation and circumspection. Bismark's

²² Marsden (1971): op. cit., p. 126

²³ J.M. Cobban *The Direct Grant School* in Black Paper 1 (1968)

²⁴ *ibid* p.41

dictum that politics was *'the Art of the Possible'* infused the 'practical' politics of both Respectable wings of the parties.

However, the two parties were still quite distinct. For the Labour Party narrative it was a matter of a fundamental moral principle that had been deferred until the times were more propitious: the Conservative Party, however, at that time at least, had no similar foundation in clear social or moral principle. The sense of an ending, endlessly deferred, has now come to characterise post-modern narratives, but at that time the Labour Party did have a clear end sight, even if they could not achieve it and even if their hearts were not really one hundred percent committed to the comprehensive school as the means for achieving it. The Labour Party had a clear idea of the importance of their modernist narrative of social justice. In some ways the Conservatives, in contrast, have perhaps always had a post-modernist narrative, even before the term had become fashionable.

2. An Uneasy Consensus

*"There is no doubt that in our headlong rush to educate everybody,
we are lowering our standards"*

T. S. Eliot: *Christianity and Culture*

The 1960s were a culturally and ideologically complex time, when the rhetorical base of the traditional social narratives of the Conservative Party - and the Respectable virtue of selfless public service which propped up their object of desire, the hierarchical social order and the maintenance of privilege - was becoming less persuasive. The rhetoric of egalitarianism of the Labour Party had become the dominant narrative, even if it was the softer 'equality of opportunity' version which actually coloured their social policies. The Labour Party interpreted the popular will for greater social equality as popular agreement with their egalitarian discourses. This was, however, perhaps more wishful thinking than actually the case.

Though there was broad sympathy with pretensions to equality, at least as an eventual goal, popularly other cultural forces were at least as strong. Class divisions in society were perceived as less relevant to 'modern' life, perhaps partly a result of the Respectable educational policies following the Butler

Act and perhaps also due to the growing emphasis on new types of industry and technology less associated with the class divisions of the past. Certainly the forms of life which were developing were much less influenced by 'traditional' values.

There was much more cynicism about cultural traditions and forms of social and economic relations but at the same time there was also an idealism for the future. It was a romantic time, not just in the egalitarian politics of the Labour Party but also in the wider culture: *'The sixties witnessed a delirious upsurge of romanticism in which the rebel and the deviant became heroes, the self was exalted and rules, restrictions, conventions and traditions were ditched wholesale. Personal style - cool, chic, cynical and consumerist - became the ideal...'*²⁵ Richards is describing developments in the cinema, but they are as applicable in the wider culture of the times. Though the zeitgeist of the times was egalitarianism, at the same time there was, paradoxically, much greater cultural emphasis placed on the individual, her search for self-identity and for a story to express that identity. The search for an individual style became in many ways the dominant feature of the culture and individualism - as expressed through consumption - was eventually to become the dominant ethic.

At the heart of a narrative is expectation, and at stake in the control of a narrative is the control of what forms of knowledge and culture it authorises, what may be legitimately expected of it, who may legitimately have great expectations and, inevitably, whose aspirations will be managed, granted or denied. In *Great Expectations*, for example, Pip is held upside down by the convict, Magwitch and, in fact and metaphor, he sees the world upside down from then on. He misguidedly writes himself a story in which Miss Havisham is his benefactor and where he is entitled to believe he has expectations beyond those which he might legitimately hope for given his class origins. It is this misplaced belief which leads the *arriviste* Pip to deny his class, to deplore his family and eventually to come to grief. Pip's expectations were not legitimate in the social narratives of his time and his presumption was cruelly punished.

²⁵Jeffrey Richards, *The way we were*, The Guardian 15/8/97

What Butler had done through his narrative was to offer great expectations, but not to everyone: only the minority who were labelled in his story of human nature as the deservingly intelligent could legitimately expect the educational and thus the social and economic benefits of his narrative. And, largely, Butler's educational story, as it was maintained by both the Labour and Conservative administrations up to the mid-sixties, had delivered and established a clear narrative expectation. At the same time, however, the story had also, when the notion of 'parity of esteem' became vacuous, created a less welcome narrative expectation for those not 'selected' for what had become the only 'real' education, the grammar school.

Labour, however, had traded on the rhetoric of a new, technocratic meritocracy to gain power and in the mid 1960s egalitarianism had become, even if more as rhetoric than fact, the sign of the times. However, this new egalitarian narrative appeared popularly to promise greater expectations than it could deliver. It did, to do it justice, take clear measures against poverty and deprivation, notably the Plowden Report and the establishment of Educational Priority Areas. These measures, however, continued to fuel the popular perception of the value of the grammar school, that comprehensives were somehow second class, more appropriate to the culturally and economically disadvantaged. The quasi-egalitarian narrative of the Labour Party, for example, was to increase the number of comprehensive schools from four and a half percent of the total secondary school provision in 1961 to close to thirty percent by 1971, but with only a corresponding shrinkage in grammar schools of less than two percent²⁶. The new comprehensives were mostly old secondary moderns upgraded, and they carried with them into their new incarnation the same problematic cultural, social and economic identity.

Marsden²⁷ describes the ambiguity of the popular perception of comprehensive schooling. Egalitarianism was then the popular spirit of the times, Marsden cites a 1967 *New Society* opinion poll which recorded that although fifty-two percent of those polled were in favour of comprehensives, yet the same poll recorded that only sixteen percent would opt for a comprehensive school for their child and over three quarters of those polled

²⁶1961 figures from *Social Trends* HMSO (1970) p.124; 1970 figures from *Statistics DES*, 1970 vol. 1, p.2

²⁷Dennis Marsden (1971) p.124

favoured the retention of grammar schools. The egalitarian educational narrative had come to be iconically represented by the comprehensive school and was never as popular, it seems, as the left had hoped. The public clearly favoured the broad cultural narrative of egalitarianism and the greater expectations which that seemed to offer, but they were, frustratingly to the left, apparently not entirely convinced by comprehensive schools. This was, perhaps, because in the left rhetoric of the times they seemed to have become linked with the expectation of educational failure. The egalitarian educational narrative had created a rhetorical linkage between comprehensive schools and social deprivation and disadvantage.

Silver²⁸ describes the new '*Born to Fail*' vocabulary of the educational narrative and its focus on deprivation, squalor and slum life and he argues that it was adopted with too little critical insight and too much enthusiasm by both politicians, particularly of the left, and educational theorists. Clearly what had attracted politicians of the left to this kind of vocabulary was its apparently scientific approach and the rhetorical force with which its impartial 'scientific' pronouncements lent to the narrative of egalitarianism. Statistically it purported to show causal links between economic status and educational success and thus between the grand narrative of capital and structural educational disadvantage.

Though Silver distrusts generalised images he does, however, himself construct an image of 'the poor' in his narrative, as a sub-class essential to capitalist modes of production. This kind of narrative distinction, common to the vocabularies of both the left and the right though for differing reasons, as Silver describes, creates a 'them' and 'us' characterisation at the heart of the narrative. It has clear implications of the cultural superiority of 'us' and creates a relationship of domination and subservience. And it is at the heart of Silver's narrative too. As the egalitarian narrative of the Labour Party also did, this distinction tends to suggest essential, though not necessarily 'natural', differences among people and inevitably to marginalise certain groups. It emphasises differences rather than similarities and tends to dehumanise 'them', the recipients of the label 'the poor' or, more euphemistically the 'disadvantaged', in that they are only perceived in the narrative as a problem which the narrative will then go on to 'solve' in some

²⁸Harold Silver, *Education as History* (London, Methuen: 1983) p. 270 and passim.

way. Inherent in the metaphorical classification of certain people as 'the disadvantaged' is that they become marginalised and excluded; at best, it seems, they are subject to unfocussed feelings of benevolent philanthropy or to the often ungentle ministrations of social policies designed by 'us' for their benefit.

Chris Goodey identifies the inter-relationship of knowledge and power in this kind of vocabulary: *'I am saying that we are confronted, beneath a language which is often common to both parties, with two competing moral philosophies, and that the language of partnership is a mirage, a deliberate and partisan disguise for the fact that one of those philosophies holds power while the other comes from beneath the underdog. There are not 'professionals' and 'parents'. There is a strange tribe that believes in spells, psychometric assessments and incantations, and there is a tribe...of real people.... 'equal partnership'... is spurious..'*²⁹ This power and knowledge asymmetry is further emphasised by Tomlinson. Though she is speaking about parents of children with special needs her remarks apply to this broader vocabulary of disadvantage: *'This clientele will be largely composed of the relatively powerless ... working class and black parents who often lack understanding about what is happening to their children, can be mystified and persuaded by professional expertise and jargon, and have little... redress in the face of professional judgements.'*³⁰ Those most affected by this vocabulary are those who are already the most disadvantaged. Armstrong and Galloway³¹ describe how the parents of children with special needs are made to feel that they have no real say. In any conflict of interest between the parents and the professionals involved, the parents come out worst. Parents are viewed as part of the problem rather than as being part of the solution. The discussion of the child's need takes place in the terrain of the vocabulary of disadvantage, a vocabulary which is restricted by the special claims to knowledge of the politicians, teachers and professionals involved, and where power is exercised only by the professionals.

The knowledge of the parent or the child caught in the narrative expectation of this vocabulary is not regarded as valid. Further the educational problems

²⁹Chris Goodey: *Fools and Heretics: Parents' Views of Professionals*, in Booth et al) Learning for All 2: Policies for Diversity in Education. (London, Routledge: 1992) p176

³⁰Sally Tomlinson (1981) *Professionals and ESN (M) Education* in Swann (ed) The Practice of Special Education, (London: Basil Blackwell, 1981) p276

³¹Armstrong and Galloway: *On Being a Client* , in Booth et al (1992) op. cit. Chapter 16

the child experiences may be caused or greatly contributed to by conditions at home, but these specific conditions are not addressed and the child tends to be viewed impersonally, defined as a member of a sub-class. Habermas³² argues that, through such impersonal and excluding vocabularies, the 'life worlds' of people, the stages on which they act out their lives, their social and communicative realities, have been '*colonised*'. Their lives have been categorised and de-personalised by the strictures of the narrative and the educational organisation of the state. The knowledge of the professionals in education is codified into a discourse which does not simply stereotype the life world of the individual but actually constructs it. The bureaucratic rules and regulations, the labelling and categorisation, all are divorced from the real life experience of the individuals concerned. Habermas characterises this process as '*juridification*':

*'... (the) objective redefining of the client's lifeworld which... requires an incessant process of 'compulsory abstraction' of everyday life situations. This is... a practical necessity in order that administrative control be exercised. Juridification thus exerts a reifying influence on the lifeworld, which, when combined with the enhanced claims to expertise of social workers and other administrators in the newly redefined categories of life, produces an insidiously expanding domain of dependency. This domain comes to include the way we define... family relations, education, old age, as well as physical health and mental health and well being.'*³³

Nothing persists more than a story, particularly if that story is not just persuasive but also, and seemingly inadvertently, ensures a built-in cultural imperialism. The vocabulary of disadvantage is not really essentially different from the vocabulary of the Victorian philanthropy it so despises for its crude assumption of cultural superiority, insensitive labelling and paternalist arrogance. It too creates Habermas's '*insidiously expanding domain of dependency*'.

³²R. Roderick, Habermas and the Foundations of Critical Theory (London, Macmillan: 1986) pp 134-5

³³S. White The Recent Work of Jurgen Habermas, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1988): , p.113

This is, however, not to deny the existence of social inequality or that some people were, and indeed still are, socially, economically and educationally disadvantaged. Will Hutton in *The State We're In*³⁴ divides Britain into a 40-30-30 society. Seventy percent of people have secure or fairly secure economic stability and prospects while thirty percent are living in relative poverty, crammed into housing estates with little prospect of escape. Dependency, in Habermas's terms, has become to characterise their life world, and with it ever reducing expectations.

The problem of the vocabulary of disadvantage is the problem of the self-fulfilling prophecy: the characterisation of the narrative defines legitimate expectation and the limits to aspiration. Bob Holman³⁵, for example, complains of the narrow expectations children from impoverished backgrounds have of their future, not as a 'natural' consequence of a lack of 'ability' but a narrative consequence of the educational story and the dependency culture they have had imposed on them. He records that in Glasgow, in spite of decades of attempts to combat social and cultural deprivation, seventy percent of children from economically stable, 'advantaged' backgrounds will achieve the educational qualifications which will allow them to fulfil their ambitions, but that only three percent of children from the 'deprived' housing estate he lives in will manage to match these achievements. The vocabulary of disadvantage circumscribes expectation.

Butler's metaphorical construction of the educational world into 'natural' kinds of children, 'natural' social and cultural hierarchies and 'natural' taxonomies of knowledge limited initiation into the vocabularies of power. The vocabulary of disadvantage similarly perpetuated, if inadvertently, much the same kind of story. It similarly constructed the educational world, not into 'natural' divisions, but into class differences. Like Butler's story, it had difference at its core though its rhetoric claimed to seek to eliminate rather than maintain difference. Education was conceived as a mechanism to increase equality and opportunity. The comprehensive narrative, built on the vocabulary of disadvantage, constructed the 'disadvantaged' as an essentially dependent sub-class and consequently comprehensive education came to be seen as resolving a particular problem and concerned only with raising the

³⁴Will Hutton, *The State We're In* (London, Jonathan Cape: 1995) Chapter 7 and passim.

³⁵in *Feel the quality, not the materialism*, *The Guardian* 13 August, 1997

expectations of a marginal group. It created a particular and in many ways peculiar kind of educational reality, a reality in which the wider purposes of education were somehow lost. It created an almost impenetrable narrative silence about 'academic aspirations', and indeed about vocational education, seeing these as divisive concepts which those oriented on 'elitist' grammar school selective education would seize and so distort the social engineering purpose of the narrative. It became so concerned about countering rival narratives that it lost sight of any positive plot of its own.

Ironically the maintenance of the vocabulary of disadvantage as the principal rhetoric of the comprehensive narrative reinforced the popular sense of inherent cultural difference by creating a dependent sub-class rather than establishing a wider sense of common cultural identity which might have been more productive in increasing opportunity. The comprehensive narrative was not, however, popularly perceived as providing greater expectations for everyone and its rhetoric was the dismissive intolerance of the political discourse to alternatives.

Both Butler's and the comprehensive narratives labelled certain groups of people - the virtually uneducable 'bronze' child or the 'disadvantaged' child - and placed them on the margins. Butler's central organising metaphor was one of 'natural' social order, while the comprehensive metaphor was one of economic class ordering. Presented this way it seems unsurprising that it was so unpopular with parents, even with those who were 'poor'. The vocabulary of disadvantage did remain, however, popular with the liberal establishment, the theorists and the professionals as in many respects it still perhaps does.

What the comprehensive narrative desired was to provide expectations for the lower classes, to do what the Butler narrative had done for the middle and rising middle classes. The romantic idealism of the social solidarity of the comprehensive narrative gave it narrative force and the vocabulary of disadvantage which it employed made it very difficult to counter effectively, especially given the egalitarian spirit of the times, but in many respects though it redescribed the educational world in quite different terms, it maintained a story ironically similar in effect to that of Butler's.

While Butler's narrative was of keyhole surgery, the egalitarian narrative was of transplants. The myth of social progress, scientifically planned and carried

out with surgical ruthlessness, was at the heart of its narrative. It was a romanticised union of science and liberal democracy. Comprehensive schooling was an intervention to attempt to alleviate disadvantage but, as has just been described, it was never empowering. It was the ‘treatment’ of a problem, an attempt to ‘rectify’ a social breakdown. It created a culture of dependency. The ‘social scientist’ vocabulary of ‘disadvantage’ was dehumanising, in spite of the at times romantic rhetoric about the value of people as ends in themselves. It characterised ‘the poor’ in terms of their social class conditions, not as individuals but as a kind of blockage in a pipeline, a spanner in the works.

The comprehensive narrative’s vocabulary represented society as essentially a machine rather than Butler’s and Hogg’s organism, and education as essentially a problem. For Butler education was never problematic, it was a clear and tried and tested means to provide appropriate expectations for the different ‘natural kinds’ of people. On the other hand, the social scientists of the comprehensive movement saw schooling as a means to engineer a different kind of society: *Some people, and I am one, want to use education as an instrument in pursuit of an egalitarian society.*³⁶

Their vocabulary³⁷, in keeping with their ‘scientific’ model of society, was one of ‘*statistical relationships*’ and ‘*comparisons*’, ‘*longitudinal survey*’s, of ‘*co-efficients*’ and ‘*correlations*’, of ‘*untapped resources*,’ and behind the rhetoric was their perception of a failed social and economic superstructure, an economic machine falling into terminal decline. The emphasis of the rhetoric was on waste, on the inefficiency of an education system which produced too many failures: the economic dead weight of the ‘culturally deprived’ who, by definition, to all intents and purposes were all those who were ‘disadvantaged’ because they had not had the ‘advantage’ of a grammar school education. The lack of an alternative educational curriculum vitiated the comprehensive story.

The argument for comprehensives was as much, if not more, about the economic future as it was about social justice. However, the rhetoric of social

³⁶ A.H. Halsey, *Education and Equality* in *New Society*: 17th June, 1965

³⁷ as in, for example, Peter Townsend (1965) *The argument for comprehensive schools* originally in *The Journal of the Campaign for Comprehensive Education*, reprinted in Robert Bell, Gerald Fowler and Ken Little (eds) *Education in Great Britain and Ireland* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul: 1973) pp. 121 to 123

justice was not convincing nor was it uttered with much conviction. The Labour Party had always had an ambiguous view of equality. For them social justice was to extend the provision of schooling to all, regardless of their social class or income and this, to a degree, was what Butler had achieved. They were far less convinced by the harder egalitarianism of the comprehensive movement. In The Future of Socialism, Crosland, the Education Secretary from 1965 to 1967, shows his broadly favourable attitude to the selective system. In his chapter *The Influence of Education*, he writes that although the eleven plus test was '*bitterly disliked and resented*' yet: '*It was thought that a child's whole future was decided on a single day's test. No doubt much of the dislike was based on ignorance or exaggeration. The results in fact were never decided on a single day's test. Immense care was commonly taken over borderline cases. There was always provision (though imperfect) for re-testing and transferring 'late developers'. And the better secondary modern schools began increasingly to provide advanced courses and thus a route to the higher occupation.*'

Though Crosland heartily loathed inherited privilege and the independent schools, he was clearly unconvinced by the hard egalitarianism of the comprehensive narrative. Like Silver, he distrusted the grand narrative of egalitarianism, preferring the softer, and more pragmatic, Respectable alternative of providing greater access to opportunity and different routes to greater expectations. It was, however, the perception of the provision of an educationally, economically and socially fulfilling narrative expectation for the majority of people which fuelled the egalitarian narrative, the public rhetoric, of the Labour Party.

The educational narrative of Butler had come to be undermined by expectations *manqué*. For those not selected to the grammar school the expectations were bleak and even for those selected, like Hutton, not always fulfilled. The egalitarian narrative of comprehensive schooling languished in its vocabularies of disadvantage and offered at best only limited expectations for some and a narrative silence for everyone else.

3. New Socialism, New Story

*'We are redefining and restating our Socialism in terms of the scientific revolution. But that revolution cannot become a reality unless we are prepared to make far-reaching changes in the economic and social attitudes which permeate our whole system of society.'*³⁸

The germ of a new narrative began to emerge in the late sixties, however. It was one which avoided what the politicians of the Respectable Left had come to see as the outmoded vocabulary of class struggle and which consequently sought to place education in a new focus - as an agent of progress in the economic struggle for Britain to survive and thrive in the modern world. Certainly Butler had also made this one purpose of education but with far less emphasis. Butler's narrative had authorised quite a different culture, which Harold Wilson satirised as *'Edwardian establishment mentality'*³⁹

Wilson's 1964 manifesto promised an escape from the class narratives of a moribund, tradition-bound, feudally-minded Conservative Party and in contrast he presented a modernist programme of planned innovation and improvement. Labour presented themselves as the party of the future: a technologically oriented meritocracy in which class distinctions would become the stagnant vocabulary of a past age and where structural inequality and privilege would be addressed through educational and social programmes which would be designed to bring about a greater evenness of opportunity.

This promise was summed up by Dennis Healy: *'I think the big failure of all post-war governments has been to produce an educational system which enables us today, for example, to move into the new technologies as fast as our competitors are moving... the whole school system's been dominated by the values of the early nineteenth century public schools... and I think that it's clearly inadequate for economic success in the modern world.'*⁴⁰ At that time, technological advances had made the world a smaller place, more

³⁸Wilson (1963) in Brian MacArthur (ed), *Twentieth Century Speeches* (Harmondsworth, Penguin: 1992) p.336

³⁹ibid., p.336

⁴⁰Addison (1985/95) p. 169/170

pluralist and eclectic in culture and more optimistic for the future. The authority of tradition had become weakened as had the class order. The post-war baby boom had created a powerful new consumer of culture in the young - the teenager had come into her own - and this youth driven consumption of popular culture became a dominating economic force.

The adjective 'trendy' so often and so disparagingly used in the Black Papers is witness to the strength of this new culture. In contrast to their assertions of traditional authority, the rhetoric of the Labour Party was of modernity, youth and challenge, in contrast to the later, more reactionary vocabulary of the Black Papers. Wilson's '*The white heat of technology*' speech to the Labour Party conference in Scarborough in October 1963 constantly refers to a new beginning. Wilson's 'new socialism' rhetoric is of challenge to old-fashioned industrial practices and renewal through changed attitudes, and in particular through education and training. His hope, however, was not with the educationalists or indeed the proletariat, but with the scientists. He called for those '*in the Cabinet room and the board room alike*' to be '*ready to think and to speak in the language of our scientific age.*'⁴¹ His vocabulary was that of a pragmatic, clear-sighted, classless and essentially apolitical professional who is despised in a country run by dilettantes and amateurs: '*a nation of Gentlemen in a world of players*'. It is this metaphor which characterised the new egalitarian narrative of the Labour Party. It represented not the individual hopes and aspirations of the people nor did it offer any breadth of culture - this, though limited, at least was offered by Butler's narrative - rather it narrowed the focus of wider social narratives down to economic success and the agents of success - the new technocracy. While it condemned inherited privilege it did so not from moral outrage but for commercial reasons.

To be fair, however, Wilson's administration did expand higher education with the Robbins Report⁴² and, notably, the founding of the Open University in 1969, so breaking down some of the perceived elitism of the educational narrative. The Open University had its roots in the Labour educational story of the Workers Educational Association and Ruskin College. It widened educational opportunity and offered not just a narrow vocational education

⁴¹Wilson (1963) in MacArthur (1992) p. 337

⁴²Report of the Committee on Higher Education appointed by the Prime Minister (The Robbins Report) (London: HMSO, 1963)

but also the wider notion of education, for self-realisation and growth. At this same time the old epistemological and curricular barriers in higher education were also being broken down. 'New' subjects, like cultural studies, gender studies and peace studies became popular and were often maliciously caricatured by the Black Paper writers who so suffered in the disappearance of the old certainties. These subjects all traded on a new, more critical - or heretical, depending on the viewpoint - approach to academia.

In schooling, however, the stress was on providing compensatory educational schemes - extending opportunity to the disadvantaged - rather than on addressing the ideological and hegemonic dimensions of a fully realised egalitarian narrative and addressing the structural educational inequalities represented by the remaining and still warmly perceived grammar schools and the independent sector. David Hill, the recently retired media spokesperson for the Labour Party reflects on his early career as adviser to Roy Hattersley in 1973:

*'My first abiding memory was sitting next to the headmaster at the Independent Schools Conference where Roy Hattersley, as shadow education secretary, read out a speech which I had helped to prepare, calling for the abolition of private education. As a result of that speech Roy failed to get into the cabinet. Harold Wilson was a great champion of grammar schools and thought Roy's views far too egalitarian.'*⁴³

The Labour Party was content to allow comprehensive schools to exist, but alongside rather than as a replacement for the bipartite system. In effect they altered the meaning of 'comprehensive education' so that it was essentially purged of its controversial social engineering connotations, its signification of the elimination of class privilege in education and its role in the production of a more just society. Circular 10/65 asserted that the object of comprehensive education was to preserve, *'all that is valuable in grammar school education'* and to make such an education *'available to more children'*. Caroline Benn and Clyde Chitty describe the effect of this sanitisation of the term: *'For all anyone could tell, it looked as if it was going to be acceptable for the old education in two or more schools... to continue*

⁴³David Hill, in an interview by Steven Richards on the occasion of his retirement in: *'After 25 years Labour's original spin doctor is moving on...'* New Statesman 15/5/98

as before under one roof, a course few of those working in the field were prepared to accept'.⁴⁴

In what sense were the children 'equal'? How could individual differences, needs, talents, aspirations and backgrounds be taken into account? Was it simply another way of saying that all children should be permitted to achieve their full potential? Was it a demand that all classes were given the same opportunities or life chances? Was it the result of an economic imperative to increase the educational standard of the work force? Was it about all children being admitted into the cultural stories of the middle class? Though Benn and Chitty reflect on these different interpretations of 'equality' they cannot find any sense of consensus.

What is clear is that the term is dependent on a narrative context, a story. It is part of a wider plot. What the various Black Papers had done was to deride the different significations of the term within the ideological framework of what they at times wilfully and intemperately interpreted as the socialist story. In classically socialist terms 'equality' was what Raymond Williams calls the keyword of their story, encapsulating and representing their struggle for economic and cultural advancement and their eventual attainment of political power. It gave their story the narrative tension of struggle and, in Kermode's terms, a sense of an ending. While it is not difficult to deconstruct the ideological trappings of differing interpretations 'equality', to do so without understanding its symbolic and ritualistic importance to the socialist narrative is to miss the point. Like 'class' it has signification - of the story of socialism - rather than any specific sense. As a term it makes immanent the whole history of the socialist struggle.

What 'equality' seeks to do is to redress historical oppressions and to re-describe metaphorically the social and the educational story. Butler's bi-partite story was too closely identifiable as just another version of the 'great ladder of being' metaphor of society.

Mary Warnock objected to the educational ladder metaphor: *'... it became a concept which was not to be tolerated in public policy any more than the social ladder, an equally real, but equally deplorable idea; to be mentioned*

⁴⁴ Caroline Bell and Clyde Chitty (1996) *op. cit.* p. 28.

if at all only to be reviled' ⁴⁵. However, rhetorically, this deferral of meaning, which in turn allowed for the narrative ambiguity of the term 'equality', became a target of the Black Paper writers and the effect was debilitating to the comprehensive discourse. The Black Paper writers understood well that 'equality' in the socialist discourse represented a story which was the antithesis of theirs - one story of education for one type of person. They therefore exaggerated the effectiveness of the comprehensive movement. Though it did have some significant success - in 1965 there were 262 comprehensive schools, by 1970 the number had risen to 1,150 - however, measured in national terms, this did not signal the death of the grammar school or of the two stories of education it represented, which remained well established not only in many areas but, more crucially, in the minds and hearts of the politicians of both parties.

While the Black Paper writers were more than willing to lay all social ills at the feet of the egalitarians, similarly the egalitarians were concerned to lay all the social ills - though differently interpreted - at the feet of the 'elitist' grammar school 'reactionaries'. Walden, however, presents a more measured story and, though no egalitarian himself, acknowledges that the comprehensive movement had some modest success, particularly in areas where they were 'true' comprehensives, with a relatively broad social class intake. It was this 'modest' achievement Walden applauds though at the same time he finds reprehensible the political willingness to settle for so little.

Even Rhodes Boyson ⁴⁶ allowed that the comprehensive school could be successful though only if its egalitarian purposes were viewed with suspicion by the managers of the school and so long as the school eschewed progressive educational policies, viewed examination results as a measure of success, maintained a didactic style in teaching, in management adopted a style of avuncular sympathetic despotism, and retained a firm grip on discipline, featuring, when necessary, corporal punishment sensitively administered. He was not as far from the view of the Labour Party as he would be willing to admit.

⁴⁵ Mary Warnock, *Schools of Thought* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977) p. 41.

⁴⁶ Rhodes Boyson *"The essential conditions for the success of a comprehensive school in Black Paper 2* p.57-62.

Boyson derided the comprehensive principle, however, though not necessarily the comprehensive school: *'Just as truth may be the first casualty of war, it can be an early casualty in any social or religious outburst from men looking for simple solutions for the problems of their time. A search for complete equality, combined with a vague Rousseautic belief that all men left unhampered are good, has brought the pressure for full secondary comprehensification for social ends, for non-streaming and the adoption of so called 'progressive' and non-academic teaching or non-teaching. This egalitarian movement driven forward by adult men and women with the sad simplicity of the militant students has made reasonable men of varied opinions jump for cover...'*⁴⁷ Boyson described how he organised his comprehensive school on what he claimed were pragmatic rather than ideological lines: any teaching method was acceptable - provided it was not progressive - if it led to improved examination results; the pupils were streamed into three broad bands following a broadly common curriculum but at different 'depths' and some mobility between bands was possible; and by adopting fairly humanitarian pastoral policies and structures. The key, he claimed, was strong management and a demand for excellence in teaching and learning. In effect Boyson had come as close as he could to creating Butler's tri-partite system in one school in many ways closer to the Scottish, particularly in Glasgow, amalgamation of junior and senior secondaries under one roof which took place in the early sixties. Like these Glasgow schools, Boyson's school had, however, only a geographical relation to the ideal of the comprehensive school, though at the same time it was, apparently, far from the disaster which the Black Paper writers had generally so gleefully labelled the comprehensive schools.

In effect, the egalitarian narrative was to have a reverse effect, to further entrench the value of the grammar school in the public imagination. Even when grammar schools were made comprehensive they still retained their cultural cachet and the educational inequalities they represented remained stubbornly in place in their new incarnation. David Blunkett remarks: *'When comprehensives were introduced (into Sheffield) we weren't aware of the serious consequences arising from the fact that nearly all the ex-grammar schools were grouped in one area of the city. We just weren't appreciative of*

⁴⁷ *ibid.* p. 57

*the problems that arose from the development of comprehensive education.*⁴⁸

In Sheffield there developed a hierarchy of comprehensives, with the pecking order following the economic geography of the city. P.R. Sharp described the educational reorganisation of schools in the West Riding of Yorkshire⁴⁹ in the late 1950s and 1960s. Sharp describes how the problem of comprehensivization of the schools in this area was tackled. Economic restraints forbade the building of new schools, but the existing schools were too small for the planned large scale comprehensives which were envisaged. The Chief Education Officer, Alec Clegg, was committed to comprehensive education and considered several different types of arrangement: the creation of junior (ages 11-14) and senior (14 plus) high schools with no selective entrance but retaining some forms of selection for parts of the curriculum, such as Latin, and some streaming in other subjects.

Clegg's scheme was introduced in 1958 in a piecemeal way over most of the West Riding. However the scheme came under pressure when the children who planned to leave at 15 were allowed to complete their education in the junior schools. Clegg complained that '*bright children of feckless parents*' would be disadvantaged and that the junior schools would be seen to '*become finishing schools for working class children - or, put it more crudely, dumps for the Newsom types*'⁵⁰ - a reference to the 'less able' children with whom the Newsom Report (1963) was concerned. It is clear that the vocabulary of 'disadvantage' had permeated and come to dominate the educational discourses of the time and, while its intentions were no doubt of the best, it was not a vocabulary which created public confidence.

In order to prevent this 'dumping' Clegg, in 1963, proposed the reorganisation of the area into Primary (ages 5-9), Middle (ages 9-13) and High (ages 13-18) schools. This arrangement, it was claimed, would maintain the spirit of the comprehensive idea and the middle schools in particular would prevent what Clegg saw as the premature selection of some children

⁴⁸in an interview with Steve Richards *The man who used to run the city council...* in New Statesman, 11th July 1997

⁴⁹P.R. Sharp (1980), *The origins of middle schools in the West Riding of Yorkshire* in Ben Cosin and Margaret Hales (eds) Education, Policy and Society (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul: 1983) pp.263 - 270

⁵⁰*ibid.*, p.265

for the academic curriculum. Clegg struggled to be allowed this re-organisation and, after much canvassing, permission was granted on an experimental basis. However Clegg had many local difficulties having his scheme put into practice. He had problems implementing this scheme with his educational authorities and there were enervating political antipathies to various of the personalities involved. Clegg was forced to wait for a Ministerial decision from the DES giving the official position on the age of transfer from primary to secondary education and what powers LEAs had for school reorganisation. By 1966 Clegg was given official sanction for his middle schools but it was not until 1968 that the first school opened.

Clegg's struggle clearly shows the Labour Party's reluctance to give a clear or imaginative lead to the move towards comprehensive schools. They were reluctant to either give LEAs clear guidelines or indeed to allow LEAs to make up their own. Clegg was a hard-headed, practical educationalist, committed to seeing his comprehensives succeed yet he was frustrated for almost ten years by an indecisive Labour Party which clearly did not share either his commitment, his vision or his energy.

As a postscript to Clegg, the lack of enthusiasm for a radical restructuring of schooling and the curriculum of the Labour Party in the seventies was to lead, though admittedly indirectly, to the 'scandal' in October 1996 of the West Ridings School. This school was an amalgamation, an 'economy of scale', which combined two older schools in Clegg's former area of responsibility, the schools he had such high hopes of in his restructuring package. It had become, as Clegg's vision was gradually eroded by the uncommitted Labour Government and the succeeding Tory narrative, a sink school, the most talented children in the area moving to the re-invented grammar schools in the area. In 1995 only one percent of the pupils achieved five GCSE passes at Grade C or better and it had become the 'dump' school for problem pupils in the area ⁵¹. The local educational story in Yorkshire had come almost full circle since 1958. However, this is to anticipate the argument of succeeding chapters in this exercise.

Even had Wilson's Labour Party grander aspirations, the relative economic stability of the post-war years had ended and Britain was plunged into a

⁵¹as reported in The Guardian, *School faces 'hit squad'* : 25th October, 1996

series of boom and bust economic crises. Sterling crises, devaluation, alarming trade deficits, uncontrollable inflation - the effects of the post-industrial revolution, the clouds of which had been slowly gathering for some years - had made the economy a more central and pressing focus of government policy. The attempt to reform trade unions, Wilson and Barbara Castle's *In Place of Strife*, foundered in acrimony and cries of betrayal. Thompson notes: '*Repeated doses of deflation and high interest rates intended to defend the sacred sterling parity (which was sacrificed in the end anyway) made a shambles of planning on any basis, whether public or private.... Meanwhile social expenditure was rigorously cut back and intended programmes abandoned.*'⁵²

The Labour Party was still not as committed to the radical reorganisation of schooling as its rhetoric might have suggested. Little educational innovation took place. Indeed, as Willie Thompson⁵³ points out the Labour Party's restrictions on public spending ensured that little could be done to forge their 'new Britain'. Thompson describes how the economic disasters and the perceived betrayals of the Wilson government caused it to fall not only into public disrepute but eventually into disastrous internecine power struggles. The educational narrative, meanwhile, existed in a kind of limbo. The Labour controlled Local Education Authorities continued to create new comprehensives as they wished but there was none of the modernist planning and scientifically structured programmes that had been promised. Wilson's new narrative foundered and his metaphorical redescription of education had to wait in the wings for its time.

Nor, however, was the Conservative Party under Heath any more successful in establishing a clear narrative expectation from education. There had been created, though, a general consensus around the vocabulary of disadvantage. Heath remarked that there had been a '*social revolution*' that '*has caused us to switch the emphasis to education for the underprivileged*'.⁵⁴ Heath went on to extol the virtues of educational opportunity and to assert his acceptance of the evils of selection: '*I want to make it clear that we accept the trend of educational opinion against selection at eleven-plus. By selection I mean the*

⁵²Willie Thompson *The Long Death of British Labourism* (London: Pluto Press, 1993) pp. 74/5

⁵³ *ibid.* Chapter 3: *Breach of Promise 1964-73.*

⁵⁴Edward Heath in a speech at Overseas House, St James's on 17th June 1967 reprinted in Bell Fowler and Little (1973) p.129

process of classifying children according to their IQ and separating them into different types of school at too early an age'.⁵⁵

His concurrence with the soft egalitarian narrative of the Labour Party, however, was not complete. He still maintained a difference - selection was not to be abandoned but merely postponed, and he continued by asserting the virtues of the grammar schools in the familiar rhetoric of the Respectable Tories: *'The grammar schools, both the ancient foundations and those established in the last fifty or sixty years, have made a magnificent contribution to our educational progress and our national well-being. It is right that we should be so concerned about their future.'* Heath makes a typical, Respectable Tory, metaphorical reference to the 'health' of the nation. However, his is not a closed position: in the interests of consensus, though he closes the door to revolutionary change, he offers the possibility of 'evolutionary' change: *'Yet the grammar schools themselves have changed many times in their history, long or short, whilst at the same time maintaining their characteristics of a broad liberal education and high standards. It has been this readiness to change and adapt themselves which has enabled them to keep pace with the sociological as well as the technical developments of the twentieth century.'*⁵⁶

Heath makes clear his desire for consensus and his offer here to the Labour Party is not so very far off the views of the Respectable Labour politicians, as has been described. He does not rule out comprehensive reorganisation: *'The Conservative Party remains firmly opposed to the rapid and universal imposition of comprehensive reorganisation'*.⁵⁷ What he does rule out is hard egalitarianism, which was never much more than a rather half-hearted and rhetorical threat anyway. Though he maintains the value of direct grant schools and the independent sector - to which he obliquely refers to when he insists that *'education should not be a state monopoly'*, he quickly returns to a reassertion of the value of the vocabulary of disadvantage and makes a vague apology for the tendency of the Conservative Party's educational policies towards elitism:

'Perhaps in the past there has been a tendency on the part of government and teachers to concentrate too much on the

⁵⁵ibid. p.129

⁵⁶ibid. p.130

⁵⁷ibid. p.130

ablest children and not enough on the average. This tendency is now being corrected and justly so. But we must be sure that in concentrating on those who have not had the chance in the past we do not neglect those who could and should be excelling.'⁵⁸

Indeed as Dale points out, by Heath's time: '*...commitment to selection to secondary education and automatic opposition to comprehensive education ceased to be central parts of official Tory education policy.*'⁵⁹ There was, however, in Heath's speech the hint of a new narrative paradigm - built around freedom and choice. He stated: '*We also believe that in a free society every parent should have the right to choose what kind of recognised education a child should have in accordance with its needs and abilities*'⁶⁰ Though Heath so qualifies the parent's ability to choose that his position begins to lose coherency, there remains enough sense to suggest a clear contradiction in his thought. The vocabulary of disadvantage and the egalitarian comprehensive narrative cannot co-exist with free parental choice. For the time being, however, this new narrative, like Wilson's technocratic narrative, had to be silent.

Though the move towards greater comprehensivization had not really been enthusiastically viewed by either political party, that ceased to make any difference: it had gained through its appearance of granting greater educational opportunity and in the broad acceptance of its vocabulary of disadvantage a cultural inertia. So irresistible did it become, indeed, that it was the Heath Conservative administration, with Mrs Thatcher as its Secretary of Education, which was to create more comprehensives than any previous Labour administration. Certainly she did so reluctantly and she did so while creating legislation to prevent the compulsory creation of comprehensives and she did, as Dale notes, attempt to slow the momentum for comprehensives in Tory controlled LEAs. However she found herself relatively powerless, in the grip of an educational vocabulary with which she radically disagreed. Kogan remarks '*she wasn't disposed to listen to the*

⁵⁸ibid. p.130

⁵⁹Roger Dale, The State and Education Policy (Milton Keynes, Open University Press: 1989) p. 78

⁶⁰Bell Fowler and Little (1973) p.130

*unalloyed liberalism of the educational service'*⁶¹ but she was unable, then, to make any radical changes.

Thatcher had little enthusiasm for the process but found that she had little power to do otherwise than follow the wishes of the local education authorities and the advice of her department. It was her experience of impotence here that was apparently to colour her subsequent attitudes to educational policy making, to local authorities and to educational professionals. In the meantime, however, the educational picture remained ambiguous. Although the comprehensive narrative was dominant, the grammar school had proved iconically too powerful to be completely subjugated by the new egalitarian narrative. It survived, though in straitened circumstances, and a kind of 'mixed educational economy' had been created, not in any planned way but more, apparently, as a result of a kind of narrative inertia.

Heath too, like Wilson before him, was driven to compromise. His 1970 Selsdon philosophy, prototype free market manifesto promise, to renew the industrial base and to stop state subsidies to 'lame-duck' industries, was wrecked by the power of the trade unions. In the 1970 Conservative Manifesto Heath wrote in the introduction:

*'Nothing has done Britain more harm in the world than the endless backing and filling which we have seen in recent years. Once a policy has been established, the prime minister and his colleagues should have the courage to stick with it.'*⁶²

The Selsdon philosophy was the first real stirrings of what was later to become re-invented as Thatcherism. Heath attempted a programme of minimising government intervention in the running of the state and in placing greater emphasis on competition and efficiency in industry. This vocabulary, for the time being, was generally applied to economic matters and not to social policy. There was little that was, however, decisive about Heath's government. In education they indeed 'backed and filled', leaving the system to the ministrations of the civil servants in the DES, their educational advisers, the local education authorities and to the schools themselves. His

⁶¹cited in Dale (1989) p. 79

⁶²cited in Thatcher (1993) p. 154

administration quickly collapsed, and with it the final vestiges of the power of the Respectable narrative of the Conservative Party. Davies⁶³ remarks that the Conservative Party had its foundations in a stable economy which *'allowed the party to retain the privileges of its supporters whilst professing concern, and sometimes indeed doing something, about the worst-off members of society'*.⁶⁴ Heath was confident in using Disraeli's 'Two Nation' narrative in his speech on education but the economy was in almost permanent crisis and without that stability the traditional Respectable narrative came under enormous pressure.

The Respectable narrative was founded in the tradition of the 'true Englishman' and had maintained power on their fiction of the English way of life. The maintenance of that way of life, with its clear social hierarchies and differentials, was ultimately rooted in the economy. They had kept alternative narratives, such as Socialism and the more stringent Hayek's neo-liberalism, at arm's length because they maintained economic stability. It was this which allowed them to represent the rival narratives as the encroachment of 'foreign' ideology into the established culture - as somehow just not English, as not 'common-sense', as not how 'we' do things. However, Heath could not manage the intermittent boom and bust economic crises and maintain that way of life in the ways to which it had become so accustomed. Not only that, but the traditional Englishness of the story was apparently threatened by the Heath administration's attitude to Europe and Britain's entry into the Common Market, and culturally, the egalitarian spirit of the times had made traditional class differences hard to maintain. They had come to be seen as old fashioned and culturally enervating.

Further, Heath's promise to reinvigorate the economic base was soon in tatters. His plan to deny 'lame duck' industries further subsidies and to de-nationalise loss making heavy industries no matter what the social cost in unemployment was defeated by popular dissent, such as Jimmy Reid's workers' occupation of Upper Clyde Shipbuilders. Heath lost control of the country, and with that the power of the Respectable narrative that could no longer deliver the economic and social expectations of growth and stability.

⁶³A.J. Davies, *We the Nation: The Conservative Party in the Pursuit of Power* (London, Abacus: 1995) p. 29 and passim

⁶⁴ibid. p.29.

His tenure ended in the oil crisis and seemingly continuous industrial conflict. He had been forced to call five states of emergency.

His administration had reneged on their Seltsdon promises to re-invent industrial relations and to refuse to intervene in the economy. Instead he had reverted to Respectable policies in a desperate attempt to regain some authority and control. He had increased public spending - in education, even Thatcher was not to cut back but rather to spend more on primary education and on the raising of the school leaving age though she did make a token cut by taking away school milk - rather than decrease it or even to make any radical review of it.

Yet these Respectable Keynesian policies almost succeeded. In 1972 he almost instituted a wages and incomes policy, though his manifesto had clearly ruled this out. His by then less abrasive rhetoric about partnership with the unions rather than war led to a period of relatively peaceful industrial stability for a while, until his was shattered by what Gamble records as the incompetent handling of wage negotiations with the miners⁶⁵. The final straw was the conflict with the miners which led to national power cuts and the three day week.

Andrew Gamble reflects that what led to the downfall of Heath was the miasma of failure and incompetence which had come to envelop his administration. The Respectable paternalist narrative had become discredited: the expectations it seemed to offer were of more unrest and economic and social failure. His ability to govern - the persuasiveness of his narratives to provide great expectations - was perceived as finished. His narratives lacked all authority.

Heath's 1974 election manifesto was entitled '*Who governs Britain?*', emphasising the siege mentality of the then unpopular and enfeebled Respectable Tory narratives. Heath lost the subsequent election and the Conservative Party were left with only the tatters of a disintegrating narrative. It is perhaps this tension on the Tory narrative which goes some way to explaining the increasingly hysterical tone of the Tory counter-narratives of society, in particular the polemics of the Black Papers.

⁶⁵ Andrew Gamble, *The Free Economy and the Strong State: The Politics of Thatcherism* (London, MacMillan: 1989, rev. 1994) p. 85 and passim.

The story of the totemic ordering of society based on Respectable Tory formulation of human nature was no longer tenable. It had become too much generally accepted that all people were essentially the same, in their desires and aspirations, though 'sameness' did not necessarily clearly entail 'equality'. However, the 'natural' virtues of the elite class - service and duty - essential to the justification of the Respectable narrative were becoming less persuasive and less meaningful.

Chapter 5

The Educational Spectacular and the End of Consensus

*'The grammar and public school standards cannot be dead as a national ideal unless we betray them. Why should it be assumed that total change is inevitable? To destroy a fine and tried educational system in the interest of vague class hatreds is a conscious choice...Why should fine schools be deliberately destroyed for an envious belief.'*¹

1. Sound and Fury

Though educational policy and the policy makers existed in a cosy consensus, the wider rhetoric of education in the seventies was far from placid. Albert Hirschman comments in his essay *'Politics'*² that the comfortable post war consensus on economic and social policy broke down, or at least was fatally debilitated, because it was inherently dull. There was little perceptible difference between the ideologies of the two main parties - sarcastically termed 'Butskellism' after the relatively consensual Respectable Conservative and Respectable Labour narratives of Butler and Gaitskell - and the consequence was, in Hirschman's terms *'a loss of spectacle'*. This eventually, Hirschman argues, paved the way for the spectacle of *'highly partisan creeds'* and politics driven by an openly proclaimed ideology. And along with this new creed came a re-vitalised rhetoric to evangelise for it, or at least to demonise the opposition. Whether Hirschman is correct to suggest that it was

¹ (ed) C.B. Cox and A.E. Dyson, editorial comment in Black Paper 1 p.(i).

² Albert Hirschman *'Politics'* in David Marquand and Anthony Seldon (eds), The Ideas that Shaped Post War Britain (London: Fontana, 1996), pp. 29-40.

just the dullness of politics that was a factor in the rise of the Neo-Liberal Tendency of the Conservative Party is open to question but it is certainly the case that the new political rhetoric of education was spectacular.

Both the Labour Party and the Respectable Conservatives were by this time presiding over a relatively consensual, or complacent, educational world, depending on who was doing the interpretation. Their social narratives had remained, with uneasy silences, much as they had been under Butler. Ranson³ argues that this period was still dominated by the post-war narratives of Keynesian centralised control of the economy in the social interest, social democracy and in education, equality of opportunity. The old certainties of class and culture which had supported the narrative of Butler had, however, begun to lose authority and by the mid-70s the Respectable tendencies of both the Labour and the Conservative parties struggled to maintain narrative control.

The Butler consensus, with its closer focus on educational opportunity, had also inadvertently legitimised the educational narrative of the comprehensive movement, something in the way that Bantock had feared would occur, and this had created quite a different set of expectations which were not reconcilable with the established expectation of education. These created unsettled narrative tensions: there was a continuing demand for total comprehensivisation and an end to 'elitist' forms of schooling and, as exemplified by the Black Papers, there were increasingly ferocious demands to end the comprehensive process and, indeed, reverse it and return to 'traditional' forms of schooling.

Hirschman describes three '*archetypal*' forms of rhetoric used characteristically, though not exclusively, by the Neo-Liberal Conservatives in their polemics against the Conservative's traditional enemy, 'the progressives': the arguments of *perversity*, *futility* and *jeopardy*. Though these were originally used by Hirschman to describe American Conservatives, they seem equally applicable to their English counterparts, and exemplified by the Black Paper writers. Hirschman describes these '*archetypal*' arguments:

³ Stuart Ranson cited in Peter Ribbins and Brian Sherrat, Radical Educational Policies and Conservative Secretaries of State (London: Cassell, 1997) p. 11.

- *' the perversity thesis, whereby any action to improve the political, social or economic order is alleged to result in the exact opposite of what is intended;*
- *the futility thesis, which holds that attempts at social transformation will produce no effect whatsoever and will be incapable of making a dent in the status quo; and*
- *the jeopardy thesis, which holds that the cost of a new reform is unacceptable because it will endanger previous, hard won accomplishments.'*⁴

To balance this, Hirschman also describes the essentially similar *progressive* equivalents of these arguments:

- *'We should adopt a certain reform or policy because as things are we are caught, or will shortly land in, a **desperate predicament** that makes immediate action imperative regardless of the consequences. This argument attempts to deflect the perversity thesis.*
- *We should adopt a certain reform or policy because such is the 'law' or 'tide' of history - this argument is a counterpart of the futility thesis, according to which attempts at change will come to nought because of various 'iron laws'.*
- *We should adopt a certain reform or policy because it will **solidify** earlier accomplishments - this is the progressive's retort to the jeopardy claim that the reform is bound to wreck some earlier progress.'*⁵

Richard Johnson⁶ argued that The Black Papers became a central focus for a new political and educational narrative. He argues that although the paper writers, Cox and Dyson, argued that they were apolitical, having only the

⁴ibid. p. 37

⁵ibid. p. 37/38

⁶Richard Johnson, *A new road to serfdom? A critical history of the 1988 Act in Education* Group II, Dept of Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, Education Limited: Schooling and Training and the New Right since 1979 (London: Unwin Hyman, 1991)

health of the education system in mind, the papers '*drew in* (neo-liberal Conservative) *activists and forged a political identity.*' Indeed many of the writers had clear associations with the Conservative Party and many with its Neo-Liberal Tendency: Rhodes Boyson, Lord Harris of the National Council for Educational Standards, Baroness Cox, Stuart Sexton and many others.

A study of the Black Papers will clearly illustrate the accuracy of Hirschman's description of the Conservative polemics. However, the Black Papers also began to establish the Neo-Liberal rhetoric of education, and of society. Their ideology was, however, never quite decisive or clear cut. Typically the opening sentence of the introduction to Black Paper 3 (1970) appealed to the usual 'traditional' arguments: *'During Mr Short's period as Secretary of State for Education and Science, an extremist group of 'progressive' educationists, with his support, flooded the newspapers and television with propaganda. Experienced teachers were astonished to read articles and speeches proposing that examinations should be abolished, that traditional subjects should be abandoned for 'progressive projects', that all selection should be banished from secondary education, that there should be no more streaming at any age, and that universities instead of being centres of excellence should turn 'comprehensive'. The whole enterprise was conducted with missionary zeal.'*⁷

Here the authors invoke the jeopardy thesis with the additional implication of perversity. Their enemies - and again the tone suggests a kind of violent conflict - remain the rather shadowy educational 'progressives'. The rhetoric continues with this rather hysterical tone: *'In this speech, Mr Short is typical of the progressives in his ignorance of human nature. Examinations always need reform but to do away with them is to return to selection by favouritism... Also very few teenagers would work hard without the incentive of an examination.'*⁸

The authors make an appeal to an 'iron law' of human nature: examinations and competition are necessary to motivate an otherwise 'naturally' shiftless student population and to maintain standards and ensure that the perversity of

⁷ C.B.Cox and A.E. Dyson, prefatory remarks: *Letter to Members of Parliament: Goodbye Mr Short: A Valediction Forbidding Mourning*, in (eds) C.B.Cox and A.E. Dyson Black Paper Three (1970): p.2.

⁸ *ibid.* p.7

teachers does not compromise the reliability of the selection processes. This type of argument is common in these papers; that 'progressive' formulations of human nature are '*unnatural*' and educational policies based on them are consequently doomed to failure: *'The fact that inequalities existed within the old selective system does not mean that they will disappear when selective examinations are abolished; and the fact that it is the pupils from poor homes who have been handicapped in the past, does not necessarily mean that they will lose these handicaps when comprehensive education becomes universal'*.⁹ Ignoring the 'fact' that there are discrete, natural kinds of students and attempting to provide a uniform educational provision for all is perverse; and the perversity of continuing to try to implement 'progressive' policies in the face of the 'evidence' of their futility provided in the Black Papers, jeopardises all the educational traditions which have been so hard won in the past. The logic is inexorable, though their 'facts', as usual, are generally a mish-mash of unsubstantiated assertion and circular appeals to authority and to English tradition as they had re-invented it.

However, along with these three types of rhetoric, there is also a more spectacular rhetoric of *betrayal* that Hirschman might have included. This thesis might perhaps be something like:

- *the betrayal thesis, which holds that the educational and social advantages of the traditional Conservative social and economic orders are so plainly obvious to common sense that to suggest radical reform can only be an envious and malicious attempt to subvert and destroy the traditions of Britain (England) for alien and extremist, ideological ends.*

At its crudest it is a 'reds under the beds' McCarthyite conspiracy theory of the most naive kind, which typically creates a powerful enemy for itself from among the various left-wing groups, riven, in reality, by antagonistic factions and weakened by regular internecine ideological warfare: *'The current Marxist strategy for bringing down liberal societies concentrates on winning preponderant influence in key institutions (schools and academies are*

⁹Douglas, Ross and Simpson, *All Our Future* (1968) cited by Cox and Dyson (1970), op cit. p. 3

particularly important)...' ¹⁰. 'Progressives' in education are in the Black Papers consistently blamed, *inter alia*, for anarchy in society, the 'permissive society', the deliberate lowering of educational standards, the destruction of high culture and the substitution of popular '*withitcity*'. There was an odd contradiction in the Black Papers: though their writers generally favoured Bantock's elitism and loathing of the 'popular' yet they were not unhappy to see their distempered rhetoric becoming popularised in the national press. They were happy to use public opinion provided it reflected the 'correct' story.

The Black Papers marked a clear moment of change in the Conservative story of education. It became rhetorically necessary to attack teachers and their professional status. Teachers, and their unions, had become to be seen as the enemy. It was the teaching professionals, along with teacher trainers, who had become perceived to have so clearly accepted the narrative of egalitarianism. It was they, rather than the Labour government, who were, to these writers, so enthusiastic about engineering a new society. Teachers were, in their view, becoming the gatekeepers of a strange new world, a world which excluded them and their 'common sense' elitist narrative of 'natural' differences and hierarchies. At best, they wrote, such betrayal might be partly excused on the grounds of stupidity or to blind adherence to the often attractive but dangerous theorising of seditious demagogues. Teachers were sometimes demonised as individuals - '*With teachers like Mr Medway it is not surprising that young people use words such as 'cronical', and cannot tell the difference between 'momentary' and momentous*' ¹¹ - or as a group. Kingsley Amis and Robert Conquest ¹² lead a much stronger attack on teacher professionalism. They satirised the teachers as being so misguided as to believe that to teach is to, '*Impose irrelevant facts and bourgeois indoctrination upon*'; that spelling is '*a bourgeois pseudo-accomplishment designed to inhibit creativity, self expression etc*'; that examinations are '*irrelevant... test(s) purporting to check a student's knowledge...often repugnant to his personality, and failing to take into account the distractions inevitable in a concerned life*'; that

¹⁰Caroline Cox, Keith Jacka and John Marks, *Marxism, knowledge and the academies*, in C.B. Cox and Rhodes Boyson (eds), *Black Paper 1977* (London: Temple Smith, 1977) p. 125

¹¹ C.B. Cox and Rhodes Boyson, *Letter to Members of Parliament* Black Paper 1977, op. cit. p. 7.

¹²all the subsequent definitions and references, except where otherwise noted, from: Kingsley Amis and Robert Conquest, *A Short Educational Dictionary* in Cox and Dyson (1970), op. cit. pp 67-70

'better' is a *'divisive term... reproducing bourgeois ideology'*; that discipline is arbitrary and fascist and unreasonably demands students do what they *'do not feel like doing'*.

The anonymous rank and file of teachers were treated more generously, at least insofar as to be labelled stupid is preferable to being traitorous. Jacques Barzan is not alone in lamenting the *'refractory'* material of many teachers but he was concerned not so much in blaming them as in vilifying their *'progressive'* educators. It was, in his view, the educators of the present generation of teachers who were to blame for having created teachers: *'more easily prepared in the virtues of the heart and the techniques of play than in any intellectual discipline. Themselves uneducated and often illiterate..., they infallibly transmitted their inadequacies, turning schoolwork into make believe and boring their pupils into violence and scurrility.'*¹³ Teachers were represented as the dupes of the educationalists. Amis and Conquest go on to deride the theoreticians of the egalitarian narrative and the forms of knowledge that it authorises: *'Theoretician; his main duty is to improve the theses mentioned in this dictionary. Actual teaching experience, with its narrowing, ossifying consequences, is a disqualification for such employment'*. If teachers do stupid things or appear to be ideologically inspired - and this they imply is entirely evident - it is because they have been brainwashed. It was important that the Black Papers should appeal to teachers but this presentation of them also de-professionalised them. Their knowledge was described as worthless and they themselves are characterised as lacking the substantial intellectual and moral character to resist their indoctrination. They are portrayed as generally well-meaning and, with backhanded generosity, as often quite skilful, but by reason of their youth, psychology or temperament, easy prey to the unscrupulous theory-mongers of the *'progressive'* Left: *'...those in the educational world are well aware of how such unqualified pronouncements (the 'bad' ideas of the Plowden Report on discovery methods) have been hammered into young students in colleges of education.'*¹⁴

¹³Jacques Barzan, *The Centrality of Reading*, in Cox and Dyson (1970) p. 74

¹⁴C.B. Cox and Rhodes Boyson, *Letter to Members of Parliament* Black Paper 1977, op.cit. p. 7.

The attack became intent on undermining the professionalism and the professional knowledge of teachers. Teachers had been seen to have gained too much power in the educational processes even though that was partly due to the Labour Party's abdication of responsibility. It had become the 'common sense' of these Papers and was a lesson that Thatcher was to learn. The claim to authority, central to the claim for the professionalism of teaching, was undermined as the knowledge which underpinned such authority was 'debunked' and the trust in the altruism of the teacher was shown to be a sham. That no serious argument was offered to justify these assertions was beside the point.

It might be argued that, even if it was unconscious, the purpose of the Black Papers was to create chaos, in effect to fill the gap left by the collapse of the Respectable narrative and to maintain the advantage in the destabilisation of the egalitarian narrative until it could be replaced. It was to find something to cling to in the cultural and social vertigo the writers were suffering. It was to fill the gap between the breakdown of the old certainties and the formation of some new story that they could live in. Though they had no real power or hope to change anything, the Black Paper writers felt compelled to maintain some sort of narrative presence even if that was reactionary and incoherent at times. The apparent respectable Tory and Labour consensus over the softer version of the egalitarian narrative had exasperated them. They felt that their world had been redescribed and that all that they valued was gone.

However, much of the Black Papers was simply a reiteration of the old elitist narrative in reaction to the egalitarian vocabulary of disadvantage, and though many of the writers were concerned to try to re-invent the vocabulary of elitism, it was never really a possibility. Their elitist vocabulary had become too entangled with, and diffused, in the narrative of the Respectable Conservatives and that, with the demise of Heath, had become hopelessly compromised. While a new narrative was formulated, however, the Black Papers had the effect of maintaining the destabilising of the egalitarian narrative. Eventually the rhetoric of the Black papers was to be used to authorise a quite different narrative.

Meanwhile, it was rhetoric such as this which also de-stabilised the comfortable consensus about education. However, the Black Paper writers were generally not aware that the narrative which they were espousing was

dead and nearly buried. Though their polemics were spectacular, when a sober attempt was made to assert their own educational policy to counter the 'progressives', the rhetorical fireworks were spectacularly absent. Their positive proposals bore a perhaps unsurprising similarity to those of Heath which were described earlier. Having established to their satisfaction the futility and perversity of the comprehensive movement, which failed even to achieve the ideals of its supporters, and having made clear that their opponents', the 'progressive experts', research was hopelessly ideologically compromised, Cox and Dyson¹⁵ began their positive argument with the assertion that it is direct grant and grammar schools which, quite obviously, '*maintain the highest standards, and offer opportunities on the basis of genuine equality of opportunity for all*' .¹⁶

They went on almost, but not quite, to flirt with the vocabulary of disadvantage, and to admit that the present bi-partite system was perhaps flawed and that *a 'socially unacceptable situation exists'* ¹⁷, which required a 'different and fairer concept' of education which, they decided was to be based on the current direct grant/grammar/comprehensive school system but with the difference that there would be '*no stigma attached*' ¹⁸ to those who did not either aspire to, or were not selected for, the direct grant or grammar schools. To attempt to reduce this stigma, selection they argued, as indeed did Alec Clegg in Yorkshire though for quite different reasons, for a postponement of selection for two years: '*...the 11 plus will cease to be a great divider..... by 13 a child's ability and motivation are usually apparent... Selection will.. be made on teachers' reports, continuous assessment and other methods, as well as upon written exams*' .¹⁹ The '*sting*' of selection would be removed because those selected for direct grant and grammar schools '*will be in such minority that no sense of failure will be possible for the rest*' .²⁰ Because so very few would be selected for the upper echelons of the educational ladder, the comprehensives would, 'naturally' come under relentless pressure from parents for results so that their educational standards would rise and they would of necessity have by then built up their own

¹⁵ibid. p. 6

¹⁶ibid. p 9

¹⁷ibid. p 9

¹⁸ibid. p 10

¹⁹ibid. p 10

²⁰ibid. p 10

academic tradition. Comprehensive schools, they assert, would not be destroyed by *'creaming off'* the elite because this underestimated children's latent abilities. Selection was not completely reliable, they implied, and many children rejected for the elite schools might still go on to university. Furthermore comprehensives attracted teachers who were skilled at patiently and painstakingly *'bringing on'* such unpromising children than the elite schools which, anyway, had a quite different ethos.

However, Cox and Dyson did acknowledge the danger of creating elites but their solution, like rest of their argument, was breathtaking in its simplicity: *'Under the emerging system, Direct Grant and grammar schools will not produce an exclusive elite or a self sustaining meritocracy, but will merely provide an appropriate education for students able, and willing, to profit from what such schools give...'* ²¹. There would be equality of opportunity, they assert, because attendance at direct grant and grammar schools will offer *'no long-term advantages'*. Thus they side-step the, to them pernicious, vocabulary of disadvantage. The purpose of these elite schools would be to stimulate the comprehensive system, raising standards and increasing opportunities for all. It is not made clear why, if they did not offer future advantage, parents would be induced to send their children there, given the additional costs of uniforms, equipment and travel as well as the social cost to their children. There is however one, happily accidental, purpose for the elite schools - they have profound cultural importance: *'Direct Grant and grammar schools, alongside the best in Independent schools, will uphold the moral and cultural values of European civilisation, and ensure that intellect does not, by becoming divorced from such qualities, form a meritocratic world apart'* ²².

Cox and Dyson's deliberately guileless argument concealed their implication that comprehensives could not be similarly equipped, presumably because they had an student body unsuitable to the rigours of academic study, immersed as they were in 'popular' culture and, anyway, their students and their more sociologically oriented staff were 'naturally' and ideologically unsuited to be the purveyors of high culture.

²¹ibid. p 10/11

²²ibid. p 11

The real danger of the current 'progressive' drive towards comprehensive schooling, in their view, was, paradoxically, to comprehensive schools themselves. By demanding just one kind of schooling, progressives would deny comprehensive schooled children - in effect all children if they were to have their way - access to higher culture because of the comprehensive movement's misplaced notion of equality, stemming presumably either from their stupidity or envious malice. This, Cox and Dyson argue, would inevitably destroy the traditional cultural values of an English education which can only reside in the more traditional, selective and culturally sensitive elite sector. They seem to be contradicting their earlier assertion that comprehensives can offer - provided they are spurred on by competition from other types of schooling - their most able pupils an 'academic' education. They seem to suggest that the academic pretensions of the comprehensives, their effort to provide even a watered down grammar school curriculum, will have them frenziedly sowing their high cultural seeds before swine: their 'progressive' pedagogy will not allow their more able children to acquire these cultural values and the less able will not be able to understand what is going on anyway and therefore will receive an entirely inappropriate education.

Their rather spiteful rhetoric notwithstanding, Cox and Dyson did have a point. The lack of curriculum concern and direction on the part of the government and LEAs and the inability of teachers to build an appropriate curriculum in the ensuing policy vacuum was because the emphasis of their narrative was to expand opportunity to the 'disadvantaged'. There was a significant absence of imaginative planning for a kind of education which would have been more effective and worthwhile for everyone. This narrative silence gave the Black Papers their opportunity and their justification, though they made little positive contribution and themselves showed a paucity of imagination or sensitivity in their proposals.

Cox and Dyson's proposal is, broadly, to do nothing much but make a cosmetic change to Butler's system by raising the age of selection. Their argument - like Heath's and, indeed, not too far from the realpolitik of the Labour Party - was to maintain the existing fragile educational status quo and not to pursue any policy which sought to make radical change: extending comprehensivisation by proscribing direct grant or grammar schools, or interfering with the Independent sector. They implicitly acknowledged that they had lost much of the battle to the egalitarian narrative: they were offering

a kind of truce. However, their narrative conceals their re-description of the comprehensive school. They appear to give limited consent to comprehensive schools but only after they have re-described them as something much more like Butler's technical schools. They voice their hope that a new educational consensus could be forged on these terms, with the raising of the age of selection as a sop to the social consciences of the Left.

At the same time their argument contained some of the germs of the emerging neo-liberal story of education, greater accountability of schools to parents and a limited form of competition to raise educational standards, though their arguments are in essence still those of the Respectable Conservative with their emphasis on traditional cultural values and selection by merit. While their vision of schooling in England, broadly still Butler's bi-partite system without 'undue' emphasis on the social effects or vicissitudes of the selection processes, was remarkably similar in many ways to the system of English schooling today, the narrative base of today's educational system is quite different.

Stephen Ball describes this process of destabilisation of the egalitarian narrative in the 1970s, and as it survived as a counter-narrative in the 1980s, as '*the discourse of derision*'²³. However this, like Hirschmann's similar description, was not actually a discourse; it was not the advocacy of a narrative. The discourse of derision, in itself, created no expectations nor did it provide any re-description or re-invention of reality, rather it was the rhetorical destabilisation an existing narrative. The vocabularies of derision create only chaos. And in creating this, at least, the Black Papers could clearly claim some success. The legitimisation crisis which was to affect the Respectable narratives of both the Labour and the Conservative parties was, however, principally brought on by economic crisis but the Black Papers can fairly claim substantial influence on the emerging educational narrative of the Neo-Liberals under Thatcher.

Ball²⁴ identifies three clear strands to the rhetoric of the Black Papers which were to have an enduring influence on the subsequent educational narratives.

²³Stephen J. Ball *Politics and Policy Making in Education*. (London, Routledge: 1990) p.22 and passim.

²⁴ibid pp.25-6

Firstly, the decline in educational standards; secondly, the culpability of teachers and their educators at the training colleges. The third theme was that of indiscipline in schools and society. Ball describes how these three themes were to become the public image of schooling, *'the generally accepted 'what we all know about school''* - particularly the comprehensive school. Eventually these were to become the common sense. Teachers became to be seen as preventing an effective education either through stupidity or ideological malevolence, and their status as professionals began to decline from then on. Schools, particularly comprehensives, became more and more linked to low educational standards and bad discipline and in turn the reputation of grammar schools was again reinforced. Social indiscipline became linked to lack of educational direction, in particular the cure for social problems became to be seen as requiring a return to, or rather a re-invention of, 'traditional standards' and traditional forms of authority in schools.

'Progressivism' became a term of abuse; it became rhetorically linked to educational failure, the decline of standards and social indiscipline and the egalitarian narrative. Soon, a fourth theme was to emerge, the blaming of schools for not just this cultural disaster but also for Britain's economic decline. These themes were strengthened in the public image by the general strategy of the Conservative Party to generate a climate of panic and fear to defeat Labour in 1970: what Ball describes as their attempt to exploit the rhetoric of *'a nation under threat'*²⁵. That they did defeat Labour makes clear the success of their creation of a sense of anxiety. It was the rhetoric of jeopardy which was the bottom line of the arguments throughout the Black Papers, the other forms of argument - futility, perversity and betrayal had anarchy as the 'logical' consequence of disagreeing. It is this explicit or implicit rhetoric which so consistently lent a tone of hysteria to their arguments and often distracted the reader from their educational arguments which were not all ill considered. It was, however, ironic that the purveyors of chaos should insist that it was chaos that they sought to avoid.

Economic crises, trade union unrest, racial tensions and roller-coasting inflation continued to rack the country and, like Pip, the Respectable politicians began to find themselves unable to control their narratives. Or

²⁵ibid p. 26

rather they were perhaps more like Miss Havisham, surrounding themselves with the disintegrating fabric of a withering narrative, stagnating, while outside the world was moving on inexorably. In the end, it seems that the egalitarian story of the Labour Party had simply run out of plots and, in its attention to its quite frequently diverting economic sub-plots and internal power struggles, it had not so much deferred an ending to its educational narrative as lost sight of one.

2. Paving the Way: The Great Debate

'England has been in a dreadful state for some weeks. Lord Coodle would go out and Sir Thomas Doodle wouldn't come in, and there being nobody in Great Britain (to speak of) except Coodle and Doodle, there has been no government.'

Charles Dickens, Bleak House: Chapter 40

It was in 1976 that Callaghan attempted to wrest the advantage in the struggle for control by attempting a radical re-description of the narrative. He had seen the initiative of the egalitarian narrative tarnished, if not lost, in the barrage of propagandist rhetoric of the Conservatives and the right wing press. He certainly had no confidence in the egalitarian narrative to repudiate their claims about falling standards and cultural and economic catastrophe. Thatcher's lack of enthusiasm in creating so many comprehensives when she was Education Secretary was mirrored by the singularly unbullient approach of the subsequent Labour administration under Callaghan. The rhetoric of egalitarianism which had been the principal driving force behind the reformist educational narrative of the Labour Party - and which had, in reaction, provided power to the counter discourses of the Conservatives - had begun to lose discursive force as the various economic problems and crises placed insupportable pressure on the maintenance of the social narratives the Labour Party as it had, incidentally, to the Respectable Tendency of the Conservative party. Something like Butler's Respectable narrative still survived in not inextensive pockets of Local Educational Authority resistance to the removal of their grammar schools and in the independent and semi-independent school sectors yet the move towards the ethos of the greater egalitarianism of the

comprehensive school had gained a cultural impetus, as Thatcher found, that had become almost irresistible, though perhaps sometimes less out of conviction than out of habit.

At the same time, the 'common sense' view was that comprehensive schooling, was a disaster, unable to prevent seemingly inexorable cultural and economic decline. The legitimisation crises had debilitated both the vocabularies of elitism and of disadvantage. Neither could maintain any real narrative authority. Where there was still enthusiasm for comprehensives was from the teaching professionals and theorists who habitually used the vocabulary of disadvantage and were still convinced by the prospect of greater social justice it promised. Not even Margaret Thatcher could see, nor would she have desired, the possibility of the return to the narrow cultural hegemony of the elitist narrative of the Black Papers. Educational debate had become both embittering and, as will be described, in the entrenched struggle of two popularly odious stories, impotent.

Educational policy making had become in the 1970s more a matter for the educational professionals, especially through their trade unions and the Local Education Authorities. There was no grand narrative vision, instead the competing rhetorics were content with gaining small victories, minimising defeats and living in a world of ideological detente. Andrew Gamble remarks that the Callaghan government, like the Heath Government before it, dropped any pretensions to radical policy making and '*attempted to cope with the recession by a mixture of pragmatism and opportunism*'.²⁶ Callaghan's government had re-assumed the by then traditional, relatively powerless role of government in education: it provided money and attempted to set the agenda for educational reforms but avoided direct control and left it up to local government and the teachers and education professionals to discuss reforms, to amend them - perhaps even to ignore them - and to set the time scale to implement them. Patricia Rowan, the retiring editor of the Times Educational Supplement describes, with penetrating hindsight, the process of reform:

'The educational system of 20 years ago was cumbersome, and the pace of change slow. Almost any attempt at reform was

²⁶Andrew Gamble (1988, rev. 1994) p.99

*doomed, crushed between those two icons: partnership and consultation. One committee on public sector higher education balanced competing interests so well that it never got beyond stalemate. By the time every interest group had been consulted several times on any given subject - before and after a report was drawn up; before and after legislation was drafted - either the education secretary or the government itself had run out of time.'*²⁷

In his Ruskin College speech in 1976, the newly confirmed Prime Minister, James Callaghan, made a determined attempt to wrest the advantage in the educational debate from the Conservatives, and also, indeed, to undermine the egalitarian narrative of his own party. Class was no longer quite so important, style and fashion had become more powerful social discriminators. Comprehensive education seemed to fit in with this new 'trendy' youth consumerist society. Labour Party policy had with Halsey tended to become a matter of attempting to remedy deprivation rather than to make any sustained attempt to restructure education or schooling. The relatively failed attempt to reorganise schooling on comprehensive lines marked the end of attempts to reformulate the educational story the end of grand theories of education.

Callaghan attempted to provide a narrative, or at least the basic plot of a story, which could win popular authority. By this time the much publicised 'scandal' of the William Tyndale primary school had left the egalitarian educational narrative in something of a shambles and the official report on the Tyndale school was shortly to be published. The more positive and vigorous narratives of the Wilson era, the '*white heat of technology*', the child-centred pedagogies, the comprehensivisation of schools, had all but fizzled out under the sustained onslaught of the media about falling educational standards and loony left teachers.

The Tyndale scandal in the early seventies had underlined the popular conception of mad, bad teachers and the shortcomings of 'progressive' comprehensive schooling: though perhaps the real problem appeared to be not so much what the Tyndale teachers were doing but their refusal to do it

²⁷ Patricia Rowan, *From one extreme to the other*, Times Educational Supplement (Scotland) 25th April, 1997, sec. Features: p.5.

quietly: *'They (the Tyndale teachers) were quite explicit in opposing the centrality of schools' human resource service to the community. Their job was not to provide 'factory fodder'; they saw themselves as preparing human beings rather than human capital. They sought too, to undermine the class structure as far as possible in their policies and practices, rather than reinforce it, which they saw as the inevitable outcome of schools' traditional sorting and selection function. The practical outcome of these policies were a decreased emphasis on 'occupationally useful' skills, a refusal to stratify pupils on the basis of accepted criteria and the **implementation** of that not uncommon rhetorical claim that the school should serve the most 'deprived' segment of its population.'* ²⁸

Callaghan, in discussing the factors which lead up to his Ruskin speech, referred to the Tyndale affair, implying his agreement with the popular jeopardy and betrayal theses: *'It was an illustration of the kinds of things that parents were saying to me...'* ²⁹. The explicit hard egalitarian socialist ideology of the Tyndale teachers reinforced the popular story of comprehensive education - jeopardy and betrayal - and the media response was not to question what were the purposes of education or what values were important in schools but instead to offer up teachers as scapegoats for the ills of society, 'brainwashed' ideologues deviously intent on destroying the opportunities of the children and presiding over anarchy in the schools, rather even than comprehensive schooling itself, or the educational system or educational policies or the curriculum. The economy was running out of control: the oil crisis was at its height, inflation was rising, unemployment was at crisis levels, industrial unrest was commonplace and there was a significant decline in wages and the standard of living:

'The picture painted showed schools taken over by extreme progressive ideas... peddled by... politically motivated and irresponsible teachers with the deliberate intention of weakening the nation's moral fibre by the corruption of its youth, and of weakening its international competitiveness by the destruction of its academic standards....'

²⁸ Roger Dale, *The State and Education Policy* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1989) p. 126.

²⁹ *ibid.* p. 4

What the William Tyndale affair did was to prove that this was no mere fantasy. It demonstrated what we all felt in our hearts about progressive education... was right after all.' ³⁰

Dale comments that the 'Plowden' consensus, at best a half-hearted thing anyway, was by then firmly on the wane and, though its fall from grace was not directly attributable to the Tyndale affair, there had been for some time little political will to continue the narrative of progressive educational principles. On its own, Tyndale's progressivism was not really the issue: the debate was never really about pedagogy or curriculum or even the broader purposes of education. Rather, the debate was beginning to be about control, who was to control the educational processes, and more importantly, the social and cultural expectations of the educational narrative. It was the beginning of the end of an autonomous educational story.

Certainly Butler had always had a concern with the economy but his concern was not directly built into the story; rather the value of his educational story to the economy was in a way epiphenomenal: the wider expectation of educational opportunity he created would aid the economy, but the story was not built round the economy, rather it was parallel to it. Though they were quite discrete stories, the two would act in conjunction but without any established connexion. Butler saw no need in his story for a causal linkage between the economy and education. As opportunities were seized and more people gained the benefits of the educational process, then the economy with its need for a better educated workforce would mirror that benefit. Butler had no desire to displace the socialising and cultural aspects of education, so necessary to re-inventing the hierarchical social order which was his primary object of desire with a, to him, crude linkage of education and the economy. The egalitarian story too placed great emphasis on the socialising function of education, though in their case to engineer a new society rather than maintain something like the old social order. However, the decades of economic uncertainty and crises had thrown this epiphenomenalist 'mirror' approach into question. There was a perception that education had to be more closely controlled.

³⁰ibid. p. 132

Dale indicates that the Tyndale affair did point the emerging narrative in a significant direction: "... *teachers could run the schools in ways that clearly contradicted many of the shared assumptions on which the education system rested. Teachers could be effective in day to day control of the schools, and they could use that control in ways not welcome to the school managers or its funding authority.*"³¹ The emerging narrative rhetorically located the concept of parent power in direct conflict with teachers and schools, particularly schools and teachers espousing progressive ideas. It further entrenched in the imagination of the public an educational system not just out of control but actively subversive of the 'British way of life'. Further it brought to greater prominence education's role in the national economy and perhaps began the process of the narrative absorption of education into the national economic story, denying it its own unique story. These two concepts - parent power and the integration of the educational story into the economic story - became central concerns of Callaghan's Ruskin speech.

In his attempt to regain the initiative and to provide a rhetoric of education as equally vigorous and spectacular as the counter-rhetoric which had so disestablished the egalitarian narrative, Callaghan adopted many of the premises of the Black Paper writers, by then the received popular wisdom of the 'real' world of education. He had much the same aspirations as Cox and Dyson, though his was a much more authoritative theatre, attempting to fashion a new educational consensus out of the shattering of the old order much as Butler had done in 1944. He, however, did not have the favourable political climate that Butler did: his opposition was much more formidable, much less willing to play second fiddle. There was little political will on the Conservative side for the establishment of a new consensus. Also his audience did not have the same relatively unsophisticated and deferential public perception of education and teachers - that had been terminally undermined by the popular press. He was addressing a cynical and embittered perception of the world of education and the declining status of teachers.

In effect Callaghan halted the ideological pretensions of the Labour Party to an extension of comprehensive education and the pursuit of greater social

³¹R. Dale: *"The Politicisation of School Deviance: Reactions to William Tyndale"* in Barton and Meighan (eds): *Schools, Pupils and Deviance*, (Driffield, Nafferton: 1979) cited in Ball (1990) p. 27

justice through the educational narrative. His plea was a pragmatic one, delivered apparently ideologically free, for practical solutions to the educational problems. While it seems uncharitable to make a criticism in hindsight, it does seem characteristic of Prime Ministers in trouble to come up with Big Educational Ideas: in Callaghan's case, however, it was not an idea on which to base policy but rather to attempt to try to grasp some authority by setting the agenda and, perhaps, to gain some popularity out of the chaos.

He began the 'Great Debate' in his Ruskin speech with a reference to Tawney, perhaps the only great educational thinker of the Labour Party and an icon of the socialist struggle for equality in education. In this way he attempted to relate his present speech to the traditional Labour Party narrative of the continuing struggle for greater social justice in education, but he side-stepped the typical rhetoric of the Left. *'Let me answer the question 'what do we want from the education of our children and young people with Tawney's words once more. He said: 'What a wise parent would wish for their children so the state must wish for all its children'.*³² Thus he immediately asserted, if indirectly, what was to be a major theme in his speech, parent power. His imagery was of the paternal state. His principal rhetorical device was metaphorically to conflate the family with the state - in effect threatening that if the educationalists could not come up with a better story then, albeit reluctantly, the state would have to take some measure of greater control, justifying this by the material implication that the state was acting *in loco parentis*. He was reflecting the popular image of schools being run not for the benefit of parents, pupils or the country but for the advancement of a failing ideology.

His speech maintained this paternal, or perhaps avuncular, tone and through it he subtly distanced himself from any idea that he was, himself, some kind of ideologue. His object of desire was to create a new story that was more responsive to the wishes of parents and the needs of the economy, though these were, in his conflated metaphor, actually much the same thing. He wanted his motives made clear: what he wanted was simply to create an agenda for debate. He, it seems, wished to avoid any great expectation of he

³²This and subsequent quotes are from the re-print of Callaghan's speech in Times Educational Supplement (Scotland) 25th April, 1997

himself, or his government, taking direct political control over educational policy. His chosen role was to voice his concern over controversial issues rather than taking any committed political or ideological stance. It would not, perhaps, be uncharitable to suggest that indeed the Labour Party had entirely run out of ideas.

He later commented that in this speech: *'I did not want to pick quarrels... my hope was that we would be able to work together... that there should be agreement on the way forward for education'*.³³ His role was to reflect what he saw as the popular mood, the common sense of schooling which had been constructed by the rhetoric of Tory propagandists aided by the ineptitude of his and previous governments' administration of education. His private tone, in addressing his own Secretary of State for Education had been blunt: *'Was the teaching of the three Rs satisfactory? Was the curriculum in Maths and Science sufficiently rigorous? Was the examination system a proper test of achievement?'*³⁴ His Ruskin speech was not much less blunt. He conceded the central themes of the Black Paper writers. He agreed that standards were generally too low: *'With the increasing complexity of modern life, we cannot be satisfied with maintaining existing standards, let alone observe any decline. We must aim for something better'*

He made his and previous administrations' abdication of direct responsibility into a kind of virtue. Maintaining his paternal persona, he implied that he had hoped that the educationalists would get it right by themselves, but now he had become forced to recognise that they required a father's guiding hand. He complained of the anchor-dragging effect of trade unions and their claims to the autonomy of the professional and to insensitive local authorities. He readily conceded that much of the problem lay with the teachers: *'one of their troubles is that for an educated group, they behave far too defensively'* and, suggested, clearly indicating that his sympathies did not lie with the teachers, a more prominent role for the schools inspectorate. He showed the typical popular mistrust of 'progressive' education, calling for an examination of *'the methods and aims of informal education'*.

³³ as cited by Michael Barber, *New Labour, 20 Years On*, Times Educational Supplement 11th October, 1996 sec. TESS(2): p.4.

³⁴ *ibid.* p. 4

His principal concern, having established his credentials as untainted by socialists or educationalists, was that schools were not adequately serving the needs of industry: *'I am concerned on my journeys to find complaints from industry that new recruits from the schools sometimes do not have the basic tools to do the job that is required.'* He was concerned that vocational education has been neglected and voiced what was to become a typical Thatcher refrain in the eighties: *'Why is it that 30,000 vacancies for students in science and engineering in our universities were not taken up last year while the humanities courses were full?'* The deliberate philistine implication of this remark was clearly intended as a rebuke not just to the elitist narrative of the Tory Party but also to the intellectuals of his own party with their egalitarian theory and ideals. It was a demand for a 'common-sense' approach, as apparently atheoretical and ideology free as Butler's. Callaghan projected himself as a pragmatist and he grasped the opportunity created for him, ironically by the Tory Press and the Black Paper writers, to voice popular opinion. His speech was as much about power, his new position was not entirely secure, as it was about education.

Chitty ³⁵ argues that it was in this speech that Callaghan's renunciation of ideology in favour of pragmatism, his linking of education with the economy and, most importantly, his admission of powerlessness to control or change the educational narrative was to have profound effect on the subsequent educational narrative of the Neo-Liberals in their determination to centralise control over the educational narrative, in particular by instituting a national curriculum and controlling how it was to be delivered by creating a new institutional culture in education. Kenneth Baker, indeed, hailed the Ruskin speech as an educational landmark:

'...there was a growing disquiet that things were not all right in the State of Denmark, or in this case the State of Britain. This concern was powerfully expressed, initially, by a Labour prime minister, Jim Callaghan, in that famous speech he made at Ruskin in 1976. What he said was bitterly resented by the educational establishment and by Shirley Williams, his own Education Secretary. It was felt that education was a specialist matter - as such it should be left to the specialists.'

³⁵ Clyde Chitty, Towards a New Education System: The Victory of the New Right (Lewes: Falmer, 1989).

You shouldn't have clumsy politicians tramping around in the secret garden of the curriculum. But there was a growing disquiet about what was happening in education. First because many people who had gone to grammar schools were very saddened to see their old schools under attack. Second, many people were saddened that the great hope which had been invested in the idea of the secondary modern school had not been fulfilled. Third, many business people were saying, '...we're getting applicants who are barely literate and not numerate. What is happening to our education system?' And so this was a matter which was being forced upon our attention and which had to be addressed by all politicians - not just Conservative politicians. There was disquiet within the Labour Party as well.' ³⁶

It was the Conservatives who seemed to be most appreciative of Callaghan's speech: it undercut the egalitarian narrative and the socialist ideology which underpinned it. What Callaghan seemed to demand was a radical shift in the focus of the educational narrative, from the struggle for justice for all to the individual's educational success. In a sense the effectiveness of an educational system was to be judged simply and arithmetically by the sum of these individual successes. It left the Labour party, almost literally, speechless and, for the Conservatives, it signalled some kind of victory in their struggle against the egalitarian narrative. While not conceding the old, Respectable narrative of the Black Papers it offered them a new discursive opportunity, and they did not have long to wait to seize that opportunity.

³⁶ Kenneth Baker, in conversation with Peter Ribbins, in Peter Ribbins and Brian Sherrat (1997): p. 91

Part 2

The Bourgeois Story

'In many people's eyes it is now the Conservative Party which stands for social fragmentation, while the opposition represents the healing force of community and compromise...No one now doubts the value of economic freedom or the spirit of enterprise, but the exclusive emphasis on such things look like so much self-serving rhetoric... In itself, and severed from the institutions which limit it, the market may pose a threat to traditional forms of social life, to custom, religion and morality.'

Roger Scruton, cited by Charles Leadbeater in
Seven Blue Moods: New Statesman, 4th October, 1996

Part 2

The Bourgeois Story

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Chapter 6

Consuming Passions for Education

*"The Old Testament prophets did not say "Brothers I want a consensus".
They said: 'This is my faith, this is what I passionately believe. If you believe
it too, then come with me.'"*

Margaret Thatcher ¹

When Butler was made president of the Board of Education in 1941 he told his officials, who had asked for his plans, that he supposed he would '*...tour the country making some speeches about education*'. The reply was: '*But minister, there is only one speech about education*'.² Indeed there had been since the war just one dominant educational story, in a broad sense. However, with the accession of Thatcher it was about to undergo an revolutionary paradigm shift. Though Thatcher's emergent bourgeois educational narrative was in some ways similar to the Black Papers construction of educational common sense and, indeed, to the Respectable Butler tradition, her adopted narrative framework, the Market, was antithetical to this Respectable tradition. Her attempt to wrench control of the narrative of education from the professionals and to locate it in a Market framework was to bring about a radical re-description of educational identities and realities. The dynamics of this narrative shift and the nature of the new narrative is the topic of the rest of this study.

¹Margaret Thatcher (1979), cited in Andrew Gamble The Free Economy and the Strong State: The Politics of Thatcherism (London, MacMillan: 1989, rev. 1994) frontispiece.

²cited by Michael Barber in *A Strategy for Success: The Guardian*, 7/3/97

1. The Keywords of the Bourgeois Educational Narrative

'Our country's decline is not inevitable. We in the Conservative Party think we can reverse it. We want to work with the grain of human nature, helping people to help themselves...'

Conservative Party Manifesto, 1979

Roger Scruton³ speaks of the late seventies and early eighties as the time when the *'collapse of the educational system'* led to the government *'at last'* beginning to provide *'the language with which to formulate new (educational) policies'* and he stresses the importance of having to *'create a language with which these policies can be debated'*. Thatcher's narrative provided such a language though, as it turned out, it was not necessarily a language that reinventors of the high-culture tradition like Scruton, as will be discussed later, might have chosen.

Raymond Williams's Keywords, for example, provides a dictionary of the traditional, Respectable vocabularies of post-war years, providing the cultural meanings of words which had become: *'significant binding words in certain activities and their interpretations; ...significant indicative words in certain forms of thought. Certain uses bound together certain ways of seeing culture and society...'*⁴ The key words of Thatcher's narrative, the key metaphorical representations of the world which are the subject of this chapter are, however, not to be found there, even in the 1983 edition. Williams's book is dominated by key terms from the arenas of struggle between the classical narratives of socialism and liberalism - between Mill and Marx - which have so engrossed Respectable philosophers like Scruton. Keywords, for example, has much to say about 'Equality', but nothing about 'Quality'. 'Nationalisation' is discussed, but not 'Privatisation'. Terms such as 'Accountability', 'Excellence', 'Competition' or 'Choice' are conspicuously absent. Present are words like 'Dialectic', 'Liberation', 'Collective', 'Consensus', 'Society'... words which seem to feature only pejoratively, if at

³Roger Scruton (1990): Open University TV Broadcast (1990), Policy Making in Education: The Education Reform Act.

⁴Raymond Williams, Keywords (London: Fontana 1976, revised and extended 1983); *Introduction*, p.15

all, in the social and educational vocabularies since Thatcher. It is perhaps evidence of the extraordinary success of the Thatcher bourgeois narrative that Williams's book is, this chapter will argue, perhaps more of historical than current cultural value.

The 'grain of human nature' had been represented in the Respectable educational narrative by various hegemonically related metaphors and corresponding metonymies - organic metaphors of the state as gardener and social 'growth' through education, evolutionary metaphors of the development of society, biological metaphors of 'innate' qualities like ability and intelligence directing 'natural' growth, and 'scientifically' circumscribing the limits of individual growth, along predetermined paths and the social ordering, metonymic dimension of such metaphors - the Platonic myth of metals, the much older but still totemic 'ladder of being' where social organisation is a reflection of what God and/or Nature has ordained, the sociobiological description of 'natural' kinds of people determining location and value in society through their 'natural' ability and 'natural' class privilege.

The Respectable narrative had determined the cultural 'common sense' of what was 'normal' and 'natural' development, educationally and socially; what was appropriate to different 'kinds' of people as educational provision and what was inappropriate; what kind of 'growth' or 'development' - social, educational or sexual - was 'normal' and what was 'abnormal' or unnatural'; what expectations people could legitimately contemplate; what was culturally sacred and what profane. The 'natural' elitism of the regimes of selection were moderated and justified by the assumption in the narrative of a putative meritocracy and an altruistic ethic of service and duty for the selected elite. The narrative consensus between the Respectable politicians of both the Left and the Right had effectively 'depoliticised' education: the kernel of the largely successful rhetorical attack on the counter-narrative of the hard egalitarians was that they were attempting to relocate education as a political objective, as a means of redescribing society in a radical way. Thatcher was, however, to break this narrative consensus and once again throw education into the political arena.

The Respectable story had been weakened from the inside by the more open, meritocratic story of the 1944 Education Act which, though it had perhaps not

seen its rhetoric of meritocracy as much more than a device to gain consensus and maintain the traditional cultural hegemonies, had in its new narrative led to a demand for greater expectations from the educational system by an expanding, increasingly prosperous middle class. The egalitarian counter narrative had weakened the Respectable story of human nature, of inherited 'natural' ability and privilege. However, the increasingly persuasive middle class story of individual betterment through self-reliance, enterprise and hard work, both socially and economically, was under Thatcher to be revealed as the actual bastard child of the 1944 Act, not the counter-narrative of the softer egalitarians which had gained some narrative credibility in the Respectable interregnum even if it had failed to flourish.

In Thatcher's victory in 1979 a new story, the bourgeois story, had finally gained a receptive audience. Alan Clark, in his television series about the history of the Conservative Party⁵, tellingly calls the period from MacMillan to Thatcher, *'From Estate Owners to Estate Agents'*. In it he charts the irresistible rise of the petty bourgeoisie into the arenas of power of the Conservative Party which had traditionally been the all but exclusive domain of the Respectable Tendency, a consensus driven Conservatism, essentially protective of traditional privilege, dominated by the shire aristocracy. After MacMillan and Douglas-Home - both from the patrician wing of the party even if MacMillan had more shallow aristocratic roots - the more egalitarian, at least in the shallower meritocratic sense, but essentially bourgeois membership of the seventies demanded change. The aspiring classes saw their hard won social and economic positions threatened by an equivocating and vacillating Tory Party, convinced by the right's rhetoric of jeopardy, attacking what had been constructed as the radical egalitarian 'hidden agenda' of the left. Electoral defeats and failed international and national economic policies had by the late 1970s clearly brought into focus the pressing need for the Conservative Party to re-invent itself.

The force of Thatcher's personality and the power of her advocacy of the bourgeois story was such as to make renaming it 'Thatcherism' irresistible. It will be discussed in greater depth shortly, but though it was primarily an economic story which owed much to the radical neo-liberal economists von Hayek and Friedmann and to their apostle Keith Joseph, there were also

⁵as broadcast on BBC2 28/9/97

present aspects of a more simplified, attenuated, notion of society and a social radicalism and nationalism similar to Enoch Powell's and much had been borrowed from Ted Heath's neo-liberal Selsdon manifesto. It will be argued, however, that it was Thatcher's driving commitment and her personal, acerbic confrontational manner, her heroic style, that drove her reforms rather than her mastery of the philosophical tensions and ambiguities of her narrative.

2. The Unforgiving Strategy

*'In the Falklands we had to fight the enemy without.
Here the enemy is within, and it is more difficult to fight,
and more dangerous to fight'*⁶

'Consensus' was the keyword of the Respectable narrative. The Respectable Tendency had invested their hegemony in the maintenance of the narratives of the Conservative Party as what EP Thomson called the 'host culture', creating a cultural 'common sense' and effectively depoliticising the stories. However the Respectable Tendency felt there was no alternative to Thatcher's ideological story. They could see no hope of achieving power without it. The Respectable was no longer sustainable. Its demise had thrown the Respectable politicians into either a profound depression or panic.

Thatcher was vitally concerned to maintain control of the new narrative - it was tolerated by the Respectable Tendency because it had placed the Tories once again in power but its future was far from being assured. She saw enemies everywhere, not just in the narrative of socialism which she was confident she could handle, but more importantly in the Respectable story of her own party which she loathed perhaps just as much. The resolve of the Respectable Tendency had become debilitated - the Respectable Norman St John Stevas was never one of Thatcher's 'converts' yet he found himself welcoming her premiership: *'I didn't know whether it (Thatcherism) will work or not. Why is there no critique of it? Because no-one has any alternative. There is nothing left to try'*. However, what Thatcher stood for went against many of his most sacred patrician sentiments.

⁶Thatcher cited in John Osmond, The Divided Kingdom (London: Constable, 1988) p.39

Thatcher had come to power riding on rhetorical storm clouds of economic and social chaos. Her rhetorical appeal was to save Britain from present disaster and the prospect of future catastrophe. However, she had been placed in power predominantly by the expanding and aspiring middle classes, many of whom owed their new economic and social power to Butler's educational narrative. Her project was, bluntly, to smash the narratives which she perceived as threatening the discourses of her new power-base - The Respectable narrative of her own party and the egalitarian narrative of her political rivals - and to substitute her own narrative - a highly ideological, politically radical narrative that was not just unashamed of its ideology but positively flaunted it.

The Respectable Narrative had never really been a Grand Narrative: it was too fluid and too consensual, too pragmatic in its desire to maintain power to have a clear and unambiguous narrative base. It had largely become the 'host culture' because it had refused to cast its stories in explicit, unambiguous political and ideological terms: it never claimed that it would change society, just that it would provide a continuity of traditional, 'common sense' cultural values and stability for the country to 'evolve', 'naturally'. It had maintained its hegemony over competing cultural narratives by accusing them of being political and they overpowered their rivals using the rhetoric of perversity, jeopardy and betrayal - they were 'unnatural', they went against the grain of 'common sense', they were inciting revolution and playing ducks and drakes with the nation's future.

The closest the Respectable Tendency had come to a grand narrative was its not always convincing advocacy of Disraeli's 'One Nation Toryism'. It was never the case that the Tories had neglected the importance of self-interest in their formulations of human nature, but unfettered liberalism was seen as a potentially dangerous - and political - rhetoric, particularly as the Reform Acts were widening the social base of the electorate. Unrestricted liberalism, would, inevitably and with Hobbesian savagery, justify a nation of 'haves' and 'have nots' - inviting revolution at worst and at best creating and maintaining an alienated electoral base which would be exploited by an active political opposition. Disraeli proposed a softer style: not unfettered egoism, but more what Thomas Nagel was to call 'self-referential altruism'. Thus the benevolence of the Victorian philanthropists, individually concerned to lay up alms against oblivion, could be re-interpreted in populist political rhetoric not

just as the human face of capitalism but as characterising the dominant ethic of the Conservative Party. Consequently the Victorians came to see education as essentially a philanthropic project and to perceive greater state control of education as a threat not just to their hegemony but also to the cultural hegemony of their economic and cultural stories.

By giving up some liberty, the Respectable tendency argued, they would necessarily gain less than they would with unfettered liberalism: but unfettered liberalism carried the risk of them losing everything. Butler succinctly called politics 'The Art of the Possible'. The Respectable project was presented in the vocabulary of games: consensus politics was a game, however, which demanded apparently irrational behaviour, the voluntary giving up of potential winning strategies to ensure longer term gain. Thatcher could never bear such 'irrationality': that was her strength and, perhaps, her weakness too. To her it was simply incomprehensible not to strive with all vigour to win.

The Respectable Tory narrative traditionally tended to represent politics in a consensual way - conceptually similar to Kipling's 'The Great Game' - with potential winners and losers regulated by gentleman's rules which might be bent or skewed but which would not entirely be broken. As a game, strategy becomes the important thing in politics and rhetoric becomes its most important means to maintaining the necessary discipline and control of the narrative to allow the game to continue, especially when some members of the team become dissatisfied when it hits a losing streak. Losses - such as the tactical sacrifice Butler made of Bantock's highly restrictive cultural elitism for a somewhat more socially inclusive elitism - were acceptable, up to a point, if there remained the possibility of long term survival and success.

The politics of the Respectable Narrative has its rhetorical roots in this kind of game-theory⁷. Though, as Davies makes clear, the competitive nature of their concept of politics was never in doubt: *'The relentless pursuit of power*

⁷The following discussion of game theory, in particular the 'zero-sum' game of noncooperative players, is indebted to J.L. Makie *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977) in particular to his discussion of 'The Prisoner's Dilemma'; to Douglas Hofstadter *Metamagical Themas* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985) for the discussion of effective strategies in this game, in particular the 'forgiving' strategy; and to John Maynard Smith, "*The Evolution of Behavior*" in *Scientific American*, 239(3):176-192 (September 1978) for the development of the 'nice' strategy.

*explains so much of the history and development of the Tory Party... It explains why, for example, the Conservative Party never had a consistent body of ideas or a clear-cut ideology, in case they got in the way of power: hence the famed flexibility of the Party...*⁸, yet at the same time they had developed what Hofstadter has termed a 'forgiving' or 'nice' strategy. He defined this as a strategic malleability, in which a player always co-operated with a co-operative adversary. If a player's opponent did not cooperate during one play, over one policy, this strategy prescribed noncooperation on the next one, but a player with a 'forgiving' strategy reverted rapidly back to cooperation once her opponent started cooperating again. In this way, for example, the National Health Service remained recognisably as Bevan had created it, steel and coal remained nationalised, nuclear deterrence remained central to defence policy, and education remained broadly selective and its curriculum broadly traditionally classicist and elitist. Even with comprehensivization, the 'common sense' of essentially different 'types' of children was embedded in the story.

In effect, the 'nice' strategy required its players to submit their conflict to external arbitration to avoid mutually assured destruction: not so much consensus as *détente*. The educational story had thus become the property of the educational bureaucrats and professionals. Any attempt to radically revise the educational story - along egalitarian lines for example - was in the minds of the Respectable Right a betrayal of the rules of the game. This might go some way to explaining the particular venom with which comprehensive education was greeted: it was not just a threat to the hegemony of the Respectable story and its representation of education and educational identities and realities but also to the Respectable strategy which had so long, and often so precariously, maintained their 'host culture' hegemony.

Indeed, Hofstadter's research discovered what the Respectable Tory Party had been practising for years; that their 'forgiving' strategy - at least the appearance of consensus - outperformed every other strategy that was 'unforgiving'. Respectable Toryism, thus, had become a broad church, allowing some degree of latitude in opinion, such that even if they disagreed on many issues the core ideology - selective schooling following the 'natural' kinds of children maintaining the 'natural' order of society and its 'common

⁸A.J. Davies (1995) p. 448

sense' cultural values - was maintained. Butler, for example, could still agree with the basic 'common sense' of Macmillan. That was the kernel of the pragmatists of the Respectable Tendency's fears: that Thatcher's story was too ideologically committed to be as flexible or so enduring. Their 'forgiving' strategy had kept not just them in power for most of the century but it also had left them in control of the 'host' social narrative - and its hegemony - with only marginal revisions having to be made.

There is no clear sense of an ending in this kind of Respectable politics, not even in theory: in this sense it can never sustain a Grand Narrative, like Socialism for example, where the End - total social equality - may be considered a woolly romantic fantasy but it still, in triumphalist, eschatological metaphors of the New Jerusalem, governs the narrative. The inflexibility of the socialist Grand Narrative - iconically represented in the radicals of the Left in Clause 4 Part 4 of the Labour Party Constitution - would, in the years to come, be more overtly recognised by the Respectable Labour Party, in an ironic reflection of Thatcher's strategic victories over alternative stories, as preventing them from gaining and sustaining power for any length of time.

For Respectable Conservatives - and for their counterparts on the Left, the less ideologically certain politicians of Labour's Respectable wing - the game cannot ever be won, it can only be lost: the strategy is to ensure the game continues and that those who are winning remain at least moderately satisfied and willing to continue in the same team. The risk of trying for an outright win - even just stating what an outright win would be - is fraught with danger and carries with it the real risk of losing: so the end is constantly deferred, re-interpreted, re-invented or revised.

Indeed the Respectable Tendency of the Left had, for example in their conception of educational realities and identities as has been discussed, much in common with the Respectable tendency of the Right - both broadly shared the same fundamental 'common sense' of education. Their consensus was, however, much deeper than the temporary allegiances of a political game: it was a matter of how they shared - and invested their very identities in - a common 'reality'. Though they often and bitterly disagreed they did not materially threaten the 'host' narrative. They both hankered after an elitist - or at least a selective - educational system; they both agreed about the

superiority of the classical curriculum; they both held the grammar school in iconic regard. Their less respectable wings might advocate different stories, the free market or hard egalitarianism, but the Respectable tendencies kept their hegemonic grip on their respective Respectable narratives. They might at times stray from it, as both Heath and Callaghan did, but they would return to its comfortable security in adversity.

Thatcher, however, had a radically different vision. She presented her vision as a Grand narrative, an all-inclusive social theory with the promised end of a 'natural' bourgeois hegemony. Her narrative demanded the wholehearted commitment of its acolytes. She was much more ideologically sympathetic to an 'unforgiving' strategy: the ethos of Thatcherism was noncooperation and the savage competition of the classic zero-sum game. She refused to 'play' politics: for her it was war. Richard Crockett chronicles the '*battles in cabinet*' against the 'Wets' and Thatcher in her autobiography herself employs all the imagery of war, '*campaign tactics in the battle bus*', '*Mr Scargill's insurrection*', '*militant shock troops*', '*the enemy within*' '*privatisation...reclaiming territory*', '*a British victory on points (over Europe)*'...⁹

Politics for her was in a sense more real than reality. It was, to borrow a phrase from Saul Bellow, a 'reality policeman' - it was not the arbiter of stories nor the gatekeeper of comfortable 'illusions' or compromised narratives - it was the destroyer of 'false' narratives: '*The final illusion - that state intervention would promote social harmony and solidarity or, in Tory language, 'One Nation' - collapsed in the 'winter of discontent', when the dead went unburied, critically ill patients were turned away from hospitals by pickets, and the prevailing social mood was one of snarling envy and motiveless hostility. To cure the British disease with socialism was like trying to cure leukaemia with leeches.*'¹⁰

No ideology is pure, none is without the seeds of betrayal, none uncluttered by contradictory accumulations of cultural baggage except perhaps in the philosophical naiveté of politicians like Thatcher. However, her demand for

⁹ phrases selected from many examples in Margaret Thatcher *The Downing Street Years* (London: Harper Collins, 1993)

¹⁰ Margaret Thatcher (1993) p. 8

an ideology was far more than her recognition that the Conservative party needed a new conceptual framework, a metaphorical re-description of their stories of society. Her desire was also for the power and control that a demand for a commitment to a particular ideology would bring. It was more than the demand for change; it was the demand for a change that would bring about and continue to maintain the ascendancy of the new bourgeois story of Conservatism for the future. The philosophy of communism was abhorrent to her, but the means by which the communist politicians had for so long maintained an enduring power-base, their nearly absolute control over the social and cultural stories of society, appears to have been far more attractive. Thatcher was much taken with her 'iron maiden' caricature, perhaps attracted by the cultural resonances of the 'iron' metaphor - 'iron' chancellors and even 'iron' curtains - illustrating the popular historical regard for political inflexibility, for absolute, simple certainties and for pragmatic, determined action uncluttered by emotional or intellectual baggage.

She had no truck with consensus, no willingness to take an 'acceptable' loss: for her it was always all or nothing. Her position was strong because of the perceived failure of the consensual politics of the Respectable story and also because of the much reduced power of the counter narrative of the Labour party which had become weakened by internal power struggles. It was also strengthened by the residual popular perception of equality of status, in the sense of the decline of deference to 'traditional' class divisions particularly by the aspiring classes, and by the existence of the Welfare State. The popular perception of 'two' nations was less strong, the 'have nots' apparently fewer and less perilously threatened. Thatcher never really threatened, for example, the essential principles of free education and health.

Her main advantage was the weakness of her opponents - '*all the problems of Britain were the direct consequence of two things. One was socialism. The other was the Tory grandees*'.¹¹ Both these 'enemies' were she quite soon rendered ineffectual. Thatcher was, in effect, able to attempt to take the board away and then begin a game of patience, ignoring the existence of any other player - even on her own side - and denying the possibility that there could be any other way of playing. Robert Skidelsky remarked that she was: '*the most ideological prime minister to have led a party that prided itself on*

¹¹Thatcher according to her media adviser, Tim Bell, cited in Davies (1995) p.336

pragmatism. She got her chance because the old pragmatism had degenerated into a sticky corporatism which had become the vehicle for stagnation and decline'.¹²

She presented her political strategy as a classic 'zero-sum' game - but there would be no co-operative strategy, no shared or compromised narrative, no communication: only savage rivalry with no quarter offered or given. This metaphorical construction of politics as a zero-sum game sees people - even those in the same team - essentially either as wholly committed devotees or as competitors and rivals, and, either way, not as ends in themselves but always as means. It offered only a very limited political morality with ethics, relations and alliances being exploitative and strategic. The only values with authority are those which maintained the story.

Her 'philosophy' was never clearly distinct from the cultural background of Thatcher herself. All her political instincts, her perceptions of 'reality', were bourgeois to their bootstraps:

'Deep in their instincts people find what I am saying and doing right. And I know it is, because it is the way I was brought up... in a small town. We knew everyone, we knew what everyone thought. I sort of regard myself as a very normal, ordinary person, with all the right instinctive antennae'.¹³

Stuart Hall characterised her style as 'authoritarian populism'. Only she was ever the legitimate speaker, only her narrative had legitimacy: *'A leader must lead, must lead firmly, have firm convictions and see that those convictions are reflected in every piece of policy'.¹⁴* Davies comments on the exasperation of her Cabinet Ministers with her heroic tendency to begin her meetings by summing up the policy conclusions or by making policy statements in advance of meetings: *'As I often did in government, I was using public statements to advance the arguments and to push reluctant colleagues further than they would otherwise have gone.'*¹⁵

¹² cited in Peter Pugh and Carl Flint *Thatcher for Beginners* (Cambridge: Icon, 1997) p.157

¹³ Margaret Thatcher (1993) op.cit., p. 207

¹⁴ cited in Davies (1995) op.cit., p. 31

¹⁵ ibid p.125

Her determination to destroy the traditional 'nice' strategy was a central complaint of the Respectable remnants of the new government. Francis Pym offered a typically condescending patrician comment on Thatcher's strategy: *'..we've got a corporal at the top not a cavalry officer.'*¹⁶ He saw, as did Thatcher herself, that she was not content with anything but a final victory, but he regarded this strategy as at best naive and potentially disastrous.

Davies records Thatcher saying, *'There is no consensus. I call them (Respectable opponents) quislings and traitors.'*¹⁷ Richard Crockett¹⁸ characterises hers as 'The Heroic Age'. For her, politics was always the crude zero-sum game and her lack of co-operation with other points of view became legendary: *'To those waiting with bated breath for that favourite media catchphrase, the 'U-turn', I have only one thing to say. You turn if you want to. The lady's not for turning.'*¹⁹ Such was the power of her rhetoric, allied to her manipulation of populist culture, that the bourgeois story of the Conservative narratives of education and society was to become, for a time, the cultural iconography of Thatcher.

There are those, particularly on the Left, who would disagree that Thatcher herself was so important. John Pilger, for example, prefers a more traditional, Marxist interpretation of events, seeing Thatcher as merely an extension of the historical march of capitalism. However, he writes:

'...Thatcher was not 'a unique political force', as her mythmakers contend. What she did was to popularise petit-bourgeois reaction and to silence any opposing voice. Indeed her greatest single achievement was the co-opting of British liberalism: from the liberal media to the Labour Party. The liberal intelligensia, in the press and the academia never seriously exposed Thatcherism by denouncing its tactics and decoding its language. Fraudulent notions of 'freedom', 'choice', 'enterprise', 'modernising'....., 'family values' and

¹⁶Hugo Young (1990) p. 331

¹⁷Davies (1995) p.92

¹⁸Richard Crockett, Thinking the Unthinkable: Think Tanks and the Economic Counter Revolution 1931-1983 (London: Fontana, 1995) p.287 and *passim*

¹⁹Margaret Thatcher, address to the Tory Party Conference, Brighton: The Guardian 10/10/80.

*'reform' were not only allowed to become common usage, but were adopted by those once proud of their liberal credentials.*²⁰

Pilger's analysis of Thatcher's 'authoritarian populism' and how it was used to maintain control over the discourses of politics is acute, but Pilger's Marxist Grand Narrative does not explain why Thatcher's story became so popular and so resistant to dissenting voices which were perhaps not as silent as Pilger describes though they did prove ineffective.

Partly the answer lies in the growing lack of confidence in the traditional Grand Narratives themselves, particularly socialism, to make a difference. The radical, modernist revolutionary projects of the 1960s and 1970s - typified by the egalitarian story of education - had foundered and, as described in the last chapter, there was a critical loss of confidence in the Respectable narrative of the Conservative Party which Thatcher filled. Certainly her story was perhaps not exactly what anyone much, even in her own party, seemed to want, but it was the only one uttered with enough confidence and certainty to persuade. It certainly struck a popular chord at the time when so much confidence in any kind of grand narrative had been lost.

Further, Pilger's Marxist analysis appears to be unable to account for the success of Thatcher's story: it seems to offer nothing but a reiteration of its compromised vocabularies, formalist historiography and class antagonism. He, in fact, states no more than we already know, without offering any explanation for Thatcher's undeniable success. Populism is clearly about personality as much as ideas: it is about effective and manipulative rhetoric, persuasive stories and metaphors which strike the people as representing how they see reality. It is, above all, about managing perceptions of reality and maintaining power, not through force but by policing consent. Stuart Hall writes:

'Popular culture is one of the sites where this struggle for and against a culture of the powerful is engaged: it is also the stake to be won or lost in that struggle. It is the arena of

²⁰John Pilger, *Distant Voices* (London: Vintage, 1992) p. 119

consent and resistance. It is partly where hegemony arises, and where it is secured.'²¹

Pilger's analysis is coloured by his own commitment, not even so much to one grand narrative, but more generally to grand narrative eschatology. For him there always must be a clear 'sense of an ending', as Frank Kermode describes it. It frames his view of the world. He sees politics as a perpetual conflict between the traditional grand narratives, socialism and liberalism, dating from the Enlightenment. What he seems not to wish to consider is that with Thatcher, though not necessarily because of her, we have perhaps come to the end of grand social narratives and their rigid uncompromising vocabularies and categories: in this sense what Thatcher was offering was to become not so much a grand narrative but a post-modernist simulation of a grand narrative. This, however, will be further developed in a later chapter.

Thatcher was instinctively sensitive to the popular mood. She, more critically however, had an awareness of the means by which she could construct, manipulate and reflect it, thus maintaining her bourgeois story and herself in power. She described the reasons for her victory over Labour in the confidence debate that led to the General Election in 1979:

The Government's defeat... symbolized a larger defeat for the Left. It had lost the public's confidence as well as Parliament's. The 'winter of discontent', the ideological divisions in the Government, its inability to control its allies in the trade union movement, an impalpable sense that socialists everywhere had run out of steam...

The Tory Party, by contrast, had used its period in opposition to elaborate a new approach to reviving the British economy and nation. Not only had we worked out a full programme for government; we had taken apprenticeships in advertising and learnt how to put a complex and sophisticated case in direct and simple language. We had, finally, been arguing that case for the best part of four years, so our agenda would, with

²¹Stuart Hall 'Notes on deconstructing "the popular"' in R. Samuel (ed) People's History and Socialist Theory (London: Routledge, 1981) p. 239

luck, strike people as familiar common sense rather than as a wild, radical project.'²²

Thatcher gave far more importance to the need to 'manufacture consent', to borrow a phrase from Chomsky. But the consent was as much for her personal power as for the story she came to embody. In many senses her story and she, herself, were the same thing - she was the story, the story was her. She wanted, almost evangelically, to rebuild the social narratives in her own image. She was convinced of the need for her narrative to bind not just the Party to Office, but the Party and the country to her. She presented the story and herself simultaneously as indispensable to the future of the nation. She always constructed herself as a strong person, a leader who had convictions from which she would not stray. Her intransigence to any criticism, never mind to counter-narratives, and her certainty in the correctness of her narrative became legend.

'She knew what was best for Britain and therefore those who disagreed with her were not simply wrong - they were potential traitors to the cause', Davies comments²³. It is interesting to note that so many commentators, like Davies, Gamble and Crockett so often cited here, constantly fall into the use of both military and religious imagery when talking about Thatcher, reflecting the characteristic unforgiving nature of her rhetoric and its positive evangelising aspect.

Indeed Thatcher radically redefined the Conservative Party as a Party with beliefs, with a dogma and with a mission. In dramatic contrast to the Respectable game strategy exemplified by Ian Gilmour's insistence that: *'British Conservatism is ...not an '-ism. It is not an idea. Still less is it a system of ideas. It cannot be formulated in a series of propositions, which can be aggregated into a creed. It is not an ideology or a doctrine.'*²⁴, Thatcher employed militant religious imagery to evangelise for her 'creed': *'The Old Testament prophets did not say 'Brothers I want a consensus'. They said: 'This is my faith, this is what I passionately believe. If you believe it too, then come with me.'*²⁵

²²Margaret Thatcher (1993), p. 4/5

²³Davies (1995) p.271

²⁴ quoted in Peter Jenkins *Mrs Thatcher's Revolution* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987) p. 97

²⁵cited in Andrew Gamble (1988) p.v

Thatcher's story was not, however, so much a political story - it owed little to political theory. Rather it was a selective narrative based on her own idealised history, her home-spun values and beliefs re-invented as a creed and related with quasi-religious and portentous zeal. In many senses it was not unlike cult 'philosophies', like Scientology - at least in their characteristic style of charismatic, authoritarian leadership, the founder's close and exclusive control of the largely home spun narrative, and a tendency towards paranoia if subject to criticism.

Her style was messianic, offering redemption only by a radical revision of the 'common sense'. She mythologised her own life in what was almost a fictional displacement of the life of Christ. She speaks in her autobiography - in the portentous tones of the New Testament - of her own nativity in a poor but honest corner shop; of her ethical and intellectual maturation under the influence of her father living above the shop; of her carrying out her father's wishes when she went out into the world; of her time in the desert outside politics as one of meditation and the temptation of 'giving it all up'; of her realisation that her unavoidable, sacred duty was to save Britain, to redeem it from the sin of socialism; of her regard for Keith Joseph as a John the Baptist figure preparing the way for her; of her recruitment of apostles into her cabinets; of her militant evangelism; of her initial triumphs against her enemies; of her casting the unions out of the temple of politics; of the development of her creed; of her final betrayal and her self-sacrificing abdication; and, finally, of the hope of resurrection in the future. It ends with her triumphal description of the new world she had created: that even if she, in her favourite Churchillian terms, had not been allowed 'to finish the job', at least she had set the agenda for the future and she had changed irrevocably the vocabularies of politics.

Davies ironically comments on this fictionalisation : *'Mrs Thatcher's 'poor but honest' background was something she was not above exploiting. In fact, however, this grounding must have been drastically modified by her privileged experience of education at Oxford, a professional life as a barrister and a marriage to a wealthy businessman.'*²⁶ He seems to suggest that she used her bourgeois background in a explicit act of exploitation but

²⁶Davies (1995) p. 94

this is to miss the point. She was not separate from the story she had created about herself; she did not 'use' it, indeed it could be argued cogently that such was the power of the narrative that the story used her to fulfil itself. In any case, Thatcher never was able to distance herself critically from her own beliefs, she had no sense of uncertainty, no power of self-reflection, and above all no sense of historical irony.

There is a sense, however, in which Pilger is quite correct: Thatcher was, perhaps, written by her story as much as she was the author of it. If she had not existed then she would have had to have been invented. It is, in the end, not quite possible to separate the 'real' Thatcher from the one she, the story espoused, the popular media, her political devotees and even her enemies had invented. However there were two discrete elements to her story: its populist, sometimes contradictory, often simplistic and ill-defined, bourgeois ideology of a new, 'natural' moral and social order; and, perhaps more important in establishing her story, the unforgiving, heroic strategy of the market, the virulent rhetoric with which it was maintained and the way that foundering attempts to create counter-narratives were broken. What was to be different about Thatcher was how she re-politicised the Conservative story and how she grasped and maintained control of the social narratives, in particular the educational story.

3. Redefining Society: Inequality by Design

*'Mrs Thatcher's success derives only in part from her ability to plunder the chapel culture in which she was born... She is also a consummate story teller to the nation, offering us easy and instant illustrations like those of the brightly coloured pop-up picture books of our childhood. Leaving nothing to chance, she tells us a constant succession of fairy tales and parables to lighten our darkness.'*²⁷

Thatcher strove to change the language of the Tory Party. Her new language would, she believed, in the Conservative naive epistemological tradition, not make 'reality' or be complicit in its re-invention: it would simply reflect the 'real' reality - in her case this was represented by the metaphorical construction, the story of the 'Free Market':

*'I knew from my father's accounts that the free market was like a vast sensitive nervous system, responding to events and signals all over the world to meet the ever changing needs of peoples in different countries, from different classes, of different religions with a kind of benign indifference to their status. Governments acted on a much smaller store of conscious information and, by contrast, were themselves 'blind forces' blundering about in the dark, and obstructing the operations of markets rather than improving them.'*²⁸

It was this cosy domestication of market forces that was to become the governing metaphor for her social policies. She could not resist, as few politicians it seems ever can, using organic metaphors. For her, however, it was not the country that was the important organism, as in the Respectable narrative, but the economic super-structure. She presented market economics as a kind of biological homeostatic mechanism, coming to the 'correct' balance by itself. In her view, providing the market was left to achieve this

²⁷Trevor Blackwell and Jeremy Seabrook: *A World Still to Win: The Reconstruction of the Post-War Working Class* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985) p. 156

²⁸Thatcher(1993) p.11

balance by itself, without interference from politicians, then all, not just economically but also socially, would be well.

Her phrase '*benign indifference*' could have been her maxim though the market as a mechanism cannot have a conscience and cannot be described as 'benign' except in the very abstract economic sense that what is good is the freedom to trade without regulation and what is evil is that which interferes with such freedom and so prevents 'natural' economic balance, an ethical dichotomy that Thatcher certainly favoured. Hers was a Manichean approach: share-holders, entrepreneurs, businessmen, wealth creators were all symbols of 'freedom' and were consequently good; trade unionists, socialists, professionals were symbols of restrictive practices and therefore bad.

The 'naturalness' of Thatcher's economic master narrative was not so much a metaphorical construction of human nature - as the Respectable Tendency had provided - but rather was presented more like a 'natural' law, a representation of how the world works, an economic version of Newton's laws of physics. She was constitutionally unable to comprehend that any other story could have any legitimacy. For her there was only one story - a story of unnerving lucidity - which she saw with perfect clarity and she had little patience with anyone who could not see as clearly and 'rationally' as she did.

The startling simplicity of Thatcher's argument stems perhaps mainly from her own experience, in particular from her faith in the 'rational' derived from the early influence of her father's small businessman mentality and clearly influenced also by her training in reductivist, epistemologically and metaphysically simplistic, science. For her, the work of economists and philosophers was to affirm her ideas, not to inform them. Hers was a simplistic view of the Market: it is not at all clear, for example, that the Market is a homeostatic mechanism at all, rather that it is inherently always in flux. The Market did, however, appeal to her as a metaphorical vehicle for promoting the radical individualism that drove her narrative and a new moral order.

Thatcher's narrative of reform presented a radically different 'common sense' educational reality though it was framed by a traditional political rhetoric of redemption. Politics, for her, was a reflection of essential human nature - she was first and foremost a political creature - and her conception of human

nature was a narrow one. Her conception, stemming from this and from her petty bourgeois background and her schooling in free market economics, was of people as rational egoists competitively seeking advantage and co-operating with others - though never compromising on important matters of principle. It was this that fuelled her contempt for what she saw as the perversity of the educational professionals.

Thatcher's narrative utilised the organising metaphor of the Market as the means by which society was to be regulated rather than any positive principle of social justice. At its heart was the minimalist economic theory of Adam Smith, refined and re-invented by economists such as Hayek and Friedmann. Its view of human nature - central to the Market framework of her narrative and her re-description of educational realities and identities was something like Darwin's and Spencer's story of 'human as animal' evolutionary success through 'natural' ruthless competitiveness and the correspondent 'natural' qualities of enterprise, hard work and self-reliance.

Darwinism, the 'Blind Watchmaker' as Richard Dawkins has described it, was particularly attractive because it suggested that the operation of physical laws alone were enough to describe the 'natural' place of humankind at the apex of creation. The 'natural' processes of selection were alone enough to describe this, as analogously, the 'natural' Market forces of choice and competition were sufficient in any description of society or, indeed, of education.

Thatcher's accession was coincidentally accompanied by the increasing popularity of neo-evolutionary narrative formulations of human nature, 'selfish genes' and 'socio-biology'. Human nature, it was argued, is the product of evolution down to the genetic level: the qualities of radical individualism - selfishness, ambition and competitiveness - are 'programmed' into the human psyche. The socio-biological re-description of human nature in such para-Darwinian evolutionary vocabulary permitted a comfortable abstraction of, for example, the discussion of poverty. Poverty was a necessary and 'natural' evolutionary condition. The world was fairly neatly - and 'naturally' - divided between the successful 'haves' and the doomed 'have-nots': the blind forces of evolution selected for the 'natural' human qualities of the bourgeois 'haves' - thrift, enterprise, competitiveness and ambition - and weeded out the feckless 'have-nots' for 'natural' extinction.

This vocabulary could argue that it was neither an unsympathetic government with its series of hostile social policies, nor was it class antipathy that allowed some to prosper while others declined: it was simply the operation of the 'natural', dispassionate, neutral forces, just like the weather or earthquakes which no-one could control.

Consequently, it could be argued, those who succeed do so because they have been selected: they have adapted successfully to the changing environment; they have the required qualities. Certainly, in classic evolutionary vocabulary, a species or a subset of a species which cannot adapt to a changing environment is ultimately doomed to extinction, but Thatcher's pseudo-Darwinist vocabulary concealed that she had set about creating a new economic environment. There was nothing 'natural' about that: it was a political act, an act of conscious ideological choice even if she argued that all she was doing was removing interfering economic and social policies, allowing the 'natural' Market to exert its inexorable will. That some people failed to adapt is a perversely circular justification of a story which had created the environment in which they could not do otherwise. The new environment was fairly explicitly designed in order that the bourgeois class should flourish and that the bourgeois stories would ultimately be instituted as the new cultural 'common sense'.

This concealment of the ideological sub-text of the story is certainly typical of the educational narratives of the Conservative Party discussed in this exercise and it is also typical of Thatcher's - but only as Thatcher's narrative has slowly and inexorably become adopted as the cultural common sense. The 'common sense' of Thatcher was not immediately apparent, either to many of her putative Tory allies or to her opposition. The earlier narratives of the Respectable tendencies had operated as an established 'host culture', disguising their ideology behind their claim to represent common sense. At first the narrative of Thatcher, no matter how she attempted to represent it, was clearly not the common sense - her narrative was characterised at first by its struggle with what it represented as a debilitating, though established, culture.

The neo-Darwinian metaphor of the bourgeois narrative represents the essence of the paradigm shift between the Respectable and Bourgeois narratives. It provided a rhetorical frame which was in direct contrast to the

static class organisation of the Respectable liberal narrative and with the fairly rigid class distinctions was the 'reality' factor of the egalitarian narrative. It was a metaphor, indeed, which encouraged a break with fixed social orders and traditions in favour of social ambition and material acquisitiveness as a marker of status. The metaphor was a dynamic one of becoming and of social change, not of the maintenance of the class status quo which was the defining principle of the Respectable narrative. Hogg's, and to an extent Butler's, use of evolutionary metaphor has been to represent society as a whole as the subject of the evolutionary processes, Thatcher's narrative was to see the individual as the subject: the narrative was concerned only peripherally with 'society' changing but rather more with the way these processes operated on each person, to permit them individually to swim more efficiently in the gene pool and thus, incidentally, to create a better pool.

Thatcher's was essentially a reformist narrative: its warlike imagery rhetorically bent on establishing an as yet unformed 'common sense'. It relied on the exposition of the corrupt and inadequate values and institutions of the then established culture. The propaganda mills of the Bourgeois Narrative were to generate and exploit a popular sense of fear and, on a more positive side, the desire to realise personal ambition, to generate a new common sense of society and social institutions. It is the purpose, indeed, of this exercise, to show the dynamics of narrative change and the processes which operate to conceal ideology behind the mask of metaphor and rhetoric. Steven Ball, for example, notes the emphasis on nature in the new narrative: *'to stress the inevitability of things'*. He points out that this *'obscures the role of theory as a basis for policy making'* ²⁹. Ball claims that Thatcher thus attempted to de-politicise the educational narrative. To an extent it does, in that it suggests that all she was doing was to allow the 'natural' world to take its 'natural' course. The ideological aspect of the narrative - its radical individualism - is thus concealed by its portrayal of itself as rationality: it merely reflects the 'natural' world.

She may indeed have attempted to de-politicise the narrative and to disguise the narrative's ideology behind a curious amalgam of market economics and this pseudo-Darwinist rationale in order to render it as 'common sense', but this is perhaps to simplify the dynamics of the cultural process. At first, such

²⁹Ball (1990) p. 59

was the nature of its radical paradigm shift in educational identities and realities, and such was its impact on the educational world for example, that it was never really seen as anything but political and ideological. As her reforms have taken hold, however, and as the metaphorical transformations in the vocabularies of education have become so embedded in the common sense of the dominant narrative, perhaps the ideological foundations have now become less visible.

However, there was never much sign that visibility dismayed Thatcher: indeed she seemed to thrive on ideological conflict. Thatcher was never in any doubt that she was right and that hers was the 'rational' approach, even when she was almost the only one to think so, on Poll Tax for example, and she had little compunction about demanding compliance when she could not get consent. Thatcher's style was not rational debate: it was the heroic, and often brutal, assertion of power. Her 'common sense' was fairly explicitly ideological and it was as such that she sought to impose it.

The aggressive, brutal story of evolution, the survival of the fittest, lent a rhetoric which had much dramatic impact, particularly in a time characterised by the pressing need for social and economic re-organisation and reform. It was its description of nature that lent the rationale behind her famous denial of society, but the individualist sub-text of her narrative was only very barely concealed, if at all:

'I think we've been through a period where too many people have been given to understand that if they have a problem, it's the government's job to cope with it. 'I have a problem, I'll get a grant'. 'I'm homeless, the government must house me'. They're casting their problem on society. And, you know, there's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look to themselves first. It's our duty to look after ourselves and them, also, to look after our neighbour. People have got the entitlements too much in mind, without the obligations.'

There's no such thing as entitlement, unless someone has first met an obligation.'³⁰

Thatcher's denial of society was, however, more a salvo in her rhetorical war against what she interpreted as the socialist counter narrative than as a material premise of her story. What Thatcher was denying was a way of life - and the vocabulary it used to represent the world - that was centred on the ideas of interdependence, social equality and cultural pluralism - the vocabularies of the egalitarian and, to an extent, Respectable narratives of education.

Thatcher denied narratives framed round a notion of social justice: the socialist narrative with its concern for natural rights and the duty of the state to fulfil the basic needs of its citizens was, for her, a perversion of the laws of nature, in particular the 'natural' iron laws of the market. She did believe in society: a bourgeois society. The economic success of Britain - and the success of the educational system - was in her story bound up in the blind operation of the Market, its 'benign indifference', which would ensure the survival of the fittest, the bourgeois; and correspondingly the 'natural' elimination of those who did not contribute to the economic gene pool. She writes: *'...socialism had failed. And it was the poorer, weaker members of society who had suffered worst... More than that, however, socialism, in spite of the high-minded rhetoric in which its arguments were framed, had played on the worst aspects of human nature. It had literally demoralised communities and families, offering dependency in place of independence as well as subjecting traditional values to sustained derision.'*³¹

A key metaphor of Thatcher's new narrative of society, used rhetorically to represent the old social narratives it found so debilitating, was the 'dependency culture'. Thatcher had reinterpreted the vocabulary of disadvantage current in the Respectable and egalitarian narratives as the maintenance of a 'dependency' culture. The egalitarian, and to a lesser extent the Respectable narrative, had, missing Shaw's irony, blurred the Shavian distinction between the 'deserving' and the 'undeserving' poor. In their shared vocabulary of social justice Mr Doolittle had become re-described as a

³⁰cited in David Willetts *Why Vote Conservative* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997) p. 15

³¹Thatcher (1995) p. 625

hapless victim of the structural inequities of the capitalist state. The Respectable narratives had maintained redistributive policies, economically and educationally, to attempt to correct or at least moderate these inequalities. For Thatcher such inequalities were not structural but rather the 'natural' human condition. Doolittle, unambiguously, was a wastrel.

Thatcher, brought up as many of her Labour Party contemporaries had been in the work ethic of non-conformist Methodism, saw poverty as essentially sinful: the 'poor' had effectively rejected their 'natural' industrious and competitive natures and opted out of the struggle to 'better' themselves which for her was the essence of being human. For Thatcher, the history of all hitherto society was the history of the bourgeois struggle for individual social and economic betterment. That, for her, was the correct, indeed the only, moral order. She made no distinction between the 'deserving' or 'undeserving' poor; rather she saw them as the effects of a dependency culture, as ingrate swallows of state subsidies and hand outs paid for by the long-suffering, tax paying middle classes. Thatcher's narrative emphasis was on the 'deserving' bourgeois: they alone were in a state of grace. It was they who made all the sacrifices yet they were the employers and the entrepreneurs. they were the wealth creators through their 'natural' qualities of industry, determination and cautious financial management. They had to have a story that recognised their importance.

Thatcherism had manufactured in her story a substantial appeal to the bourgeois - large and small business people, the socially and materially ambitious middle classes and the aspiring skilled working class. It was for them that the educational story was finally being written. These were the moral 'heroes' of her story; they were its central agents, the only characters who were fully rounded in her narrative. Her narrative was presented as fulfilling bourgeois dreams beyond avarice. Her mixture of vituperative derision and homely rhetoric won her the support of a disillusioned middle class. She carefully built the monolithic tenet of her creed, '*There is no alternative*'; and indeed there was no credible counter narrative to provide one.

Her story was an exclusive appeal to bourgeois self interest and aspirations. Their essential character traits - entrepreneurship, personal ambition, self-reliance, thrift... - were the cardinal virtues of her sociobiological story of

human nature, and her narrative was governed by their motivations and desires. Her story valued them uniquely for the contributions they were making to the economic and cultural life of Britain and her story offered them stability, value for their money and the possibility of the fulfilment of their expectations that the Respectable narratives had so miserably failed to deliver.

Other characters - those who did not own their home, those who were unemployed, the unskilled and so on - were more one-dimensionally characterised as 'dependent', essentially a drag on the aspirations of the bourgeois. Hugo Young describes how one Cabinet colleague, wisely anonymously, described the narrowness of this characterisation and uncompromising certitude of her story: *'She is still basically a Finchley lady. Her view of the world is distressingly narrow. She regards the working class as idle, deceitful, inferior and bloody minded. And she simply doesn't understand affairs of state. She doesn't have the breadth.'*³² Such patrician contempt marked the anger of the Respectable shire aristocracy and their 'One Nation' rhetoric over their exclusion from the bourgeois hegemony. They were in turn described with matching malice, and as one-dimensionally', as 'wets', though Thatcher was never quite able to silence their voices though she made a determined attempt to do so. With, perhaps unconscious, humour she described the 'huffy' departure of the reshuffled Ian Gilmour and the 'grander' exit of Christopher Soames who gave her the impression *'that he felt the natural order of things was being violated and that he was, in effect, being dismissed by his housemaid.'*³³

Indeed the 'natural' order of the respectable Tories was being turned upside down as the old elite gave way to the more vigorous bourgeois hegemony. Though they were characterised as the enemy, the Tory grandees had never united in open resistance to Thatcher but she was relentless in pursuing her narrative to the exclusion of all others. The 'wet' Jim Prior was replaced at Employment by the 'dry' Norman Tebbit and Mark Carlisle, whose consensus-seeking strategies had she believed fairly dismally failed, was replaced by Keith Joseph in that same 1981 reshuffle. The dissenting voice of the diminished Respectable Tendency of the Conservatives had largely had its

³² cited in Hugo Young, *One of Us* (London: Pan Books, 1990) p. 127

³³ Thatcher (1993) p. 151

day as, gradually, the traditional Respectable power-base self-destructed during the Thatcher years.

Many of Thatcher's closest allies had staunchly bourgeois backgrounds. Evans ³⁴ charts the rise in the representation of professionals and business, almost exclusively men. There were fewer Tory MPs with inherited wealth and many were children of the '44 Act. The Tory party also saw an expansion of 'professional' politicians in its ranks, many from what was described now as a 'classless' background: the 'new' Conservatives, William Hague and his sergeant-at-arms Sebastian Coe for example, attended comprehensive schools but have achieved 'classlessness'.

The concept of class became de-politicised under Thatcher. Indeed, 'classlessness' became a metaphor for the bourgeois class which had grown strong in its narrative triumph: so that only the bourgeois were recognised as legitimately having interests and only the bourgeois had access to the discourses of power. To use the vocabulary of class or to acknowledge membership of a social 'class' - whether it be the working class or the upper classes - was, in effect, to invite exclusion from the discourses of power.

³⁴Evans (1997) p. 48

Chapter 7

The Middle Way

*'It is my passionate belief that above all what has gone wrong with British education is that since the war we have... 'strangled the middle way'. Direct grant schools and grammar schools provided the means for people like me to get on equal terms with those who came from well-off backgrounds.'*¹

1. Education in the Marketplace

The metaphor, 'the middle way' has come to code the bourgeois hegemony. It is not, as it might imply, an acceptance of the need for consensus or an Aristotelian avoidance of extremes. It locates the radical difference of the bourgeois narrative with the Respectable narrative of the Conservatives in which power had been ultimately located in the propertied elite and the redistributive egalitarian counter-narrative where power had been located in its construction of a class struggle. It emphasises the primacy of liberty and choice and, though it is a broadly meritocratic narrative, it seeks to empower only the middle classes. Its dynamic is one of social mobility, but always towards the middle class: all society is constrained to approach the condition of the bourgeoisie. Since access to power is discursively restricted to the middle classes, the lower classes are invited to aspire upwards and the cultural and political elite, the shire aristocracy and the academy, are forced to relocate downwards. Everything that wishes to rise, to paraphrase Malebranche, must converge on the bourgeois narrative.

The market was not the only thematic strand of the bourgeois narrative though it was the dominant one. It was the means by which education - and indeed all social institutions - were to be formally restructured: education was to become a mechanism for creating a winners and losers culture through the marketing of educational achievements as commodities. The second strand, the moral and cultural story rather than the economic mechanism, will be

¹Thatcher (1993) p. 578

discussed a little later though these strands are philosophically very closely linked.

In the Respectable narrative, education had been described primarily as a social good. Certainly it was portrayed as a means to the cultural, economic and social benefit of the state but the Respectable narrative was broadly, if not always convincingly, framed by a conception of social justice. The Market narrative entertained no such interpretation: it was driven by consumer demand for marketable commodities in open competition. The idea that education was a commodity - like a car or a beefburger - and that the school and the teacher were there simply to meet consumer demand and that their survival would depend on meeting that demand in competition with other schools was to turn the traditional reality of teaching and schooling upside down.

David Hart, the General Secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers bluntly made this point. Speaking about the Education Reform Act (1988) he remarked: *'I don't suggest she (Thatcher) sees schools as supermarkets, nevertheless what she is saying in effect is, that just as parents have every right to shop where they think fit, when it comes to buying goods, so they have every right to shop where they think fit when it comes to their child's education.'*² Yet this was exactly how education was to come to be viewed, not broadly where it was also concerned with the acquisition of culture, but much more narrowly as the acquisition of marketable skills. This paradigm shift in educational reality was premised on the strategic connection between education and the well-being of the economy. Whereas in the Respectable narrative this connection had been contingent - education had a duty to take some responsibility over its connection with economic development and the labour market - in the bourgeois narrative this connection became a necessary one, in effect identifying education with economic performance.

Callaghan had in the Ruskin Speech effectively repudiated the egalitarian narrative in favour of a much more economically effective, vocationally focused, educational system. He had tried to do so, admittedly, in the rhetoric of the expansionist tradition of the Labour Party educational narrative, though

²Stephen Ball (1990) p. 63

he paid little more than lip-service to the redistributive and idealistic dimensions of that narrative. John Patten, however, to use a currently popular political idiom, put a different 'spin' on the Callaghan speech and he made explicit how it was used rhetorically to give justification for the radical metaphorical re-description of educational realities and relations of the bourgeois narrative. John Patten asserts the 'common sense' view that economic crises had created a sense of unease with the then established educational and social narratives and describes the 'deeper' cause of the failure of education:

*'There are two important features. First the whole educational system was producer-driven; some saw it as indifferent to the needs and wishes, of parents, of employers and the wider general public. It was never quite clear who was responsible for what, and it became clear that central government took no responsibility for the school curriculum. that government had few, if any, levers on standards of performance in schools. Second, schools were failing pupils of average and below average ability; there wasn't the right quality, breadth and balance for these pupils. And these issues, taken together, called for fundamental change. The Department, up until the 1980s, concentrated on the supply and organisation of schools - there was a certain complacency about the standards achieved by school leavers - but there was a growing frustration with uneven quality within the decentralised system, and it was this point that Jim Callaghan highlighted so strikingly.'*³

Thus education and the economy were to become inextricably linked. Educational Goods became economic Goods and only what was good for the economy was good educationally. Patten's first words here show the new metaphorical representation of education. Thatcher's narrative came to represent education in the vocabulary of business and the economy. Education was to be dedicated to the needs of consumers and employers - the end-users. The consumer of education was to be empowered by the creation of an educational market where the market forces of choice and competition would,

³John Patten in Ribbins and Sherratt (1997) p. 171

it was believed, inexorably drive up educational standards and, critically, at the same time make education much more responsive to the needs of business and the employers. Wider definitions of education, cultural initiation or enrichment, for example, were largely abandoned in favour of a vocationally oriented, consumer driven system: it is the customer, through her wallet, and the business end-user who would jointly determine the nature and standards of the service. In the end, excellence would be determined by crude utility and maintained by the introduction of competitive, dog-eat-dog market forces in schools.

Patten addressed what he, like Thatcher, had come to see as the central problem in education: that of control. Patten, rather oddly, used the economic metaphor *'laissez-faire'*⁴ to characterise the lack of political control of education in the 1970s. Presumably he was trying to describe a failure by previous governments to grasp control of the educational narrative, yet the central premise of the Market narrative was to abdicate central state control and leave education to the 'natural' balance of the competitive market. He speaks of Callaghan's speech as *'very brave and farsighted'* but criticised both Callaghan and Shirley Williams, the then Education Minister, for *'back-peddalling'*, not taking direct control of the educational system but instead relying on Local Education Authorities to initiate reform.

Mark Carlisle, Thatcher's first Education Secretary, remarked: *'I did say at one stage that the Secretary of State was the reverse of the harlot throughout the ages - you had all the responsibility and no power.'*⁵ This perception of powerlessness, under the dead weight of the Respectable consensus, was to provide, under the succeeding Conservative Secretaries of State for Education, the focus of the Thatcher educational narrative on the necessity for both control and reform. Local Authorities and the educational professionals were to become characterised in the emergent narrative as being bent upon frustrating reform - either because they were pursuing their own self-interests, or because any proposed change was immediately obstructed because of their adherence to competing ideological agendas, or because of their instinctive resistance to change and their blind adherence to the system they knew, or simply because of their hopeless incompetence.

⁴ibid., 177

⁵ Mark Carlisle in Ribbins and Sherrat (1997) p. 63.

Mark Carlisle, Secretary of State for Education from 1979 to 1981, was reluctant *'to grasp the nettle'*, a metaphor Thatcher was fond of. He, for example, remarks: *'...when I came to office I believed that schools had been through a lot of upset during the past few years. There had been a great debate going on, for and against comprehensive education, for and against the 11-plus, for and against grammar schools - schools that had been thrown into turmoil. It seemed to me what was needed was a period of stability.'*⁶ Carlisle goes on to assert that much of the rhetoric about the state of education was not entirely valid and much had been exaggerated or taken out of context. This was not the preferred narrative, nor the heroic strategy that characterised the Thatcher reforms. She had perforce accepted 'wets' into her cabinet but by 1981 she had become much more established and confident in office and Carlisle was replaced by Keith Joseph who was not at all reluctant to *'grasp the nettle'*, though he was later to admit that his confrontational style was not, in the end, as effective as it might have been.

Joseph regarded his time as Education Secretary as largely a failure, though a failure only because of his inability to tell the story in a way that would have converted the educational establishment, not a failure of the story itself. Like Thatcher, he believed that his story was the only truly rational one. In the new vocabulary, the welfare state and the 'egalitarians' had created a debilitating 'dependency culture' in education as elsewhere. In the bourgeois narrative, education was run by people who had been too long protected from public accountability - another key term - for the money they spent. The narrative was, therefore, framed by its 'reality' principle, the Market, and the vocabulary of reform: *'And the faster the illusions of practical men crumbled before the onrush of reality, the more necessary it was to set about developing... a framework... It was the job of government to establish a framework of stability... within which individual families and businesses were free to pursue their own dreams and ambitions.'*⁷

A central problem for the educational reforms was that the educational professionals, along with other salaried public sector professionals, were not part of the wealth-creating bourgeoisie. Characterising teachers as a problem was a central theme in the narrative, reflecting the popular image of teachers as trendy, left-wing activists. Yet many teachers, members of the bourgeois

⁶ *ibid.* p. 72

⁷ Thatcher (1993) p. 14

‘salarariat’, as Evans⁸ describes, were ‘natural’ Tory voters and found themselves cast as the enemy, along with Trade Unionists and socialists who still adhered to a different story. There were clearly not ‘dependent’ in the same way as the ‘lower’ classes but they were, in a sense, dependent on the wealth producing entrepreneurs: they used public money. Nor were they directly involved in economic transactions or exchanges. Kenneth Baker makes these points quite unambiguously:

Of all Whitehall departments the DES was among those with the strongest in-house ideology. There was a clear 1960s ethos and a very clear agenda which permeated virtually all the civil servants. It was rooted in progressive orthodoxies, in egalitarianism and in the comprehensive school system. It was profoundly anti-excellence, anti-selection and anti-market. The DES represented perfectly the theory of producer capture, whereby the interests of the producer prevail over the interests of the consumer. Not only was the Department in league with the teaching unions, University Departments of Education, teacher training theories and local authorities, it also acted as their protector against any threats which ministers might impose. If the civil servants were the guardians of this culture, then Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education was its priesthood.’⁹

Much of the thrust of Thatcher’s reforms was an attempt to re-describe the public sector in market terms and to integrate the professionals into the bourgeois narrative, to recharacterise them by stripping away their protective claims to self-regulation and expertise and plunging them into the ‘real’ world. These attempts at reform created some alienation of the middle classes, especially those employed in the educational sector who saw, in the fissure opened up between the private and public sectors, that they were not being valued in the new narrative either materially or even with the respect they felt due to them. Though Joseph claimed he was simply ‘seeming’ to

⁸Eric J. Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism* (London: Routledge, 1997) Chapter 6 and passim

⁹Kenneth Baker, *The Turbulent Years: My Life in Politics* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993) p.168

attack teachers¹⁰, the market reorientation of education was seen by them, with some justice, as a threat to their professional status, indeed to their jobs.

To remove the 'professional' status of teachers was one of Thatcher's key objectives in her fight to locate education in the wider narrative of the Market and to re-describe education as a commodity. 'Professionalism' had long been the code for the social status and autonomy of educationalists: to plunge them into the market was to reduce that status to that of a skilled tradesman - or even to that of a corner shop grocer - and to make the schools operate in a Market was to make their actions responsive not to the expertise and authority of their professional knowledge but to the parents re-identified as 'clients' and 'consumers'. To create the new narrative reality of the market, the claim to professionalism had to be removed.

Thatcher had an enduring mistrust of teachers - *'a deep dissatisfaction.. with Britain's standard of education'*¹¹ - though her comments were mostly bald reiterations of the Black paper venom of the seventies: *'I also believed that too many teachers were less competent and more ideological than their predecessors. I distrusted the new 'child-centred' teaching techniques...'*¹². Her 'common sense' was largely undisturbed by educational research or educational theory.

Teachers and their unions and the local authorities had indeed become powerful in the no-mans'-land between the conflicting egalitarian and Respectable narratives. Teachers, in particular the unions, had formed a buffer between mutually incompatible, potentially conflicting ideologies. They, Thatcher perceived, had the real power in education, but they seemed to take none of the responsibility. They were invisible, hiding behind their privilege of self-regulation. They were, she considered, too easily swayed by 'socialist' rhetoric of egalitarianism, much too perversely committed to comprehensivization, and much too inefficient and lax to maintain educational standards. She believed that they were not just incompetent but they were also too ideologically compromised to adopt her Market vocabulary in education. They lived, in her view, in cosy complacency, cushioned by their professional privileges from the harsh realities of the economy. They, in

¹⁰Ribbins and Sherrat (1997) p. 86

¹¹Thatcher (1993) p590

¹²ibid. p. 590

her perception, resisted innovation, avoided accountability, limited consumer choice and prevented competition. Evans writes:

*'...they (professionals) winked at sloppy practice and casual inefficiency. They were insufficiently self-critical. However finely honed their skills and however much their expertise was valued, Thatcher felt that they were insufficiently responsive to market forces - and thus a collective impediment to the achievement of the kind of world she wished to bring about. Professionals were particularly prominent defenders of that welfare tradition, especially in health and education, which had been inherited from William Beveridge in the 1940s...'*¹³

Thatcher complained about the lack of *'factual knowledge of the subjects teachers needed to teach, too little practical classroom experience...and too much stress on the sociological and psychological aspects'*.¹⁴ Indeed, Thatcher tended to deny that it took any particular or specialised skills to teach at all - it was all just common sense. Educational theory had no place in her epistemology. In this, however, Thatcher was in the tradition of good canonical authority. Educational theory had never been, until the sixties, really acceptable in the academies. Mary Warnock, speaking of her early university career, remarked: *'...Education Departments in Universities were pretty generally despised, devoted as they were to learning and teaching in general. Fellows of colleges (in Oxford) used to speak of them with derision. "There's no such subject as education", they would say; and the implication was that those who could not get far in pure scholarship or real scientific discovery or genuine philosophy had invented a subject: Education - parasitic on the real thing.'*¹⁵

Nigel Grant¹⁶ remarked that such indifference or hostility to educational theory was indicative of a desire to maintain a conservative view of education: to maintain and reproduce the traditional values, canons and institutions which it narratively supports. Thatcher, though, was concerned

¹³Evans (1997) p. 65

¹⁴Thatcher (1993) p. 598

¹⁵Mary Warnock: *'Teacher teach thyself'*, The Dimpleby Lecture 1985: cited by Nigel Grant: *'Some Uses for Educational Theory'*, in Hamish Paterson (ed) Educational Studies at Glasgow University: Past, Present and Future (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 1994) p.130

¹⁶ibid., p. 131

with reform. Ostensibly, the Market would decide which values were correct, what had authority and what institutions would survive. Thatcher was indeed confident that a 'natural' bourgeois narrative would ensure the survival of 'natural', bourgeois values, authority and institutions. For her the 'common sense' was that education should reproduce bourgeois society and bourgeois values and that educationalists should recognise this as their primary duty.

Thatcher made a fairly determined attempt to destabilize the authority of unsympathetic teacher educators. Using characteristic Market-inspired business metaphors, she tried in the late eighties to '*break the monopoly*',¹⁷ of teacher training institutions by instituting business inspired training schemes: one to create 'articled' teachers by what was basically an industrial apprenticeship model of training on the job; the other was the creation of the 'licensed' teacher - someone who had experience of the 'real' world, the world of business, to bring to the class and to what she saw as the cosseted educational world. She envisaged that such schemes would supply half the required recruits to teaching. While this estimate was very optimistic, it was nevertheless a clear threat to teacher educators and to the traditional professional autonomy and expertise of teachers themselves. The vocabulary used to describe teachers was that of the trade apprenticeship, not of vocation or expertise but of the job and craft skill. Teachers had to learn their new place, their new description and their new identity - of the market, not the ivory tower. Their 'skills' would have to stand the test of open competition in the educational market.

However, there was, it seems, more than a degree of truth in Thatcher's complaints even if her tone was, perhaps, not entirely justified. Since Butler the educational professionals had lived in their buffer zone, relatively free from criticism or control. That insulation had become progressively damaged since the mid-1960s - as described earlier - but the professionals had generally not heeded the writing on the wall. They had, in the public perception, been judged and been found wanting: they had done little to assuage fears of falling educational standards and incompetent teachers and they seemed to be insensitive to criticism and beyond public control. There was a clear popular dissatisfaction - however valid it might be or however it had been produced - with the uneasy equilibrium in the conflicting ideologies of comprehensive

¹⁷ibid., p. 598

education, the selective grammar schools and the elitist private sector and there was a popular sense of the need for reform.

Humes¹⁸, no Thatcherite, nevertheless shares her suspicion about claims to professionalism. He claims that the meaning of professionalism in the vocabulary of teaching is not entirely clear and what claims to authority, expertise and special status it may legitimately have, have become debased as it has been rhetorically exploited, by employers to secure compliance with reforms and by teaching unions to demand a privileged protection from external oversight or accountability and as a crude bargaining counter in wage negotiations. Thatcher was concerned to break the institutional power of the teaching unions and to deny them not just influence over but access to the narrative. This she did by simply excluding them: her trade union reform legislation ensured that they could not make any effective resistance. She was also, however, concerned with the claim to autonomy of teachers: their claim to service, their loyalty to the client and their resistance to managerial pressures in changing their methods of teaching or in forming their judgements of pupils.

This autonomy had, anyway, already become weakened by the story of the teaching career. The really successful teacher was, as Humes describes, not the ordinary classroom teacher - rather it was the teacher who had progressed up the career structure. The claim to professionalism of teachers was plagued by such deep ambiguities: the career structure in teaching was one of advancement, which took the teacher out of the classroom where the 'professional' skills were exercised and where claim to some unique expertise could be justified, onto a ladder of managerial and administrative promoted positions where such 'professional skills' were increasingly irrelevant. This careerist narrative, Humes argues, is more characteristic of a bureaucracy than a 'profession' such as medicine or law where simply being a doctor or a lawyer is generally sufficient in itself.

Thatcher had a hearty dislike of bureaucracies, seeing them as stultifying and unaccountable organisations resistant to change. The introduction of competitive market forces in education, particularly the greater emphasis it placed on the management and administration of schools, was to strengthen

¹⁸Walter Humes, The Leadership Class in Scottish Education (Edinburgh; John Donald, 1986) pp. 21-25 and passim

the careerist story and to risk increasing the bureaucratisation of the teaching force. However, in establishing an educational market, it was intended that teacher would be re-identified as the producer of a marketable commodity and would be judged by his or her effectiveness though that was to prove very difficult to quantify. Payment by results was the market logic - this would effectively prevent the bureaucratisation of teachers - but though it was often proposed and though it was a view that had many sympathisers, it proved to be politically impossible to impose.

The market ethos of schools was also intended to ensure that the new business minded management of the school would take much more account of corporate image and corporate loyalty and responsibility: their additional powers over the employment of teachers: the new emphasis on accountability and the carrot of promotion then ensuring that teachers, crudely, toed the desired line regardless of any 'professional' scruples. This control over teachers and its attempt to eliminate the potential for conflict between autonomous 'professional' and corporate values, was considerably more sophisticated, however, and will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter, particularly in the discussion of the regulatory culture of management that was to become a key feature of the new business vocabulary of schooling.

George Walden, a Tory politician with a greater sense of both justice and style, sums up the public perception of teacher professionals, who he argues had become identified with left-wing teacher activists, particularly those in the union conferences, who had in their speeches been at best insensitive to the public image - another keyword of the Market vocabulary - they were creating: *'What is disturbing is the calibre and cultural level of the individuals involved. On that measure our militant teachers would not be allowed a platform by their fellow leftists on the continent. They are just not educated enough. The harm they do to their profession is out of all proportion to their numbers. It is not simply that they are political infants and educational cranks whose speeches and appearance are not designed to bolster public confidence in state schools. The damage goes deeper. By deflecting the debate on education to the unrepresentative periphery they draw attention away from more central issues...'*¹⁹. There is some justice in

¹⁹George Walden, We Should Know Better: Solving the Education Crisis (London: Fourth Estate, 1996) p.28

Walden's judgement; the left-wing activists were politically not well educated. For example, Gramsci's concept of educating the working class to the highest standards, creating an appropriately educated socialist elite with which to force cultural change was a current continental educational ideology, and something like this indeed had been the principle of the British Workers' Educational Association: yet this would have been condemned out of hand as reactionary at these conferences. Even by April 1995, the 'loony left' image had not materially changed. At the 1995 Easter NUT conference the union executive's motions had been consistently defeated on the card votes of associations dominated by left-wing militant organisations. Many still employed the language of the factory shop steward in defence of their vote for strike action in response to class sizes and national tests: *'Some teachers' union members have demanded that they exercise their democratic right to withhold their labour..'*, *'Your leader vilified the "militant extremist delegates who rant and shout and refuse to listen". But you offered very little alternative. We had a broad based, united front... against the closure of the coalmines in 1992 but that did not stop the closures.'*²⁰ Teachers using the language of the shop floor merely affirmed the authority of the de-professionalizing rhetoric of Thatcher and her successors.

After David Blunkett had been mobbed by Walden's 'militant' teachers at that same conference, Doug McAvoy, the NUT General Secretary, remarked in a vain attempt to rescue the image of the profession: *'Sadly it is possible for an unrepresentative minority to gain an influence far greater than is attributable to their numbers'*²¹ and announced his intention to reform the Union. The concern with public image was a product of the increasing impact of the bourgeois story. Roy Hattersley summed up the discursive effect of the image of mobbing teachers on his attempt to reinstate the Respectable Labour narrative of soft egalitarianism: *'No doubt, some of the idiots who besieged David Blunkett last Saturday night were... qualified to instruct the young. But they are obviously unfit to perform that task. So they have made it more difficult argue for an education policy which does not curry middle class favour by excoriating what I hope is still a profession.'*²² In Hattersley's article there is a clear concern that the 'image' of teachers, even though it was an image partly stage managed by the rhetoric of perversity, has been

²⁰Letters by John Stagg and Matt Foot, [The Guardian](#) 20/4/95

²¹*Teaching Union declares war on leftwingers*, [The Guardian](#) 29/4/95

²²Roy Hattersley: *Louts, lessons and half baked notions*, [The Guardian](#) 17/4/95

damaged to the extent that they may no longer be considered 'professional' - and consequently their contributions to the educational narrative may be ignored, their concerns marginalised, and their privileges of self-regulation and non-interference may be summarily removed.

George Walden, speaking a more sophisticated and less emotional version of the bourgeois narrative, recognises this and finds it regrettable. He is partly concerned to raise the public status of teachers, even despite themselves, believing that they still might have something to contribute to the narrative - after all they are the people charged with delivering the service and it would be naive to exclude them entirely. However, Walden does not have much regard for educational theory - or at least any educational theory that does not follow the 'common sense' of the bourgeois narrative. Characteristically he dismisses theoretical concerns and diversity of educational provision using a medical analogy to emphasise the perversity of the educational professionals: *'If a surgeon took off a leg without anaesthetic we would see it as no defence to say that he was simply using one of the many options at his disposal: we would be astonished that such an option should be considered appropriate in any circumstances, and begin asking questions about the state of the entire profession. And if we suspected that his action - and the General medical Council's stalwart defence of it on the grounds that some surgeons took off legs one way, other's another - was in fact dictated by adherence to a theory of medicine widely seen as quackery, the shift to private medicine would be sudden and vast.'*²³

Part of his remedy is for the institution in England of a General Teaching Council that would 'heal' the profession - presumably by insisting that there is only one valid methodology, the bourgeois methodology, a rehash of the establishment of a work ethic, rote learning, strict discipline, emphasis on the three Rs, and selection by ability. In justification he points to what he sees as the enduring success of the private sector which exists only if it delivers educational excellence. The iconography of the Grammar school, as simulating the only real education which can only be found in the Private sector, dominates Walden's narrative as it had dominated the educational narratives of the post war years. Thatcher's solution was mediated by the same iconography: that when parents are given the choice, and where the

²³Walden (1996) p. 141

schools are located in the marketplace responsive only to the wishes of the parents, then 'naturally' an educational system will evolve which will exploit the same consumer desire for grammar schooling and which will show the clear commercial superiority of 'traditional' methods and which will through market forces eventually recreate an educational system in this bourgeois image. While Walden is far more sanguine about the introduction of market forces in education and the commodification of education, otherwise he would agree that 'traditional methods' provide the only 'real' education. He reiterates, thirty years later, the same broad arguments of the Black Papers. He characteristically describes how pupil centred progressive education - the '*quackery*' he refers to - has debilitated state schooling and how the professional image of state teachers has been damaged by their incomprehensible attachment to it.

Walden's argument is simplistic, naive, and it offers nothing new - but then he believes, and he is very far from being alone, that there is nothing new which can compete with the bourgeois 'common sense' verities. Walden's focus imaginarius is the private sector, the cultural repository of good educational practice: as evidence for this he points out that it has survived, indeed thrived, because clearly the state sector was too unresponsive to the wishes of parents and indeed to the traditional 'common sense' of educational methodology. It is now time, he argues, for the private sector to be used as a model to show the state sector the way. His view does not materially differ from that of Thatcher: he disagrees only on the means by which to achieve it.

Private schools, however, Walden insists, must not be narratively divorced from the state sector: they must be 'opened up' by a vastly increased supported places scheme to become part of a united, grand '*national educational enterprise*'²⁴ to make Britain and its educational system great again. He proposes that the state sector, with much increased provision and a reversion to traditional teaching styles, be altered to what is recognisably something like Butler's system of academic and technical schools with additionally some 'specialised' schools. Since, as Malebranche remarked, '*everything that rises must converge*', so improvements in the state sector would make the distinction between them and the private sector less pronounced and, since both were operating on much the same principles, in

²⁴ibid., p3; the subsequent argument may be found in Chapter 4.

effect there would be just one educational narrative for everyone. Malebranche also said that '*we see all things in God*': Walden sees all things, it appears, in the private sector.

Thatcher saw all things, though, in a privatised sector - or at least as close as she could get to that. She reorganised the public education system - deregulating admission rules, allowing schools to opt out of local authority control, creating league tables - so that the bourgeois classes could continue to insulate themselves from the 'lower' classes and so that they would be able to continue to choose and to patronise schools in which their children would associate only with their own social class. Though grant maintained status was seen as being of limited, selective application by Kenneth Baker, Thatcher saw it as the means by which to re-invent the traditional grammar school as '*the natural model*'²⁵ and she dismayed her secretaries of state by referring to grant maintained schools as 'public independent schools'. Her first objective, though, had been to wrest control of the narrative from the professionals. Rhetorically she won that war, her unforgiving rhetoric had defeated and marginalised the influence of the despised professionals, but the real campaign, to maintain narrative control over education and yet to locate it in the marketplace, was her most difficult challenge.

²⁵Ribbins and Sherrat (1997) p. 190

2. Establishing Scholesia

'Many constituents would come in to see me and would say, "I want my child to go to such and such school, but I have been told he can't be allocated to that school. That he will have to go to another school instead. But it's further away; it's not as good; what can I do?" These sort of questions came up frequently. What could such parents do if they were not rich enough to send their children to private education, or if, as was true of many of them, they did not want to do so'.

Kenneth Baker²⁶

The establishment of a 'real' market in schooling and providing 'real' choice to parents was in the mid-1980s proving an intractable problem. The educational voucher system had been the preferred option by the more radical promoters of the bourgeois narrative. That was the option which would most clearly locate education in the market place. In effect it would allow the government to relinquish all control over education - quality and standards would be generated through open market competition and consumer choice. The market, through the homeostasis brought about by open competition and freedom of consumer choice, would eventually ensure an efficient and effective service. In essence education would be privatised, just as the public utilities, British Steel and the railways were to be. Control would be effectively taken from the educationalists, the teachers, the educational bureaucracies, the local authorities and even central government, and placed firmly in the 'hidden hand' of the Market. Granted that through the voucher system, the continued use of public funds obtained through taxation, this privatisation would create a virtual rather than a 'real' market, yet it was considered that such a market was politically the most effective means to bring education into the 'real' world.

In Black Paper 1977, for example, Stuart Sexton broke with the traditional Respectability of the Black Papers to make this kind of radical proposal. His article was entitled '*Evolution by choice*'. He uses not the traditional Respectable organic metaphor of evolution linked to the 'natural' cultural health of the nation typical of much of the Black Paper contributions but

²⁶ibid., p. 92

rather his metaphor represents the 'natural' economic framework of the Market. He makes the neo-liberal demand for the primacy of choice. He argues that consumer choice - not tradition, not high culture, not the academy, not government and certainly not the educational profession - is the final arbiter of standards and schooling and that the state and its bureaucracies should not interfere with the 'natural' right of parents to choose broadly whatever kind of schooling they wish: *'We remove all other political constraints and directions which seek to distort the pattern of educational supply and demand. We have to assume that the politicians keep their fingers out of it, apart from laying down the framework within which variety and diversity can abound in accordance with the aspirations and abilities of the children.'*²⁷

An educational Market was his preferred framework and the voucher system his preferred mechanism for the homeostatic balance of supply and demand and the production of excellence. Butler's 'natural' kinds of children and his meritocratic emphasis on the 'deservingly' intelligent were to Sexton irrelevant. The market allows no prior statements of value: the parents choose the school and the school generally delivers or it eventually goes out of business. *The school does not choose the child*' he insisted. Sexton extolled the virtues of the Market. Fundamentally education should be the responsibility of the parents. The state schools only be involved to provide the means by which parents fulfil that duty: the state provides the means and is concerned only to ensure that the taxpayer receives value for money.

Indeed vouchers would have been Thatcher's choice. She set up the 'Family Policy Group' to reach some workable proposals for educational vouchers, *'to give power and choice to parents'*, though these would, for financial rather than ideological reasons, be limited to the State sector: *'Keith Joseph and I had always been attracted by the education voucher, which would give parents a fixed - perhaps means-tested - sum, so they could shop around in the public and private sectors of education for the school that was best for their children.'*²⁸ The metaphor 'shop around' encapsulates the whole ideology of the scheme. It would allow a clear transfer of power from the provider, to use market vocabulary, to the consumer. However, though

²⁷David Sexton, *Evolution by choice* in C.B. Cox and Rhodes Boyson (eds): Black Paper 1977 (London: Temple Smith, 1977) p.86

²⁸Thatcher (1993) p. 591

attractive in its simplicity, even this limited voucher scheme was judged impractical, not financially but politically: *'...you would have to have very controversial legislation, which would take two or three years to carry through, with my party split and the other parties unanimously hostile, on the wrong grounds. And all the producer forces hostile.... and the pilot scheme would probably have been wrecked by producer hostility... And I didn't think I had the moral courage to impose it. Of course it wouldn't be like imposing comprehensivization: it's imposing freedom - that's the main difference between the two...I was forced to tell the 1983 conference that 'the voucher, at least in the foreseeable future is dead'...opting out will help to free up the system - with open enrolment forcing schools to be more responsive to the wishes of parents.'*²⁹

Even the heroic Thatcher advocacy of the bourgeois narrative found that discretion was the better part of its valour and the most radical educational reforms, like voucher system and payment by results, never found a favourable climate of opportunity even when the narrative was at its most persuasive. This did not dampen enthusiasm, however, rather it was seen as evidence for the need to promote the narrative even more virulently. There is a recurrent theme of being misunderstood - sometimes it is presented as wilful misrepresentation by critics or by supporters of a counter narrative to create mischief, sometimes it is down to the public's ignorance of what is really good for them - in the discourses of the Thatcher reforms. She had the Platonic confidence that if only the listener would listen then they would understand the Good, and they would have to agree - such understanding for her carried a rational imperative. However when she spoke it was only to the aspiring bourgeois classes: her narrative was for them alone.

Her 'knowledge' of the Good and her 'rationality' were never themselves objects of any self-reflective critique. Indeed the thrust of her educational reform was the heroic assertion of the Good. Ribbins and Sherrat point out the lack of theory in the scripting of the 1988 Educational Reform Act (ERA): *'there were depressingly few references to the views of philosophers or educational theorists.'*³⁰ Nor was there narrative space for doubt, even when empirical studies suggested that parents did not entirely endorse the

²⁹ the 'words' of Keith Joseph in a constructed interview with Clyde Chitty in Ribbins and Sherrat (1997) p. 83

³⁰Ribbins and Sherrat (1997) p. 13

reforms: *'I'm very distressed by this country's complacency about state education. I'm even more distressed that a large number of parents are said to be satisfied. I'm even further distressed by the apparent complacency of the inspectors who are meant to be the guardians of standards.'*³¹

The 1980 Parents' Charter had been a first step in the process of widening choice and empowering parents, in providing not what they wanted but what was good for them, what they really wanted though they did not know that themselves. In limiting the power of local authorities and asserting the 'natural', right of parents to choose and allowing schools some freedom to meet the demands of parents, she was vocalising the desire of the bourgeois by creating the educational environment where *'children from families like my own had the chance of self improvement.'*³² Her subtext of self improvement by expanding educational opportunity, however, was a more or less straight lift of the Tawney Labour educational narrative. Blackwell and Seabrook describe how Thatcher appropriated the missionary idealism of the socialist narrative, reinterpreting it in her own narrative quest for a new bourgeois Jerusalem:

*'It is worth recalling that this original purpose - this journey to the new Jerusalem - was once the socialists' quest. But now the terms have been reversed... Appropriating the rhetoric of Labour, Mrs Thatcher has created a world in which nothing is any longer what it seems. Socialism is the true oppressor of the people; capital is what sets us free, comes as our deliverer... She has absorbed the heroic journey of labour, and all the potent images which sustained an outcast working class in its wretchedness...'*³³

She had recolonized the idealist vocabulary of the left leaving them, almost literally, speechless. Indeed it was the wretchedness of the bourgeois class - the suppression of their desire for self-improvement and their exploitation by an unsympathetic socialism hell-bent on using the fruits of their entrepreneurial labour to create a stultifying culture of dependency - that fired her rhetoric and her creation of 'The Parents' Charter'.

³¹ibid. p. 83

³²Thatcher (1993) p.39

³³Blackwell and Seabrook (1985) p. 160/161

David Cooper³⁴ illustrates the aggressive, unapologetic, bourgeois underpinnings of Thatcher's narrative and its appropriation and reinterpretation of this idealism. The establishment of 'opted out' schools, open enrolment and the gradual reintroduction of selective education was creating what was in effect not so much a Parent's Charter as a Bourgeois Charter. Many existing grammar schools and fairly recently comprehensivized grammar schools had found new identity, and increased resources, as 'opted' out, re-invented grammar schools after the 1988 Education Reform Act. The remaining comprehensives and local authority run schools found themselves competing for 'able' children, their struggle made more difficult by the rhetoric of excellence which was attached to these new Grant Maintained schools and, practically, by the geography of the Grant Maintained and grammar schools which were generally located in middle class areas. The introduction of 'league tables' in schools as an aid for parent choice created the immanent - and narratively necessary - prospect of 'failing' and sink schools. The market demanded losers if there were to be winners.

Cooper's chapter can be read as an apology for the Thatcher reforms. He sets out to dismiss egalitarian principles in education; to define quality in education in terms of the notion of 'educational transformation'; and to argue in support of educational excellence and what that implies for the distribution of educational resources. He creates an imaginary community, Scholesia, in which there are just two schools, North and South. North, the grammar school in all but name, offers greater educational opportunity than South, in better conditions, with better resources, in a better environment. Children attending North are offered a better education and get better results in examinations and go on to become *'versatile, cultured, knowledgeable, imaginative, creative appreciative, moral agents'* - in effect they will be ground on the educational mill of the bourgeois narrative. Children are allocated, simply on the basis of their ability, to either North or South though Cooper leaves unclear how these measures of ability are constructed and how they are used. South - the comprehensive, stripped of its predominantly middle class 'able' cohort - is less well resourced and the pupils there do less well and are prepared for jobs *'suitable to their lesser qualifications and abilities'*.

³⁴David E. Cooper: *Illusions of Equality*, Chapter 2 : *Equality in Education*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980) All subsequent quotes are taken from this chapter except where otherwise indicated.

Cooper argues that while Scholesian education is inegalitarian, in that the distribution of resources is unequal and that certain developmental and life opportunities are denied to the pupils of South and granted to those at North, the system is nevertheless fair. Each pupil is allowed to develop educationally as far as they can, given that they have different levels of ability. The education each child receives is fair because it '*educationally transforms*' that child maximally whether they go to North or South: that some children are more transformed, or transformed to a higher level, is dependent on the abilities and capacities and motivation - the 'natural' qualities - of the respective child, not on the system which merely reflects the inherent inequalities of human nature. Egalitarianism is 'unnatural' and adherence to it is the chief obstacle to the ultimately beneficent bourgeois progress of society.

Cooper disingenuously asserts that the quality of an educational institution is proportional to the degree of educational 'transformation' it brings about - it has nothing directly to do with the opportunities it provides. Consequently the superior school brings about a greater degree of 'transformation' in its pupils than any other school. Cooper even suggests that it would be possible for South to be the superior school because the degree of transformation there could be greater than North, even though the pupils from North might all be better 'educated'. This reorganisation of schooling would be unjust, he claims, only if the pupil was not educationally transformed proportionately to the pupil's 'natural' abilities, capacities and willingness to work hard: '*Scholesians would regard it as a betrayal of such children, were their intelligence and other educational virtues not nurtured and developed to the maximum.*' However, the clear thrust of the North/South organisation of schools is to underline the desirability of entry into the North school.

The talk of educational transformation is a disguise for the cultural superiority of the North school. Though Cooper, as Thatcher did to create a degree of competition in the educational market, would have to resort to crude measures of educational success to ascertain how much 'transformation' has taken place - to such measures as levels of achievement on assessment schema common to both North and South, to examination success or truancy rates, for example - the question of 'transformation' is always secondary to that of the pursuit of higher standards. 'Educational transformation' is, in the

end, a vacuous concept: it is a rhetorical device in the argument rather than a substantive, measurable, qualitative or quantitative measure though it does lend his story the empirical quality, though not an actual empirical base, that Thatcher, for instance, claimed for her crude league tables: '*... romantics and cranks... did not like.... basing policy on science rather than prejudice.*' ³⁵

Cooper claims that the empirical measure of 'educational transformation' refutes any egalitarian assertion that some pupils benefit at the expense of others. He, reversing the egalitarian educational 'common sense' that some are 'born to fail' and others to succeed because of structural social and educational inequality, states that the 'superior' child's abilities do not stem simply from good fortune, but develop through the child's hard work and application and this is what makes the child 'naturally' deserving of the positive discrimination he advocates. It is the 'natural' qualities of the child that determine success. The implication is that in the prior educational narratives with their emphasis on social justice, the bourgeois had been discriminated against; his Scholesia, in part, is justified in that it redresses past iniquitous sacrifices. He has modelled his system, he claims, to maximise the educational transformation of every child as an entitlement - a sop to the egalitarians - though it is always clear where the real educational opportunities lie.

Cooper argues that the purpose of education is, above all, to promote excellence and for that reason educational resources should be distributed in favour of the talented. This would be, in the longer term, beneficial for all. The talented make scientific and technological advance, they are the future wealth creators, and the corresponding increase in knowledge and wealth, he asserts, benefits all. Cooper asserts, with a less than secure logic, that it is rational to favour the talented because it is rational to desire the promotion of excellence and consequently irrational not to favour the education of those who are capable of achieving excellence. He points out that the able child deserves the best education, indeed is entitled to it, simply by virtue of the child's abilities: '*The basic case for the North/South system is (almost embarrassingly) simple. It permits a closer approximation to educational excellence than its alternatives. The quality of education to be found there is higher.*'

³⁵Thatcher (1993) p. 758

'Simplicity' is another keyword of the bourgeois narrative and is used to silence more complex and theoretical educational social philosophy which might contradict its narrow 'common sense' certainties. Cooper's Scholesia is performance driven: it is judged strictly - even crudely - on results, not on process. It accords with Keith Joseph's educational view, '*to switch the whole ethos of government educational policy from inputs to outputs*'³⁶ which was, according to Kenneth Baker, was the '*startling simplicity*'³⁷ that was to drive the bourgeois narrative.

Cooper argues that the concern with excellence is fundamental: '*It is one piece of evidence, if evidence is needed, of a fundamental human concern in myriad areas of human practice - the concern with the attainment, in whatever field, of excellence; the concern that some should scale the heights... I stress that it outweighs the lesser concern that there should be an evenly spread, general improvement in the quality of a practice.*' He admits that the concept of excellence can mean different things to different people, and cites the different types of educational provision offered in England. In particular he highlights that offered by the independent public schools - and fortuitously finds a justification for excluding them, rooted as they are in a kind of market and as the ultimate objects of desire of the socially ambitious bourgeois educational narrative, from the state control of his Scholesian model. The private sector evaded Cooper as they have escaped other forms of control in the educational stories of Butler, the Labour Party and Thatcher. Their existence was indeed encouraged, under the pretext that they provided a model to the state sector of what constitutes educational excellence. Cooper's view is broadly that a free market will breed excellence through competition between differing views of excellence: '*In education as elsewhere, competition among different methods and projects may be the best breeding ground for success.*'

The bourgeois narrative is characteristically almost impertinently naive in its construction of society and in its assumptions about education. Cooper's Scholesia, like Thatcher's view of Britain, is aggressively simplistic. Their view of what society is, is attenuated and is without history. It is some sort of 'given' state of affairs, static and, in effect, sacred. They rely on rather crude

³⁶John Patten on Keith Joseph, Ribbins and Sherrat (1997) p.170

³⁷ibid. p.37

instrumental reason in their arguments, where the end, the bourgeois hegemony, justifies the means, and artlessly conceal the ideology which underpins their stories. Cooper makes no enquiry into the complex and abstract concepts he uses with such cavalier abandon. For example, he uses the word 'ability' often: indeed his argument rests on a supposition that the term is easily definable and its meaning is clear. He also accepts traditional forms of knowledge and the power these bring with them wholly uncritically.

Cooper's story unapologetically presents a closed system of ideas and a virtual denial of the social and material links between schooling and society. His educational story is almost exclusively the bourgeois story: society is 'naturally' bourgeois, to model an educational system any other way would be perverse. He rules out of discussion the links between social class and educational achievement, between schooling and class reproduction and between schooling and its socio-economic setting because, in the exclusively bourgeois setting of his story, they are irrelevant. His unsentimental 'realist' thinking and his substitution of heroic certainty for argument is typical of the Thatcher strategy. His educational system, like Thatcher's, is crudely Butler's but with the concern for social justice stripped away and instead the pious assertion that his 'fair inequality' is the only way to ensure progress. The only education that matters is to be found in the re-invented grammar school, the grant maintained school. As John Patten remarked: *'The Prime Minister (Thatcher) and myself regard grant-maintained as the natural model..'* ³⁸. The real focus in the Thatcher educational narrative was the recreation of the grammar school, there was little concern with other 'unnatural' forms of schooling or indeed for those who did not possess the necessary 'natural' bourgeois qualities.

Cooper's discussion of equality is premised on his bourgeois individualism. He ignores the egalitarian insistence of the essential social interdependence of people and considers that a person is in a sense definable only by his/her achievements, status and acquisitions. This distorts the social framework essential to any discussion of justice: without a social framework and interdependence the concept of justice is meaningless. Cooper places a classic neo-liberal emphasis on the primacy of individual autonomy which he fears is threatened by the compulsion of stories which assert positive rights. Cooper

³⁸cited in Ribbins and Sherrat (1997) p. 33

asserts the negative rights of people, their rights not to be compelled. It is this premise which lies behind Cooper's statement that *'every new equality produces a new inequality'*. It is only when people are viewed, in essence, as isolated individuals, 'windowless monads' in Leibnitz's terms, that Cooper's statement makes sense.

Thatcher did strive to deliver a degree of prosperity to her constituency, the bourgeois, and her rhetoric, like Cooper's, was aimed almost exclusively at them and especially to the aspiring bourgeois. Evans describes the importance of the policy of selling council houses to the tenants, for example, in the expansion of the bourgeoisie. She also did much, especially in the round of privatisations, to widen share ownership and there arose on the back of these privatisations and the deregulation of the financial markets, an expansion of the wealth ownership classes. She offered nothing to competing narratives except ruthless confrontation.

In many ways this expansion of the middle classes by Thatcher had been the object of desire of the Respectable narratives of the Conservative Party and the Labour Party. Selective education and the grammar schools were a mechanism for this and even the comprehensive narrative had been suborned by that desire. However, the social, cultural and, in particular, the political cost of the hegemony of the bourgeois narrative was more that they were willing to pay. Certainly the cultural 'natural' virtues and qualities were broadly shared by the competing Respectable narrative, but the real energy of the new narrative came from its legitimisation of raw material acquisitiveness, dog-eat-dog competition and crude individualism. Thatcher's narrative was one of rampant individualism: not for her the slippery Respectable consensual quietism, sacrifice and subordination of desire, nor Bantock's hegemony of an exclusive cultural elite and certainly not to the egalitarian aspiration to a pluralist society and pluralist values. For her the 'natural' society was the bourgeois society: her 'common culture', a bourgeois culture.

The discourse of excellence in education in effect disguised the creation of the 'common sense' of the bourgeois educational narrative. Thatcher, Tebbit, Major, Parkinson and Scruton all went to grammar schools: what Cooper wanted was an educational system which was designed exclusively in the interests of the bourgeois hegemony. 'Fair' inequality would be, as in the

Respectable narrative, moderated by pious assertion that the ‘haves’ would look after the interests of those excluded from their hegemony: *‘I don't think individualism is anything to do with selfishness... But individuals have to recognise - and this has been an absolute characteristic of the British - they have to recognise that as they do well, their obligation to their fellow citizens, to the community increases.’*³⁹ Scholesia provided bourgeois education as the only route to opportunity and social advancement.

The key metaphor is the bourgeois re-invention of Tawney's ‘ladder of opportunity’ and the limits the narrative places on who may legitimately climb it and for what purpose they may strive towards. This is at the heart of the bourgeois narrative's ‘common sense’. Gillian Shepherd, for example, remarked: *‘...the Prime Minister (John Major) and I come from similar social backgrounds. Very different in terms of environment, but similar social backgrounds which have given us very similar attitudes towards the importance of education as an enabler and a ladder for children. Which means that we start from the same position without having to describe it to one another.’*⁴⁰ This metaphor places emphasis on a distorted sense of equality: the parents of the ‘classless’ class, those from ‘broadly similar backgrounds’, are the ones empowered by this narrative; only those who so aspire are entitled to opportunity. The *‘startling simplicity’* is the tautology: only the deserving deserve. And the narrative makes clear who are ‘naturally’ deserving. There is a kind of sense in this, but education had traditionally been viewed as a vehicle for opportunity even for those who by virtue of their economic and social background had become aspirationally limited. In the bourgeois narrative it was up to people to seize the opportunity, those who could not get on the ladder - for whatever reason - were labelled feckless and dependent and the bourgeois narrative effectively excluded them. Chris Woodhead, the head of Ofsted, puts it neatly: *‘when equality of opportunity translates through to any kind of flirtation with equality of outcome that has a depressing effect on the educational experience.’*⁴¹

Whose educational experience does Woodhead have in mind? There was nothing socially inclusive about the narrative though it provided the appearance of inclusion through the ‘natural’ qualities of ‘going it alone’

³⁹Margaret Thatcher, Daily Mail 29/4/88

⁴⁰Gillian Shephard in conversation with Brian Sherrat, Ribbins and Sherrat (1997) p. 221

⁴¹speaking in *‘The man they love to hate’*, *The Guardian* 18/4/98

independence, hard work and social ambition: *'..the Victorians also had a way of talking which summed up what we were now rediscovering - they distinguished between the 'deserving' and the 'undeserving poor'... The purpose of help must not to be to allow people merely to live a half-life, but to restore their self-discipline and through that their self-esteem'*.⁴²

3. Commodifying Education

'I regard the raising of standards for education and the reorienting of education towards the needs of a modern society as the most important supply-side economic change we can make'

Kenneth Clarke⁴³

The process of establishing the new narrative was, however, far from immediate: *'...for at least the first seven years of its existence, the new Conservative government was prepared to operate largely within the terms of the educational consensus constructed by the leadership in 1976'*⁴⁴. It was only in the 1988 Educational Reform Act (ERA) that Thatcher finally institutionalised the new vocabularies of education and it is this in which Chitty locates the discursive establishment of the bourgeois narrative.

The ERA was unapologetically cast in the economic, business vocabulary of the market. Like Wilson and Callaghan before her, her rhetoric was of modernisation: a new system to meet the new needs of the new era. This is historically clearly a persuasively powerful rhetoric though it rarely actually meant anything much - there was, for example, nothing 'modern' about market economics. Such rhetoric had, however, worked in the past, at least to propel politicians into power, even if radical reform of the educational system had not actually taken place. Though Wilson, for example, had created a significant expansion in higher education, the reform of schooling to meet the needs of the technological era had proven to be much more difficult and Callaghan had provoked the 'Great Debate' in the interests of modernity without much immediate effect.

⁴²Thatcher (1993) p.627

⁴³in conversation with Brian Sherratt in Ribbins and Sherratt (1997) p.149

⁴⁴Chitty (1989)p. 172

Andrew Gamble puts Thatcher's attempt at 'modernising' reform into historical context: *'There was a clear trend towards authoritarian statism in Britain from the mid 1960s onwards, caused by the breakdown of the attempt to organise corporate consent for modernisation programmes...'* ⁴⁵ Thatcher's ERA was a modernist reform, in the sense that she believed, fairly uncritically, in the instrumentality of structures and systems to produce her vision of a 'modern' society. Hers was solely an instrumental vision: she had no time for metaphysical abstractions, for value judgements, or for uncertainty. Form would be constrained to follow a clearly identified function. Institutionalised market forces, which she would ruthlessly introduce, would bring about the desired end - the 'natural' bourgeois hegemony which would produce a new, prosperous economic and moral order.

What was to follow with the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) was a more brutal realisation of Callaghan's rather vague vocationalism. The ERA was designed to further re-invent the educational vocabulary in the language of the market and to deny influence over the creation of the common sense of the narrative to the educational professionals and the local authorities who found themselves effectively sidelined by the Act. Ball charts ⁴⁶ how the influence of educationalists, theorists and teachers over the emergent narrative had been negated. Indeed the policy community had, as Ball shows, changed dramatically since the ERA. Local education authorities found themselves denied control over much of their provision of education and what control they had was gradually eroded as the base of the policy community altered from its traditional orientation on the 'producers' to the 'consumers' - parents and employers. Sir Peter Newsam, for example, comments about the disempowerment of the local authorities: *"No regard (was) paid in any measurable sense to the comments made: the local authorities were rather like people on the touchline of a football match, shouting but really having not much influence on the field."* ⁴⁷

⁴⁵Gamble (1994) p. 181

⁴⁶Ball (1990)

⁴⁷Sir Peter Newsam, *The Association of County Councils: in O.U. Broadcast (1990) Policy Making in Education: The Education Reform Act*

The publishing of league tables, the emphasis on parental choice, the establishment of Grant Maintained schools (GM schools), the delegation of school management to parent governors, the funding of schools, the curricular programmes and their testing regimes... all these changed the vocabulary of education and these encroachments of market forces into education were eventually to give the authorities, and indeed the schools, far less control over what they could do and they were to become much more accountable for what they did.

The ERA was moved by Kenneth Baker using the by now fairly well established new vocabulary of education: *'Our education system has operated over the past 40 years on the basis of the framework laid down by Rab Butler's 1944 Act.... We need to inject a new vitality into that system. It has become producer-dominated. It has not proved sensitive to the demands of change that have become ever more urgent over the past 10 years...'*⁴⁸. Baker continued with a sound-bite summation of the central purpose of the educational reform: *'I would sum up the Bill's 169 pages in three words - standards, freedom and choice. The purpose of all these measures is to improve the quality of education for all our children...'*⁴⁹. Standards themselves, instrumental logic would suggest, would be determined by the market: what was valuable was what would have a cash value for the consumers and the employers. However, a wholly hands-off, laissez faire attitude to education and the educational narrative proved, it seems, rather too much power for a government to relinquish, particularly a government which had so much of its justification for reform caught up in the rhetoric of incompetent teachers and falling standards. Though the logic demanded that the government should 'roll back the boundaries of the state' and provide merely the framework of the market, ending all limiting regulations on schools and schooling, the Thatcher governments never quite had the will unequivocally to do so; and so the national curriculum was born.

There are, however, apparently inherent contradictions in the bourgeois narrative which are pointed up by the establishment of the national curriculum. John Redwood stated, classically, that capitalism is blind to prior statements or judgements of value. The Market is no respecter of persons or position: *'(Capitalism is)... anarchic and democratic in its style. It does not*

⁴⁸Hansard: 1st December 1987: 771

⁴⁹Hansard: 1st December 1987: 780

matter who you are, who your parents were, where you came from: it is who you are and what you can contribute that matters.' ⁵⁰. Putative measurements of ability, in effect, become secondary to the freedom to choose, which in the consumerism of the market is reduced to the ability to buy. 'Who you are' and 'what you can contribute' are, despite Redwood's pretensions, largely irrelevant: the market is blind to good intentions. The Market is not meritocratic: it owes nothing to anyone. All it provides is a framework for consumer choice and the mechanism of competition which ensures, on threat of bankrupt extinction, that the consumer is satisfied. What is important is the exchange value an education provides, ultimately what it is worth to employers. Thus there was in the market stand of the bourgeois narrative a significant leaning towards the market value of education, the commodification of educational achievement and a marked distrust of 'academic' studies. The national curriculum, however, with its regimes of testing, while it created a base for comparison, allowing the placing schools in league tables, seemed to contradict the central ideology that it was the market which generated value; no value may validly be established prior to the free operations of choice and competition.

Many interpreters of the ERA, across the ideological spectrum - Steven Ball, Ribbins and Sherratt, the Birmingham Cultural Studies, Education Group, Clyde Chitty who are mentioned in this chapter, for example - locate a crisis in the Conservative educational narrative at this point: between what they describe as the neo-liberal discourse with its emphasis on freedom and the neo-traditional discourse with its emphasis on maintaining standards.

Indeed the neo-liberalist David Sexton was highly critical of the establishment of the National Curriculum: *'The best national curriculum is that resulting from the exercise of true parental choice by parents and children acting collectively, and being provided collectively by governors and teachers in response to that choice. The substitution for that freely adopted curriculum ... of a government-imposed curriculum is a poor second best.'* ⁵¹ Sexton was to derisively refer to it as the '*nationalised curriculum*' ⁵² and he was to state: *'The Market itself will set what the curriculum should be and you don't need government - of any political colour - setting a national*

⁵⁰ John Redwood, *Popular Capitalism* (London: Routledge, 1988) p.44

⁵¹ David Sexton in a letter to *The Independent*, 19/11/87

⁵² David Sexton *No nationalised curriculum*, *The Times* 4/6/88

curriculum.'⁵³ though in his 1977 Black Paper Article he had acknowledged that the free market in education was not quite sufficient in itself: *'As part of that framework we must have minimum standards and a minimum curriculum...'*⁵⁴.

In neo-liberalism the ultimate virtue lies in freedom and choice, brought about by market economics. This ideology prescribes a very weak role for the state and regards state intervention in the lives of the citizens as coercive. It regards collectivist arguments for socially ameliorating or egalitarian policies as state oppression. The market economy, providing freedom and choice for the citizens is idealised and is held to guarantee a better life for all - though this is not to be understood as in any way egalitarian: neither equality of opportunity, equality of provision nor equality of outcome are allowable options. Neo-liberalism does allow some role for the government to set the narrative framework of the state and of the citizens' legitimate expectations for self improvement: *"The (neo-) liberal argument is in favour of making the best possible use of the forces of competition... It does not deny, but even emphasises, that in order that competition should work beneficially, a carefully worked out legal framework is required, and that neither the existing nor the past legal rules are free from grave defects. Nor does it deny that where it is possible to create the conditions necessary to make competition effective, we must resort to other methods of guiding economic activity."*⁵⁵ The neo-liberal argument against the National Curriculum was consequently not so much about having one but about setting its limits.

Indeed Thatcher shared much of Sexton's concern. She states all she desired was: *'a basic syllabus for English, Mathematics and Science with simple tests to show what pupils knew.'*⁵⁶ She blamed Kenneth Baker for allowing the National Curriculum to mushroom into a complex, bureaucratic maze, accusing him of falling under the influence of educationalists in his, admittedly pragmatic rather than democratic, concern to include them in the process: *'For them the new national curriculum would be expected to give*

⁵³David Sexton in Open University TV Broadcast (1990): Policy Making in Education: The Education Reform Act

⁵⁴David Sexton, *Evolution by choice* in C.B. Cox and Rhodes Boyson (eds): Black Paper 1977 (London: Temple Smith, 1977) p.86

⁵⁵Friedrich von Hayek : The Road to Serfdom, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1944, rev. 1976), p.27

⁵⁶Thatcher (1993) p. 593

legitimacy and universal application to the changes which had been made over the last twenty years or so in the content and methods of teaching. Similarly testing should in their eyes be 'diagnostic' rather than 'summative' - and this was only the tip of the jargon iceberg - and should be heavily weighted towards assessment by teachers themselves, rather than by objective outsiders. So by mid-July the papers I was receiving from the DES were proposing a national curriculum of ten subjects...' ⁵⁷. Her contempt for the technical vocabulary of education is obvious, as indeed it was for the technical vocabularies of any social subjects with the possible exception of the 'practical' study of economics. Thatcher's dissatisfaction grew as she - or rather her secretaries of state - began to lose direct control over the burgeoning educational bureaucracy: *'Ken Baker paid too much attention to the DES, the HMI and progressive educational theorists in his appointments and early decisions: and once the bureaucratic momentum had begun it was difficult to stop.'* ⁵⁸. The 'simplicity' of her vision was lost, she claims, through the malign, empire building influence of HMI, the teachers' unions and their demand for teacher-dominated assessment.

Nigel Lawson describes Ken Baker's *'metaphorical handbaggings'* by the heroic Thatcher during the creation of the national curriculum: *'The process would start by Margaret putting forward various ideas... there would be a general discussion... Margaret would sum up and give Kenneth his marching orders. He would then return to the next meeting with a worked out proposal which bore little resemblance to what everyone else recalled as having been agreed at the previous meeting...'* ⁵⁹ Even when Baker was replaced by MacGregor in 1990 - who she believed could more firmly *'keep a grip'* on the national curriculum - it spiralled well beyond her original expectations. She states that: *'By the time I left office I was convinced that there would have to be a new drive to simplify the national curriculum and testing.'* ⁶⁰ It was, indeed, later simplified somewhat by Dearing but the *'bureaucratic momentum'* that Thatcher complained so bitterly about, had become so institutionalised - and for other reasons that will be discussed shortly - that the changes Dearing made were far from radical.

⁵⁷Thatcher (1993) p. 594

⁵⁸ibid. p.597

⁵⁹Nigel Lawson *The View from No. 11: Memoirs of a Tory Radical* (London: Corgi, 1992)

p.619

⁶⁰Thatcher (1993) p. 597

A.V. Kelly⁶¹ argues that the educational case given for the justification of the national curriculum - the maintenance of standards - is in important respects a blind and that the national curriculum is in essence a political device for centralising control of the educational system and that the curriculum proposed is best understood as a mechanism for maintaining that control. This does appear broadly to be the case, at least insofar as the national curriculum was a means of fixing the new educational narrative reality in the minds, and the vocabularies, of the educational professionals who, with reservations, accepted the curriculum as at least as an educational reform in the public examination tradition that they could understand and, moreover, it was one which appeared to grant them, once again, some measure of professional expertise. As such the national curriculum, as Thatcher has described, was colonised by the technical vocabularies - the *'impenetrable educationalist jargon'*⁶² - of the educationalists.

However, there is some justification for Kelly's view that in this strand of the bourgeois narrative education is all about initiation into 'British Culture' and 'traditional' social organisation of society to promote a fixed social order and stability, to situate the child and the later adult into his or her social role. The introduction of market competition is limited to removing education from state ownership, but not state control. Johnson comments: *"New Right theory values prejudice over reason, instinct over knowing, in an anti-educational logic. Learning is not the changing of self or society, nor the 'raising of consciousness' in the radical sense. Change through education is a rationalist illusion."*⁶³ Thatcher's was indeed a rationalist, instrumental vision. The new educational narrative became a priority terrain of reform, of *'culture restoration'* in Ball's terms⁶⁴ in which the ideological sub-texts of bourgeois culture and social structure are presented as common-sense, self-evident truths.

The new narrative, bending under the strain of these different vocabularies and different interests, began to slip from Thatcher's control a little and it is perhaps that which created the narrative tension in the story, or at least created the conditions for some internal dissent. The expansion of the

⁶¹ A. V. Kelly : The National Curriculum: A Critical Review (London: Paul Chapman, 1990) p112 and passim.

⁶² Thatcher (1993) p.595

⁶³ Johnson (1991) p.90

⁶⁴ Ball (1990) p. 48

curriculum gave Sexton some justification for his protests but there was also a corresponding attack by the neo-traditionalists, like Roger Scruton and the Hillgate Group, on the market ideology of the narrative. Scruton stated: *'Markets aren't the whole answer to every problem. An educational system can't be created by a market. In certain cases elements of market competition must be reintroduced. Of course there is also the fact that education requires a stable tradition of learning, the maintenance of subjects which have been acquired over hundreds of years... the maintenance of a common culture.'*⁶⁵ The neo-traditionalist discourse demanded much closer control over the social narratives and was suspicious of putting trust in the blind operations of the market: *"The value of individual liberty is not absolute, but stands subject to another and higher value, the authority of established government."*⁶⁶ It argued that the values of allegiance to legitimate authority, tradition and national identity are not negotiable. The purpose of government is above all else to maintain these: *"...the urgent need today is for the State to regain control over 'the people', to re-exert its authority, and it is useless to think that this will be helped by some libertarian mish-mash..."*⁶⁷

The maintenance of British culture should be, therefore, the primary imperative of government and no apology is offered for the exertion of state power not to achieve justice, equality or even freedom but *'to maintain existing inequalities or restore lost ones'*.⁶⁸ Power may even be used *'to command and coerce those who would otherwise reform or destroy'*.⁶⁹ Scruton generally would agree that some element of market forces should be introduced but only to remove education from state ownership. Scruton's objections to the imposition of full market forces is concerned with the danger that this mechanism would generate cultural value on a cost accountant basis, on the cash value of the educational experience as the market conflates economic with moral values. However, like Sexton, his complaint is not so much about the policy as about its limits. Scruton's attempt to re-invent something like Bantock's traditional, elitist educational narrative will be discussed later but, meanwhile, it is clear he had no absolute

⁶⁵Roger Scruton (1990): O.U. Broadcast (1990) Policy Making in Education: The Education Reform Act

⁶⁶R. Scruton, The Meaning of Conservatism (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980) p.19

⁶⁷P. Worsthorpe *Too Much Freedom* in Maurice Cowling (ed) Conservative Essays (London: Cassell, 1978) p.150

⁶⁸ibid., p.9

⁶⁹ibid., p.25

objection to the introduction of market forces as Sexton had no absolute objection to the national curriculum. The narrative ending - the creation of the bourgeois hegemony - both Scruton and Sexton broadly held in common. Their arguments were partly about the means to achieve this end and partly about what a bourgeois hegemony would mean.

Their debate was a throwback to the earlier narrative problematisations of education to the Black Papers and Bantock and beyond. It was, however, to become essentially meaningless. Neither Scruton nor Sexton fully understood the narrative change that was beginning to take place and how that was to render both their positions vacuous. The bourgeois narrative was not about the institution of a free market and the rolling back of the state, nor was it about 'cultural restoration': its vision of culture would be very different from Hogg's Respectable vision and Scruton's and Bantock's elitism. Indeed even the principal speakers of the bourgeois narrative at this stage - Thatcher and her Secretaries of State included - often had great difficulty with the new vocabulary and found themselves in great difficulties trying to explain what was happening, attuned as they were to the traditional Respectable vocabularies of education in which they grew up.

Kenneth Baker comments on this confusion. He complains that curriculum debate in cabinet was often lacking in focus and expertise, the speakers relying on their individual educational experiences: *'Much of that discussion seemed to be woolly and vague.... the contribution of colleagues... was not one of the most glorious moments of collective discussion I've ever attended. It was largely derived from personal reminiscences of their own education (I started rather like that myself).'*⁷⁰ His is a scarcely veiled criticism of Thatcher who saw everything as blindingly simple, obvious to 'ordinary people' like her and to whom she made constant appeal: *'When she felt under siege, particularly from what she saw as the establishment, she could rely on conference to boost her self belief and renew her thirst for conflict.'*⁷¹ It was not just that Baker was frustrated by what he considered were unhelpful demands by Thatcher and his colleagues for simplicity and by their lack of understanding of what a curriculum entailed. Though he was concerned that his curriculum policy was not *'sunk in a mire of other people's individual*

⁷⁰Ribbins and Sherrat (1997) p. 99

⁷¹Richard Kelly *'So much more than showbiz'*, The Independent 10/10/94

memory and prejudice'⁷², he was also concerned that education should not be caught in what George Walden describes as the '*congealed vocabularies*' of the past.

Baker's desire was to create a distinctively new vocabulary based around the vocabularies of business: '*There was this huge continent which was state education, catering for over 93 per cent of all children. There was private education, a relatively small island with 7 per cent. And there were no links between them at all. No other types of islands or semi-continents. What we have done is to create a lot of semi-continents in the CTCs and in the grant-maintained schools. I was also very interested in the administration of the whole system. I had been a business manager and was therefore interested in the mechanics of management.*'⁷³ Baker demands that the geography of reform, the 'big picture', be seen - not the smaller isolated squabbles about individual reforms. He was concerned in creating a long-needed and workable national curriculum - Thatcher's version was by implication far too simplistic - which would ensure the raising of educational standards in tandem with the foundation of different types of schools in a coherent market mechanism in which parents could really choose the type of schooling they wished for their child. He was consequently not as enthusiastic about the uniform creation of grant maintained schools as Thatcher was. This is not to suppose that he was not committed to the market narrative, he was, but that he believed that the market on its own was not enough to ensure what he considered to be educational excellence.

Baker comments that the curriculum which he created was '*in many respects strikingly similar*' to the 1864 Clarendon Commissioners. Indeed the national curriculum was to provide a vehicle for traditional narratives of education that Scruton, Bantock and Eliot would have difficulty complaining about. Baker was indeed greatly concerned with the propagation of the cultural values of the bourgeois narrative; '*...the heart of the Conservative mission is something more than economics - however important economics might be: there is a commitment to strengthen, or at least not undermine, the traditional virtues which enable people to live fulfilling lives without being a threat or a burden to others.*'⁷⁴ However, in spite of the rhetoric, this was not so much

⁷²ibid. p.100

⁷³Ribbins and Sherrat (1997) op.cit., p.105

⁷⁴Thatcher (1993) p.279

the restoration of 'lost' values but their re-invention as the values of the bourgeois narrative.

Stronach and MacLure deconstruct in the bourgeois narrative the concept of 'cyclical'⁷⁵ time: the rhetoric demanded a return to traditional values that had somehow become lost in the misguided adherence to the failed Respectable and egalitarian narratives. Thus Thatcher's much publicised 'return to Victorian values' rhetoric reflected her central concern with the narrative institution - in her terms 're-institution' - of a bourgeois moral order. She constructed a time which was presently out of joint, pointing to the necessity of return to the 'natural', individualist moral order of the bourgeois narrative. The narrative, however, also used the concept of 'progressive' time which Stronach and MacLure represent as 'progress thinking'⁷⁶ characteristic of the capitalist economic narrative and the modernist faith in systems and structures. The economic future of Britain is portrayed as at a crucial stage, in a crisis which may only be averted by a reconstruction of education. The narrative instils a sense of urgency for reform, silencing dissenting voices, labelling them as out-moded and reactionary. What is needed is a modern education for modern needs. Alan Amos, for example, supporting the ERA speaks of it as a '*radical and reforming measure which boldly and imaginatively creates a dynamic framework to our education system fully into the 21st century.*'⁷⁷ These two senses of time, double coding the narrative, maintained, if not without tensions, order between the dissenting voices of the marketeers and the traditionalists.

Though Thatcher willed the means, the Market framework, she could be interpreted as appearing equivocal about the Market's generation of cultural value - or at least the cultural value she desired. She was concerned, for example, that '*Thatcherism in education*' had become to be seen as '*a philistine subordination of scholarship to the immediate requirements of vocational training.*'⁷⁸ Though apparently committed to instrumental market logic in educational reform neither Thatcher nor the Conservative Party were, it seems, willing to rely entirely on the Market to realise the bourgeois hegemony it desired. Indeed what is apparent from Ribbins and Sherratts's

⁷⁵Ian Stronach and Maggie MacLure, Educational Research Undone: The Postmodern Embrace (Buckingham; Open University Press, 1997) p. 89

⁷⁶ibid., p. 89

⁷⁷Hansard: 1st December 1987: 815

⁷⁸Thatcher (1993) p. 599

conversations with Conservative Secretaries of State for Education is just how often they, and Thatcher, drift in and out of these different vocabularies. The neo-liberalist and the neo-traditionalist vocabularies are often inextricably mixed. However, what the bourgeois narrative actually was to become was not either of these - though it was to owe much to both of them. It was a different kind of beast altogether even if it was to take well beyond Thatcher for it to be fully realised.

Thatcher had felt it necessary that not only should the educational world be institutionally located in the 'real' world of Market economics, but that it was also the values of 'ordinary people' that the educational institutions should reflect. In effect she tried to buck the Market. She was able to do this because she was not creating a 'real' market in education, but a virtual one. Only virtual capital would be exchanged in simulated competition. Ball calls this a '*proto-market*' because there is no direct connexion between consumer choice and the earnings and benefits of the producers. To an extent, therefore, she was able to try to fix the values of the emergent narrative. She had the enormous assurance that her 'common sense' was the 'common sense' of the 'ordinary people', the consumers, who would ensure the continuing hegemony of the values of bourgeois culture. She was supremely confident that her cultural values were the only rational ones and the possibility of conflict, between bourgeois values and the values her virtual Market might generate, was not just invisible to her but, in her narrow rationale, literally unthinkable. Since the Market was, in her view, the only rational and 'natural' means of social organisation, and since people were 'naturally' bourgeois - except when forced into 'unnatural' cultural values, brainwashed by misguided and dangerous ideologues - the virtual educational Market could not but create the 'naturally' correct, bourgeois cultural values. She, in effect, perhaps even unconsciously, attempted to fix the cultural values of education narrative as the 'natural' values of the bourgeois hegemony.

Blackwell and Seabrook comment on the *Pilgrim's Progress* subplot of the Thatcher story. Her story is of the bourgeois, suffering the iniquities of a reviled people, avoiding the traps and illusions laid by the devils of socialism, and finally attaining the celestial city of prosperity: *'This is the long road I am resolved to follow. This is the path that I must go. I ask all who have spirit - the bold, the steadfast, and the young in heart - to stand and join me as we go forward for there is no other company in which I would*

travel.⁷⁹ This metaphorical construction is of a directed and controlled movement through turbulence towards a time of stability - the homeostasis of the Market - offering a justification for what at present might seem chaotic social change and perhaps even cruelly harsh social policy, by the promise of eventual - and eternal - affluence. However, only the elect are to be her companions. The message was clear: adopt the bourgeois way - re-invent yourself in its stories, purposes and values - or fall by the wayside. At its roots there is no real contradiction between market values and cultural values in the bourgeois narrative.

There was indeed a crisis of sorts and the neo-liberal/neo-traditionalist problematisation of the Thatcher reform has become the received wisdom. The account of Thatcher's reforms has become a drama of the struggle for domination of conflicting discourses, as in Ball's analysis⁸⁰. However, though this makes for a gripping text, it is perhaps to overstate the case. The real problem, it seems, was that of the exponents of the story getting to grips with the reality the new discourse was creating and the conflicts arise from misdescriptions rather than any deeper narrative crises. There is no sign that such conflict was to make any significant change in the narrative or offer any real resistance.

The market story was to remain the dominant ideological subtext of the bourgeois narrative and it was from that there arose what Stronach and McLure were to describe as the discourse of vocationalism. That was to become the arena of struggle, not so much for narrative domination but for the realisation of its re-description of educational realities and identities. It was to lend quite a new emphasis on opportunity and eventually to create a new kind of educational common sense and, eventually, a new kind of consensus in the educational world. There would be no cultural restoration and no further radical institutionalisation of market forces. This, however, is the topic of the next chapter.

⁷⁹Blackwell and Seabrook (1985) p. 157

⁸⁰as in Ball (1990), for example.

4. Six Stories

'I don't think I had any distinctive ideas (except)... a feeling that we needed to do something about vocational education and to try to right the old binary line between the academic and the vocational. I feel very strongly that we need to do something about those people who have not been, perhaps, challenged enough... they haven't had high enough expectations;' ⁸¹

The next chapters will deal with the nature of the bourgeois narrative and the discourse of vocationalism and its impact on education. To sum up, however, it is, possible to discern at least six different educational stories ⁸² of the Thatcher years. Though not all of them were part of the emerging narrative, each of them had an impact on how the new narrative was to develop.

There was the *Culture Restorationist* story in which education was seen primarily as the transmission of (authorised) culture in authoritarian regimes at school. Schools would be required to operate on a subject focus, justified by tradition and defined in a national curriculum. The acquisition of knowledge was considered more important than understanding or creative pursuits. That knowledge was arranged progressively and tested at defined developmental (chronological) stages. The pedagogy of this story leant towards whole class teaching, 'traditional' methods and formal relationships between pupils and teachers as in Bantock's narrative. The preferred assessment was by examination rather than coursework and such assessment was used as the basis of selection by academic ability. It's preferred school was the grammar school. Parents' involvement in this story lay in their ability to choose to seek admission to the grammar school but not much more than that.

The Labour Party counter narrative remained committed to the Equal Opportunity story even though that had been damaged, perhaps fatally, by Thatcher's appropriation of its idealism. Roy Hattersley, for example, sees -

⁸¹Ribbins and Sherratt (1997) p.185

⁸²As described, though here substantially amended, in *Six Educational Theories* by Michael Bassey, Executive Secretary of the British Educational Research Association, in The Guardian 16/4/96

even to this day - education as a means to redress social injustices and inequalities. This story was concerned to provide equal opportunities to succeed irrespective of parental wealth, race, gender or class. It was implacably opposed to private education and the assisted places scheme and its preference was for the comprehensive school. It was distrustful of selection and streaming within or for schools. It favoured democratic types of management and the involvement of pupils in schools and retained a soft spot for mixed-ability teaching. It maintained the professional story of teachers and valued them, preferring continuous assessment to formal examinations. Education was seen as an important socialising influence and education of the emotions was an important feature. It saw education as a means of restructuring society on a more equal basis.

The *Elite* story remained among some of the more unreconstructed politicians of the Right. This story saw education as a means to re-structure society into a small elite and the masses, with education primarily a means to train the elite. The underclass were to be given some training in relevant skills and some indoctrination into a moral code which protected the interests of the elite. It was a story designed to create compliance, obedience and uncritical thought.

The progressive *Learner Centred* story saw education as the social nurturing of the individual to fully develop their personal potential. Mark Carlisle, at the beginning of the Thatcher accession, was somewhat sympathetic to this view. The emphasis was on learner centred pedagogies and research findings. This story tended to be democratic and collaborative in its relations and innovative in curriculum. Graded performances, formative assessment and self-assessment were important features and there was strong interest in cognitive skills, problem solving, creativity and critical thinking. This story was always a soft target and was to suffer most disapprobation in, and beyond, the Thatcher years. It had been the *bête noire* of the Right since the time of the Black Papers but despite much media ridicule and political oppression it remained very influential in the teaching profession.

Bassey's next story was that of the *Vote Seeking Pragmatists*. This is not an educational theory at all, rather it is rhetoric which takes some educational issue as a text for political gain as opposed to rational discussion about education. It rejects contributions from educationalists except those who say

what its proponent wants to hear. Its arguments are simple, emotionally driven and populist. The sound bite quality of its rhetoric is important: it is designed to gain press coverage and a mass audience. Parents are important only as potential voters.

Then there was the *Industrial Training* or *Vocational* story where education is seen in terms of its relationship to future economic growth and the 'needs' of industry. Education would not consist of just technical knowledge appropriate to the creation of industrial wealth but would also be concerned to instil the 'values' of hard work, self-discipline, obedience, punctuality... The institution of league tables and the introduction of competition was intended to create an educational 'market' to improve 'standards' and create the appropriate 'industrial' ethos. This story values only technical innovation, especially involving computers, and demands industrial or business management styles in schools, particularly sympathising with accountability regimes and maintaining an affection for performance based pay.

The 'congealing vocabularies' of these stories were to create some ambiguities and conflicts in the emergent story for some time to come but eventually a new common sense would emerge. These last two stories, in particular, were to be influential in the development of the bourgeois narrative which is the topic of the next chapter. However, though there are elements of all of these stories in the new narrative, even if they only feature pejoratively, the new story would not be any of them.

Chapter 8

The Educational Panopticon

'In practice, victory was with those who could speak with the greatest appearance of clear, undoubting conviction and could best use the accents of infallibility.'

John Maynard Keynes¹

1. From Chaos to Order

'Where there is discord let me bring harmony...'

Margaret Thatcher²

The main narrative characteristic of the period between the Butler's Act and the ERA (1988 Education Reform Act) was that of chaos. Though the selective story remained the desirable educational story, evident in that its rhetorical power and influence had remained largely unchanged despite the brief egalitarian comprehensive interregnum, the plot - the clear, ordered development of the educational story - had been lost until it was to be re-invented and culturally restored by Thatcher as the Bourgeois Story .

Butler's 'consensus' had masked the absence of any radical change in the educational narrative since the 19th century. Butler had attempted to bring some order to the increasing educational expectations of post war Britain by providing a narrative which was something rather more than a meritocratic veneer to a stolidly elitist system but which fell well short of providing substantial equality of opportunity. There followed a period of more acute narrative disorder with the egalitarian and 'traditionalist' narratives in

¹cited in Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: a study in moral theory* (London: Duckworth 1981, revised 1985) p. 17

²Thatcher, quoting St Francis of Assisi on her accession: Thatcher (1993) p.19

contention, neither able to claim outright victory, creating an educational system riven by ambiguity and presided over by a quietist political ‘consensus’ which opted out of seeking clear narrative direction.

There had been in conflict two interpretations of human nature each regarding the other as ‘unnatural’: the Respectable narrative and its selective educational story reflecting and maintaining the ‘natural’ class ordering of society justified by a weakened re-invention of the Great Chain of Being, anchored in the *‘mystique of traditional authority’*; and the egalitarian story with its attempt to engineer a more equal society by overt political intervention in the educational system, fuelled by a sense of the unfulfilled destiny of people who had the natural capacities to succeed but who were oppressed by an ‘artificially’ maintained class ordered social system which institutionally denied them fulfilment. There was from this conflict to emerge a different interpretation of human nature, a story which formed the ideological sub-text of the emerging educational story.

Thatcher’s reactionary bourgeois story, shared indeed by not a few ‘new’ Labour politicians as this chapter will discuss, regarded the egalitarian story, in turn, as essentially artificial: it upset the ‘natural’ balance of society by going against the grain of human nature, denying people’s essential ‘natural’ self interest, and their ‘natural’ qualities and ‘natural’ expectations. Egalitarianism, was accused of cheating by making promises that, given the essential ‘natural’ inequality of people, could not possibly be kept. The traditional Respectable story fared little better: it was accused of attempting to maintain a stagnant social system based on an outmoded elitism which obstructed the new bourgeois meritocracy. However, until the bourgeois story was to become the foundation of the new common sense of education, the educational discourses remained fixed in the struggle between selection and egalitarianism. This cultural lag created narrative chaos: as described at the end of the last chapter there were many different stories and interpretations of these stories all vying for domination.

However, the narrative chaos of the two older discourses of education had created ‘strange attractors’ - static narrative points about which speakers of the various educational discourses had tended to collect. Grammar schools and comprehensive schools had become the strangely attractive polar co-ordinates of the educational discourses since Butler. Such was the

attractive power of these points that speakers almost invariably seemed to become caught in one or other of these narrative vortices. These types of schooling became constructed as idealised icons of the contending narratives. The actual schools themselves - the nature of the education they provided and their respective strengths and weaknesses - were lost in them, becoming the iconic receptacles of the narrative hopes and desires of the competing narratives. Their diametric opposition had become not just a feature of educational discourse but in essence what educational theory was about, setting its 'battle' lines - the ideological conflict was almost invariably represented in warlike imagery - defining its boundaries and so narrowly constricting what were its legitimate concerns, eventually to confound the possibility of any potentially constructive educational debate.

'Real' schools and 'real' education became lost in the rhetoric of what Michael Barber calls the '*passionate credulities*' of an educational debate '*..hung up in failed ideologies*'³. The 'reality' of the emergent bourgeois educational story will be discussed and whether it provides an educational debate that is not also hung up in different, but no less passionate, credulities will be questioned. Michael Barber is a key speaker of the 'new' Labour educational narrative and his exposition of the Labour educational narrative and its relation to the bourgeois narrative of the Conservatives will be discussed.

This chapter will also discuss how populist rhetoric, the presentation of policy and opportunistic exploitation of the media was to become an important feature of politics and the creation and maintenance of the bourgeois narrative. What was to become important was not so much what was happening in the educational world but the 'spin' with which these events were to be represented. Politicians were becoming much more versed in the manipulation of the media, having learnt from earlier crude attempts how putting the right 'spin' on events could generate political advantage. They had learned from the seventies and eighties, how minor, inconsequential events, like the apocryphal South American butterfly, initiated catastrophic storms: like the teacher who stupidly appeared in a sex education film, or the misguided 'progressive' fringe at William Tyndale school which stirred up

³Michael Barber: The Learning Game: Arguments for an Education Revolution (London: Indigo/Gollancz 1996, 1997)

increasingly vituperative rhetoric and counter rhetoric for the opposing camps. Such was the power of the largely right wing media creation of public disapprobation for the educational system, that the rhetoric of crisis in education was appropriated by political opportunists to foment crises that they might use to propagandise for the bourgeois narrative and, indeed, electorally exploit.

However, the chapter will go on to argue, the pragmatism and instrumentalism of the Panopticon has served not just to conceal the ideological base of the educational discourses but is an example of the end of attempts to construct grand social narratives. It is an example of the end of what might be considered as uniquely Conservative social narratives - and indeed uniquely socialist narratives too - as the plot has converged into an, arguably, lesser educational and social story without the distinctive qualities that the traditional narratives provided: indeed into a post-ideological narrative, a story without qualities.

2. Building the Panopticon

*"I don't think we consulted any of the professionals.
They were looked on as the enemy."*⁴

Thatcher's heroic strategy had been to promulgate the perception of educational crisis as an important rhetorical feature of the cultural establishment of the bourgeois story. The taming of the teaching profession, the marginalisation of the influence of the teaching unions and the much asserted impotence of the egalitarian narrative to meet the needs of children, the state or the economy, had left education in chaos and made it a popular and vulnerable target. Nor had the Labour Party - then caught in the chaos of the violent narrative competition between its left and the right wings - any credible alternative to offer other than a half-hearted reiteration of the egalitarian narrative which had by then been successfully represented not just as a failure but as a betrayal of the children, their parents and the state.

It had, however, become increasingly evident to Thatcher and her Education Secretaries that making sure that they alone were the ones in the room with the buttons - to borrow an Italian metaphor - was not sufficient. Their control over the educational narrative was far from secure even though they had, by the mid-eighties, succeeded in discrediting teachers and educationalists and removing them from direct influence over the policy making processes. Their *'discourse of derision'* had achieved that, but still, though they pushed the buttons, the educational narrative remained chaotic. Simply reiterating the language of consumerism was not, on its own, enough to construct the desired new reality. This is clear in Norman Tebbit's contribution to the ERA debate: *'.. enough consumer choice will encourage the professionalism among school teachers ... needed to produce the curricula that will please parents and do well for children.'*⁵ What was required was that teachers and educationalists adopt that language and internalise its values and ethos. What was required was a change in the culture of schools.

⁴Nicholas Pyke quoting Stuart Sexton and his distrust of educational research and researchers in the formulation of Conservative Party education policy in: *Perish the thoughts.. Times Educational Supplement* (Scotland) 4/10/91

⁵Hansard: 1st December 1987: 810

Though at first the Thatcher narrative had created yet more disorder, by the early nineties, the 'common sense' of the bourgeois narrative began to become embedded in the educational vocabularies and, as it was internalised, slowly it began to create a new educational order, a new consensus. It is the creation of this new 'common sense' and the nature of this new 'reality' which is the subject of this chapter.

Thatcher's bourgeois discourse of education demanded complicity: that its ideological values of cost efficiency, market economics and cultural restoration be shared by the teachers. At least in the short term - until teachers, colleges of education and other teacher educators had become 'culturally restored' and the bourgeois story became the new 'common sense' - teachers had to be encouraged not to voice disagreement and, bluntly, be constrained to do as they were told. This required teachers to be made directly answerable for what they did and to be more closely supervised and controlled. Consequently, the keyword of this new culture was to be 'accountability'. The world of the teacher and the educationalist was to become metaphorically re-described by the language of consumerism and 'accountability' was the means by which they were to be redefined, themselves re-educated and repositioned in it. It was to be the foundation stone of what might be termed the educational Panopticon.

In describing Thatcher's, and her successors', policing of narrative consensus, Foucault's discussion of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon⁶ was persuasive as a framing metaphor for this chapter. The Panopticon was Bentham's model prison which in 1794 he managed to get the government to fund though it was never built. It was the apparent lack of interest of the government of the time in his reform which apparently converted him to the idea of bourgeois democracy⁷. Bentham was an early exponent of 'soundbite' political rhetoric: his 'felicific calculus' an antecedent version of Thatcher's bourgeois instrumental pragmatism and his dramatic rhetoric exploiting the current popular mood for reform.

⁶Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977) p.200 and passim

⁷as described in Mary Warnock (ed): *Utilitarianism, On Liberty, Essay on Bentham*: (Glasgow: Collins/Fontana, 1962)

The Panopticon was a modernist system of supervision and control; its effectiveness was not so much a matter of its punishment regime, though that was part of it, but rather its regime of surveillance which had the insidious effect of making prisoners their own best goalers. Though Bentham explicitly designed this system for a prison, it is implicit in his political philosophy as a metaphor for the supervision and control of society through the self-referential altruism of the principle of utility. The inmates of his model prison were arranged in cells round a central monitoring tower. They were subject to surveillance from the central tower though at no time were they aware when such surveillance was taking place: good behaviour, the carrying out of prescribed tasks, was rewarded, bad behaviour was punished. The idea was to make the prisoners their own best goalers by making them internalise and become complicit with the values of the prison.

Access to the outside world was denied: the prison became all their world: all that was the case. Critically, each prisoner was alone, isolated so that their individual self interest, as defined and circumscribed by the regime, was the sole determining influence on their behaviour, and so their complicity was individualised. There was no possibility of collective action. Like in the prisoner's dilemma, the zero-sum game described in the last chapter, each prisoner could only guess at the thoughts and feelings of his fellows: self interest was, inevitably, the only remaining - and therefore the only rational - motivation for action. Even the prison warders themselves were subject to surveillance by the prison governor, who was in turn subject to surveillance by visiting prison inspectors, who were in turn... and so on. Any critique of the regime was not just punishable but, in that it made reference to alternative worlds, it was eventually rendered meaningless in the narrow, claustrophobic vocabularies of the prison world. Foucault describes this process of internalising institutional values:

*"He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection."*⁸

⁸Michel Foucault, cited in Peter Griffith: English at the Core: Dialogue and Power in English Teaching, (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1992) p. 10/11

The control function of the Panopticon rests not on what is said, but on what is left unsaid and ultimately rendered unsayable; not as much on who may speak within its confines, but who is rendered silent. The isolation of the individual and the individual institution into regimes of surveillance and accountability in effect leaves the structural bars of the prison invisible and, as it is internalised, undetectable.

The cultural change - the creation of a new 'common sense' of education - was brought about by the creation of a complex system of surveillance and control in the educational world. The teacher was to become the subject of a de-personalised disciplinary system in which the supervisors are themselves each such a subject and so on, and where ultimate control is invisible. Soon the teachers - isolated and individualised by regimes of accountability - were not simply redefined but came to redefine themselves as they internalised and became complicit with the values of the institution and so accountability, the measure of complicity, became the reality principle of the world of education.

The Panopticon was built by the bourgeois narrative in three ideologically congruent phases. Firstly, Thatcher seized control over what teachers taught and how they should teach by instituting a national curriculum and realigning the purposes of education along the needs of the economy. Secondly, the relocation of schools in the market was to place an increased importance on management and the vocabulary of commerce which insidiously began to take precedence over the educational vocabulary. Finally, the new culture was to be enforced by a reconstructed schools' inspection service. The Panopticon, it will be argued, has become the embodiment of the bourgeois educational discourses: it has become the new 'common sense' educational reality.

3. The Isolation of Schools: Education in an Open Society

"It was the Black Paper writers of the late sixties - advocating a return to the basics and to classroom teaching and discipline ... which broke the consensus then controlled by the Left. These Black paper writers were... concerned for the preservation of real learning and the continuance of an open society."

Rhodes Boyson⁹

Boyson makes several oblique references to Popper's 'open society'¹⁰ in this article, emphasising the central core of the Conservative bourgeois narrative's distrust of social and educational theory and the narrow pragmatism of this new narrative. The enemies of the 'open society' are those who would deny choice and accountability: those who would constrain the people and remove their liberty in the interests of some ideologically grand social vision: those who would shape schooling to their ideological will, denying any democratic say in what was being done.

In opposition to such views Popper proposed that social changes, considered as purely empirical matters, could be 'scientifically' engineered by isolated and selective changes to social policy. It is in this sense, and against this background, that the institutional changes in education may be seen. The preferred message of the bourgeois narrative, which this chapter will attempt to deconstruct, is that the reforms are 'ideology free', simply the pragmatic means to create better educational standards.

It was the rhetoric of crisis in education which was used to create disillusionment with ideology and to form the popular desire for choice and accountability and consequently justify the building - and the maintenance - of the educational Panopticon. Barber, for example, remarks, '*a sense of crisis pervades the education service*'.¹¹ Only a cursory glance at newspaper headlines over the past twenty years is sufficient to show how effective the

⁹ Rhodes Boyson: *Empty Heads on Education's Future*, in The Observer: Schools Report, 14/3/93

¹⁰ Karl Popper: The Open Society and Its Enemies, (Routledge & Kegan Paul: London, 1945)

¹¹ Barber (1996/7) p.22

rhetoric of crisis has been in establishing this perception. This rhetoric maintained the popular perception of the need for something to be done. It provided the necessary tension in the narrative to justify its characterisation of teachers and its representation of the 'real' educational world and to keep its process of reform dynamic.

Only those who spoke within the rhetoric of crisis were granted a say in the discourse. As Barber points out, the more evidence was produced to show that schools were being at least relatively effective, the more that evidence was ignored by the then established common sense that schools were failing their pupils, the economy and the country. Barber¹² cites many examples of educational success: increasing numbers of pupils staying on beyond the statutory leaving age; a steady expansion in the number of pupils achieving GCSE passes and an increase in the quality of those passes; increasing numbers attaining A-Levels and many more entering further and higher education. Yet such successes were not allowed to count against the 'common sense' of crisis.

In a strict business sense, success would be welcomed and used to promote the image of the company and praise its methods. Yet the rhetoric of crisis was maintained even though clearly there had been many educational improvements and achievements. Its use, it appears, was not simply that it maintained the narrative tension and justified the reforms; it was a critical factor in bringing about change the culture of schools. Even when Gillian Shephard claimed credit for the improvement of exam results in the publication of the 1996 league tables, it was accompanied by the caveat that the improvement was *'not enough to salvage any realistic chance of achieving the educational targets set for the year 2000 to ensure Britain can keep pace with its economic competitors.'*¹³

Stronach and MacLure describe this use of '*catastrophic future time*'¹⁴ in the bourgeois rhetoric, in which the construction of a dystopic future characterised the narrative - disaster stemming from the consequences of the denial of 'democratic' choice which consistently premised the reforms.

¹²ibid p.23

¹³The Guardian 20/11/96

¹⁴Ian Stronach and Maggie MacLure: Educational Research Undone: The Postmodern Embrace (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997) p. 89/90

Kenneth Clarke ¹⁵, for example, rather than allowing the reforms to take the credit for the improvement in basic literacy when the National Foundation for Educational Research showed that spelling had improved instead asserted a claim that one third of seven year olds cannot identify three letters of the alphabet, implying future disaster. John Patten ¹⁶ claimed that GCSE results - from an examination introduced and monitored by the government - must be inaccurate if they show that educational standards are rising. Indeed there were repeated claims that children cannot spell and that many cannot read, or write, or count; there are fairly constant international comparisons which purport to show how Britain is not competing well in the educational stakes. Gillian Shephard, launching a 'crusade' for '*plain, simple, effective English - not just in the classroom, but in the media, in industry and commerce, even in parliament...*' joined in: '*For too long we have been to slack in the treatment of English and we have impoverished our children in the process.*' ¹⁷

Professor Gordon McGregor, sarcastically described this rhetoric:

"Our hearts go out to the Secretary of State as he agonises over steadily improving GCSE results. But he is not alone. I feel I must now publicly confess on behalf of this college that, in spite of government's genuine commitment to inadequate funding, our students have just achieved... the best results in 151 years.

... It is becoming embarrassing to feel obliged, year after year, to congratulate students and colleagues on what would appear at face value to be remarkable effort and achievement. There must, of course, be a more acceptable explanation and we would be most grateful for any help the Department for Education can offer." ¹⁸

Nicholas Pyke ¹⁹ argued that the Conservative government was not interested in qualitative research but in statistics, which may be interpreted, or

¹⁵NFER (1993): '*Spelling it out, the spelling abilities of 11 and 15-year-olds*' as reported in TES (Times Educational Supplement) 12/2/93. The NFER study showed that 11-year-olds in 1988 performed better than the same age group in 1979.

¹⁶cited in John Marks Standards in Schools: Assessment, Accountability and the Purposes of Education (Social Market Foundation: London, 1991)

¹⁷The Guardian 14/10/94

¹⁸Professor Gordon McGregor, Principal, University College of Ripon and York St John, in a letter to The Guardian, 8/9/92

¹⁹Nicholas Pyke: *Perish the thoughts...*, TES 4/10/91

manipulated, to suit their preconceived opinions. He concludes, more broadly and inclusively: "*..politicians use research as a drunk uses a lamp post - for support rather than illumination*". However the rhetoric was pursued relentlessly, impervious to criticism. It was not accidental but by design that as a consequence of the rhetoric of crisis there was no authoritative, or even informed, check on what politicians and the media could say about education or schools or teachers: the dogs of war had slipped their leashes and they allowed no quarter in the narrative conflict. Richard Hoggart, for example, was constrained to debate - on an apparently equal footing - with Barbara Cartland over her fatuous assertion that: '*Our schools today are producing many pupils who are barely literate and therefore everything must be done to encourage them to read. If someone started reading any romance, not necessarily one of mine, and ended up with Jane Austen, all the money spent on education in this country might be considered worthwhile.*'²⁰

Everyone, it seems, became an expert on what was wrong with education and the focus of discontent remained the teaching profession. Teachers and educationalists, the traditional arbiters of the 'real' world of education, were denied any authoritative place in forming the new educational discourse; they had effectively been marginalised and neither they nor educational researchers, had access to, or influence over, the policy making process. The rhetoric was not designed just to make teachers visible but also simultaneously to disempower them and to re-invent them as the problem.

Nor were the local authorities any more able to influence the reforms or the rhetoric which propelled them. The institution of grant maintained schools was to create yet another limit to their influence. Sir Peter Newsom remarks of the Association of County Councils comments on the ERA proposals: "*No regard (was) paid in any measurable sense to the comments made: the local authorities were rather like people on the touchline of a football match, shouting but really having not much influence on the field.*"²¹

Barber calls this denial of success by the Conservative narrative a '*conspiracy of silence*' though he sees this rhetoric merely as the means to tame the

²⁰*Shhh...page rage*: The Guardian 22/9/97

²¹Sir Peter Newsom, The Association of County Councils: in O.U. Broadcast, *Curriculum and Planning: A Curious Kind of Ritual* (1990, OU/BBC2)

teachers and their unions and maintain the popular perception of the urgency of reform. It was not, however, simply the means by which educationalists were tamed; it has become more than just a rhetorical device, it had become a necessary condition of the new educational reality as that had become redefined in terms of the economy.

An important part of the explanation for the attractiveness of this rhetoric to the speakers of the new narrative was that it was in touch with 'reality': in the economic world of the eighties and nineties, crisis was the critical condition of existence as monetarist policies tried to combat recession with high interest rates and tight control over inflation. Businesses, in the market story, existed on the knife edge between supply and demand. Competing successfully, the central concern of the story, was a matter of sensitivity to consumer demand, providing a quality product and ensuring cost efficiency: it was the era of 'down-sizing' and 'structural unemployment', of 'corporate ethos' and 'quality control'.

Britain had, in the culturally dominant market story, become Britain PLC: it too existed in a characteristic state of permanent crisis. The desires embodied by social policies became almost wholly eclipsed by the prospect of immanent economic catastrophe. The demonology of the bourgeois narrative was the economic threat to continuing bourgeois affluence: the danger to the individual of a rising rate of inflation, high interest rates and ultimate recession - where house prices would spiral out of control, where mortgages would be prohibitively expensive and the threat of repossession became real, where middle management might find themselves 'down-sized', where pensions and investments were worth less, where taxes had to be increased - all coalescing in the rhetoric of 'denial of choice', the evil of attempting regulation of the market by intervention.

Education found itself just a part of this economic story: thus, '*Success in economic management is the most important single measure of the effectiveness and coherence of a party's political programme...*'²² and, even more explicitly, '*Education is the single most important economic policy this government is following.*'²³ John MacGregor, though espousing a devotion

²² David Willetts, *Modern Conservatism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992) p.124

²³ John Redwood, 7/2/95, in a speech to the Conservative Party Central Office on the future of

to traditional moral and cultural purposes of education, particularly the role of the 'domine' of the Scottish educational story, when he was charged with making the ERA reforms work went on to place education firmly in the economic world: *'Education is of fundamental importance, not only to the competitive performance of the British economy, and of all firms and everyone in it in a very competitive world, but also to tackling the challenges of technological change. If our young people are going to be able to cope with the world of the future, they need to have a very strong foundation in education.'*²⁴ The management guru, Sir John Harvey Jones, remarked: *'It is in the field of education that the greatest hopes for Britain's economic revival lie.'*²⁵ Education had lost its own distinctive story, and its traditional cultural sub-texts, the transmission of 'all that is good', the values inherent in citizenship, moral and aesthetic appreciation, even its attempt to re-engineer society, were submerged in the economic vocabulary of means and ends.

Indeed the logic of the reforms was crudely instrumental. In the contemporary world, it seems, social narratives have become, despite the occasional nostalgic moralistic discourse of Thatcher and her Conservative and Labour successors, no longer dominated by the traditional moral or religious stories. The totems of the traditional Respectable stories - the class structure, the intellectual elitism of high culture, the naive patriotism of King and country, the established church, which made up Hogg's 'Myth' of the *'mystique of traditional authority'*²⁶ - no longer have the authority they once enjoyed as certainty in moral absolutes has been undermined.

The only certainties that remained believable in the new narrative were the certainties not so much of theoretical science, those were too obscure and unproductive, but the practical and prudential wisdom of the technological instrumentalism of applied science: that which gets the results, that which yields products that have value in the market. Indeed it had been the biological story - of evolution and of genetics - which was used to create the 'naturalness' of the bourgeois narrative and this was crucially reinforced, indeed verified, by its market-oriented technological applications: genetic

the Conservative Party, as reported in *'House to House'*, Channel 4 TV.

²⁴Ribbins and Sherrat (1997) p.127

²⁵TES 8/7/94

²⁶Ribbins and Sherrat (1997) p.27

fingerprinting, gene sequencing, the creation of hybrids in agriculture and so on. Where faith in morality and in the 'truth' of the traditional grand social narratives had waned, faith in the 'truth' of biological determinism waxed and had been used, as described in the last chapter, to justify social policies based on 'essential' human inequalities: inequalities that are 'natural' and which cannot be changed no matter how benevolent the intentions of the counter-discourses. The pragmatic, instrumental vocabularies of technology - science applied in the interests of business - were to provide not just verifiable 'truths' about human nature and the nature of social organisations but they also had the rhetorical advantage of appearing to be free from ideology.

Sheila Lawlor, gives a classic statement of the individualistic educational philosophy of the market: no educational theory is needed, the role of teachers is simply to teach, the devices of the market will determine standards and ensure rising standards of teaching:

'The professionalism of teachers will flourish in a transformed model, where all schools are independent trusts... In the collective plan for an education service teachers are deprofessionalised. They are seen merely as part of the planned economy of education, seen too often as minions whose task is to promote the plans of those whose expertise (if such it may be called) is not in the subjects they will be teaching but in education....Teachers should be subject specialists employed by their school to teach children their subjects. Like doctors and lawyers, teachers must master their subject academically and learn how to apply their knowledge on the job.

*'True professionalism would bring high academic standards, remuneration which recognises responsibility and excellence, and a dynamic relationship with the parents of children who are taught rather than the debilitating 'partnership', as it is touted, with the local authority or central quango. It would also bring the end of teacher training as an activity conducted in separate education departments of universities and other institutions.'*²⁷

²⁷Sheila Lawlor: 'Questioning Professionalism' The Guardian 14/1/97

Lawlor disguises behind her privatising, non-interference rhetoric that the operations of the Market, as metaphor and as fact, are governed by the pragmatic logic of means, not the moral discourse of ends. She provides a seductive message, a re-invention of professionalism which, however, at the same times denies teachers any 'professional' skills. Teaching depends not on pedagogic expertise or knowledge but on individual, personal qualities.

A re-invention of something like the Butler's consensus, as remarked earlier, was the ultimate object of desire of the bourgeois narrative. The foundations of the Panopticon were built heroically by Thatcher and as it was maintained eventually its ideological sub-texts were to become assimilated into the vocabularies of education and it would cease to be visible: it would become the new educational consensus. The ideologies that underpinned it would become 'ideology free' common-sense just as Butler had successfully, if temporarily, created a 'ideology free' educational consensus. For a time Butler's common sense had become the educational reality: measures of 'natural' ability had produced the three types of child which had in turn justified the 'natural' selection regimes and different but 'appropriate' types of schooling. That consensus had disintegrated in the demand for greater opportunity and in the loss in confidence of the cultural narratives which underpinned it. The chaos that followed Butler was a product, it seemed, of fruitless ideological conflict: consequently any new consensus had to be perceived to be unpartisan and ideology free: to create an educational system where, to invert Kenneth Baker's comment about education in the 1970s, *'good education took precedence over dogma'*.²⁸

And what was 'good' was, in the end, what was useful. There was a lapse in faith or confidence in anything but instrumental reasoning and Thatcher's reasoning was quintessentially instrumental. The narrative authority of the bourgeois story ultimately legitimised itself not by its rather confused iteration of 'traditional' cultural and moral principles, its 'return to Victorian values' but by its success in achieving stated goals - and as educational goals had been reinterpreted in the final instance as economic goals, economic success was Thatcher's ultimate justification for her reforms.

²⁸Ribbins and Sherrat (1997) p.93

The effect of this bias towards instrumental logic on the role of the teacher, on the curriculum it predicated and the rather strange fate of the Conservative bourgeois narrative will be discussed a little later. The purposes of education had, however, become redefined. The new language of education was to become the hard pragmatic language of technology and the business world: devoid of ideals and woolly notions about the Good. What was good was survival and that depended on the cost-effective production of desired commodities. Thatcher took a very simple view about what was wanted: she considered everything in terms of its exchange value. Education was simply one commodity like any other. For her justice resided in the exchange mechanisms of the market - commutative justice rather than social justice. The ethics of the bourgeois narrative was the morality of the estate agent, where value was not intrinsic to the object but simply a matter of what it could be sold for.

Consequently, the world of education was to be firmly placed in the 'real' world: in the 'open' society' it was to be made 'visible'. Butler's 1944 Act had maintained a narrative silence about teachers. He had not questioned the efforts of schools or teacher's professionalism: he spoke of 'the private life' of the school and showed no inclination to change this state by granting parents the power of greater choice. Indeed he had tacitly accepted teachers' 'professional' status by not questioning their abilities, willingness or expertise and by leaving it up to them and the local authorities to run the educational system and to devise appropriate curricula for his different types of schools according to his framework. This perception of the private world of schools and schooling had remained stubbornly intact since Butler. The thrust of Thatcher's earlier reforms had been external and structural: she had until the late eighties only peripherally affected the 'private' life of the school.

The 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) changed all that. Education was thereafter no longer a story in its own right. The narrative expectations of the bourgeois had to be fulfilled and had to be seen to be fulfilled. Those who were responsible to fulfil those expectations had to be seen to be doing so or suffer the consequences. Teachers could no longer have pretensions to the privacy of professional autonomy: they were to become visible. The ERA was designed to exploit the established perception of education in crisis to put teachers under the spotlight of accountability. The language of consumerism

was to be taken to its logical conclusion by the creation of the national curriculum and the production of league tables as a measure of teacher and school effectiveness: its criteria for educational success became not the social good or even the individual good of the pupil but was to be reduced to crudely quantifiable measures of empirical success, the league tables of schools.

Education was presented as a consumer product, schools redefined as service providers. The interests of the consumer were defined, in the long run, as the interests of business and the consumerist/market vocabularies of education became inseparable from each other: individual self interest and the prospering of the economy were the same thing in the bourgeois plot, and supplied the only character motivation which was permissible in the story. Michael Portillo speaking to the Institute of Personnel Development stated *'What we can do is increase the value that people add to their business through education and training. Our aim is a high wage economy, not a low wage economy...'*²⁹ The narrative mutation of 'personal' to 'personnel' in the authorised educational vocabulary sums up the new story of society.

The ERA was to provide the proto-market mechanisms by which parents, redefined as consumers, could compare school performances made visible by league tables of examination results and could thus make 'informed' choices as to which schools they, as customers, should patronise. The existence of schools would, it was intended, depend on their ability to compete with each other in the quality of product they offered. This was the first phase of the Panopticon but for the reform to succeed the teachers had to not just learn but to internalise the vocabulary of consumerism and its pragmatic logic, it had to become the culture of the school: it had to be lived.

The ERA was not established, however, without a 'blip' in the rhetoric of crisis. John Patten mishandled the ERA curricular reforms so badly that he almost lost control of the discourse: his voluble disapprobation³⁰ led him to be sued by Tim Brighouse and his insensitive and clumsy attempt to impose national testing alienated not just *'deeply lippy'* educational officers, *'politically motivated'* teachers and *'Neanderthal'* parents but had even begun

²⁹ The Telegraph, 28/10/94

³⁰ references to Patten from: Stephen Bates, *When the blue chips are down*, The Guardian 5/4/93

to create some popular sympathy for teachers. He even managed to offend his own right wing when Robert Skidelsky and John Marenbon, leading Tory thinktankers and quangoistes, resigned from SEAC when he considered taking legal powers to enforce the tests. Stephen Bates in his profile of Patten, remarks: *'Patten does believe, like most Tories, that there is something deeply rotten in the education system... The fact that most parents don't appear to share that view is, to him, just proof that they have been brainwashed and deluded...'*

Duncan Graham, recalling his time as chief of the National Curriculum Council (NCC) ³¹, reflects on his demise under Patten. He points out that, when he was appointed by Kenneth Baker, Baker was apparently concerned about the *'professional sensibilities of teachers'* in imposing the national curriculum: it needed someone to *'take a grip'*. Baker, he perhaps selectively recalls, wanted the NCC to offer *'independent professional advice of high integrity'*. Indeed Baker reinforced this impression when he stated that he did not want the national curriculum to become a *'narrow, utilitarian, Gradgrind curriculum'* ³² and he preferred Graham's *'down to earth, very Scottish approach. He was not in thrall to the prejudices of academics..'* ³³ More importantly to Baker and his heroic establishment of the national curriculum, Graham does conceal the breakneck speed with which the reforms progressed, was that Graham was chosen to ensure that: *'the curriculum did not fall into the hands of the DES civil servants, inspectors, the academic establishment or ministers.'* ³⁴ Baker's final inclusion of 'ministers' is perhaps just his attempt in more recent times to conceal the then intensely ideological thrust of the reforms: there was never any sense in which either he or his successors ever felt themselves unable to intervene.

Indeed it was heroic ministerial intervention, and their political appropriation of the reforms, that caused Graham's fall from grace. Graham soon found himself *'being kept away'* from ministers, only being summoned on *'stage managed'* occasions when policy decisions had already been taken. When, in 1989, the NCC tried to exert some authority and proposed the publication of

³¹ subsequent references are taken from Duncan Graham's article: *Scapegoat for all seasons*, The Guardian 13/2/92, unless where otherwise noted.

³² *Baker answers critics on curriculum*: The Guardian 24/11/92

³³ Kenneth Baker: *An insider's notes on the curriculum*, The Guardian 24/11/92

³⁴ *ibid.*

'five themes it thought were essential to all education: citizenship, environment, economic and industrial understanding, careers and health', Duncan recalls: 'then the roof fell in'. The NCC were directed to 'get on with the real work of introducing the curriculum'. From then on nothing was to be placed on the NCC agenda without the explicit approval of the minister. The remit of the NCC was reduced until its influence reached what he called: 'the illusory power of a rubber stamp'. 'Ministers', he states, 'saw every initiative as dangerous. In spite of evidence to the contrary, NCC was seen as being in the hands of the professionals, the educationists and the teachers'.

Fallon and Eggar, junior education ministers under John MacGregor, accused the NCC of over-complicating the national curriculum and *'not sorting out how the teachers taught'*. Their publications were vilified by Michael Fallon as *'rubbish', 'the biggest waste of the taxpayers money'* he had ever seen. Fallon with characteristic Thatcherite vitriol, commented: *'Did ministers interfere? We certainly did... if Parliament had not... we would have seen history redefined as current affairs, geography covering politics and not places and English shorn of grammar but including Monty Python'*.³⁵

Graham describes how, when Kenneth Clarke became minister a whispering campaign began, blaming Baker for *'appointing people determined to wreck the government education reforms'*. All the ills of the national curriculum were, he states, pinned on the NCC and SEAC (Secondary Examinations and Assessment Council) which now *'had no more influence than any other pressure group'*. He complains that he was never called in for a *'rational'* discussion of the role of the NCC. Graham was eventually replaced by David Pascall as head of the NCC. Pascall had no educational background but he was a prominent businessman and Tory think-tanker. It was clearly a political appointment: Pascall was seen for a time to be the person to make the NCC cease to frustrate their political masters. However he too was replaced in April 1993 by Sir Ron Dearing who was considered more *'appropriate'* to the less ideological rhetorical tenor of the times: he was seen as *'a safer pair of hands'*: *'a non-political appointee who had worked for both main political parties and was therefore without 'baggage''*.³⁶ Ironically Pascal had come to adopt a conciliatory approach to teachers: he was accused in the traditional

³⁵The Times 23/11/92

³⁶The Guardian 14/4/93

vocabularies of the right, despite his market credentials, as having ‘gone native’: an imperialist metaphor which has often been used by politicians of both parties to describe appointments which had become politically unsatisfactory. Pascal had even adopted the NCC line on the importance of values education and increasing the ‘understanding of our cultural heritage’. He was exasperated by his political masters’ ‘heroism’: *‘It is vitally important that... the chairman... talks to teachers, understands the issues and relates what is actually happening in the classroom to the real objectives. If that is your definition of ‘going native’, I make no apology.’*³⁷ He had tried to win consensus for the reforms and perhaps he would have succeeded but Sir Ron Dearing, former head of the Post Office, was seen by the politicians as a figure more likely to build the ‘ideologically free’ consensus and Pascall was in turn sacked.

Dearing indeed was to become a key figure in the creation of the new consensus and proved an astute choice. He was never accused of ‘going native’ though he too adopted a conciliatory ‘listening’ approach. In August 1993 his interim report on the slimming down of the national curriculum was well received by everyone even if it was more a result of a political rather than educational desire to create some semblance of consensus. The government needed to see the reforms working to maintain credibility and the unions needed to improve their image to try to recover some influence in the discourse. Dearing’s exercise in *‘the art of the possible’* perhaps came to mark the beginning of the new culture in education. Michael Barber acknowledged the importance of the emergence of what at last seemed like an ‘ideologically free’ initiative. *‘The generous welcome Baroness Blach gave to the interim Dearing Report appeared to herald a the dawn of a new era..’*³⁸, he claimed.

The new consensus was characterised by an apparent absence of the heroic political statement. Patten had deliberately provoked the teaching unions partly because of this abiding distrust of them but also, it seems, for reasons of personal, political ambition - he wanted to be seen as a ‘heroic’ right wing hard liner. He had decided not meet with teaching associations: he snubbed the National Association of Headteacher’s conference by telling them he had

³⁷David Pascall, quoted in James Meikle *Making no apology*, The Guardian 14/4/93

³⁸Michael Barber cited in: *That was the year that was...* TES 24/12/93

nothing to say to them. He had decided not to speak to teachers' associations: *'not to pander to them. They are an interest group and we do not want to get too close to them.'*³⁹ and when he met David Hart, the leader of the Headteacher's Association who was sympathetic to the broader narrative of bourgeoisification of schools, if not entirely content with the use of the mechanisms of the market, he remarked: *'Come to make trouble again, I suppose'*. This flamboyant, heroic strategy, however, did not meet with the same success as Thatcher's did and threatened to undermine the curricular reform.

Patten was to be replaced a few months later by Gillian Shephard, a 'safer pair of hands' and who was to prove a minister somewhat more in touch with the less heroic, more 'consensual' approach the educational discourses were taking. Though the boycott of the testing arrangements by the teaching unions for a time seemed to threaten the whole thrust of the bourgeois narrative, the tide had irrevocably changed against the influence of teachers, educationalists and their professional associations in the affairs of the educational discourse and, though the union did eventually win some few concessions, these were not ultimately damaging either to the ideological thrust of the reforms or to the continuation of the rhetoric of crisis. Indeed their limited victory had the effect of etching the consumerist vocabulary of the market ideology even more deeply into the narrative. The Dearing Report, the result of the union action, was to reinstate the central principles of the ERA. There was no material change to the reforms: the prescriptive curriculum would still be set, albeit in a reduced number of subjects; mandatory testing would still be carried out at the key stages; and league tables of results would still be published in their crude form.

The national curriculum was reduced to a much simpler structure, much more in line - three years on - with Thatcher's desire for simplicity. Ironically, it had been educationalists, particularly the HMI who had retained some influence over the Department for Education, who had made the curriculum so complex in the first place. Chris Woodhead, then the Chief Executive of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority remarked: *'the national curriculum was rescued from the complexity and bureaucracy which*

³⁹this and subsequent references in *The Guardian* 5/4/93

*threatened to sink it. Battles remain to be fought over the detail...*⁴⁰ The warlike imagery remained though, importantly, those who spoke it were to change.

In 1993 the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) was created by John Major. It was organised and staffed to be a market-oriented replacement for the discredited HMI: the effete educational aristos were to be replaced by 'ordinary people', the *sans culottes* of the bourgeoisie. Having given up hope of reforming HMI, Ofsted was seen as the means by which schools would be encouraged to adopt the cultural values of the revolution. Having offered schools the carrot of increased funding by opting out of local authority control, Ofsted was to become the stick to ensure that the reluctant and recalcitrant would toe the narrative line. Its advent was announced by John Patten's reiteration of the main recommendations of the 1992 'Three Wise Men' report on primary education, the call for more whole class and subject based teaching and the need to place greater emphasis on differentiation by ability which John Patten called '*plain, old-fashioned common sense*'.⁴¹

HMI was suspected of more than a casual flirtation with 'progressive' education and though it would remain in an 'advisory' capacity, its influence over educational policy and its direct contact with the educational world was again eroded. Ofsted was created in line with Major's 'citizen's charter' approach to the public services: a kind of contract with the people - not as citizens as in the traditional discourses of Rousseau or Hobbes - but with people re-identified as essentially consumers. In effect Major offered a consumer protection service, giving product advice like *Which* magazine's comparison of 'service' providers and their 'products', thus implicitly legitimising the principles of individual consumer choice and individual consumer self interest of the narrative. The neo-liberal emphasis on the freedom of choice of the individual was, in effect, reduced to providing only a choice of commodities and services they might consume.

Major's period in office was marked by a growing popular cynicism with politics and the traditional ideologies of both Conservatism and Socialism. It had also become much more difficult to maintain the rhetoric of crisis by

⁴⁰Chris Woodhead cited in: *That was the year that was...* TES 24/12/93

⁴¹TES 12/2/93

heroic statement. Thatcher had been propelled to power through her heroic Churchillian rhetoric, her ruthless single mindedness fuelled by her sense of certainty; but it was just those qualities which were to eject her from power. She, like Churchill, was a war politician: in times of peace, now that the bourgeois narrative was becoming the cultural common sense, she had become a liability to the Conservatives and their pursuit of power. The narratives of the Labour Party - as re-invented first by Kinnock and Smith and then, more radically still, by Blair - and the Conservatives began to converge and there was a correspondingly growing consciousness that politics was becoming less ideological. This growing 'post-ideological' bourgeois consensus was threatened by what appeared to be Thatcher's heroic loose cannon, creating quite unnecessary dissension, not least among the Conservatives themselves.

This 'post-ideological' bourgeois narrative brought with it a new kind of social cohesion built around consumption. The bourgeois narrative's justification of individual consumer fulfilment and individual consumer self interest had brought with it a popular scepticism for, perhaps even a fear of, potentially disruptive grand narrative claims: it rejected grand visions of the future which it replaced with the apparently 'post-ideological' demand for consumer protection. Indeed Major was exploiting the increasing popularity of consumerist 'watchdog journalism' in the media, perhaps the one area of journalism which had retained the confidence of an increasingly cynical audience. The consumerist stress of the educational narrative was thus to move beyond the commodification of education. An important aspect of the narrative is its metaphorical re-identification of education, not simply as 'product' but as 'brand'.

The commodification of education was to evolve in the narrative as competition between market 'brands' - the independent sector, the grant maintained schools and the comprehensives. Like washing machines or cars, the products of different producers are, essentially, identical: what the 'brand' gives is fashion, desirability, exclusivity, status and cachet: labels like 'Porsche' or 'Skoda' on cars and 'Calvin Klein' or 'Marks and Spencer' on underwear become at least as important as the product themselves and probably much more so as 'lifestyle' replaced 'class' in the totemic reordering of society.

The league tables must always favour the 'selective' schools: 'comprehensives' cannot compete with them and such competition in examination results must always produce failures, 'sink' schools to provide the spur to greater efforts. Yet Barber describes the continuing improvement in educational standards in many comprehensive schools and Benn and Chitty⁴² show that they are not inherently 'bad' schools nor are their teachers inherently poor: they could provide as good an education as anywhere else if they were also patronised by the bourgeoisie. The 'comprehensive' school proved, however, too downmarket a brand to be the popular choice of the upwardly mobile. The Grant Maintained school, like the London Oratory which Tony Blair has patronised, was a more fashionably exclusive and thus a more desirable school: it provided greater social cachet than a comprehensive in Islington.

The bourgeois and the aspiring bourgeois 'naturally' chose the more chic independent sector or the grant maintained school. It is in this way that the educational narrative was 'bourgeoisified': not according to social class or putative ability as in the Respectable narratives but according to brand labelled 'lifestyle' choices - conspicuous consumption finally superseded 'class' as the new social differential. Alan Clark⁴³, quoting Julian Critchley, was to satirise this new class as '*garagistes*', but it is a class which had become far too narratively secure in its expectations and smug in the comforts and cachet of its 'lifestyle' to be affected by such 'meaningless' criticism, interpreting it as either elitist snobbishness or envy, depending upon which wing of the traditional 'Respectable' narratives was complaining.

⁴²Caroline Benn and Clyde Chitty (1996) op.cit. passim

⁴³in his *History of the Conservative Party*, as broadcast on BBC2 28/9/97

Chapter 9

Policing the Post-Ideological Consensus

"...part of the significance of the discourse is the impossibility of reply. The culpable teacher, the implicated educational establishment, are excluded from valid participation in the debates which affect them directly...The discourse rests on their failings and their culpability, thus their responses...can be set aside... alternatives are thoroughly excluded and discredited." ¹

1. Surveillance

'It put the country's most important issue firmly on the agenda' ²

Ofsted was the means by which the bourgeois educational narrative was to be maintained. It would be the consumers' watchdog, ensuring that all the brands offered value for money. Its apparent impartiality - borrowed from the consumerist watchdog discourse - was also a means to disguise the ideological trappings of the narrative, allowing the politicians to appear to distance themselves from the 'post-ideological' educational world. As a consequence, educationalists became themselves more visible and some began to see themselves as media figures of importance in themselves, as much as educationalists - a kind of Jeremy Paxman syndrome where the interviewer becomes more important than either the interviewee or the topic of discussion. Of particular relevance to this chapter is the media seduction of Chris Woodhead, the present head of Ofsted. Pierre Bourdieu ³ describes the corruptive influence of the media and its concern over its market position -

¹Stephen J. Ball Politics and Policy Making in Education, (London: Routledge: 1990) pp 58/9

²Michael Barber on his 'high point' of 1993 which was the Ofsted Report Access and Achievement in Urban Education : in *That was the year that was...* TES 24/12/93

³Pierre Bourdieu, On Television and Journalism (London: Pluto Press, 1998)

simplifying issues in populist terms, creating personalities and manufacturing controversies in its search for higher ratings. The market thus began to have an even deeper, even more invisible, influence on the educational discourse. It is for this reason that most of the references to Ofsted and Woodhead in this chapter are taken from the media.

The experience of Patten had showed that the heroic, hands on strategy of Thatcher was no longer as effective or as popularly received as it had been. Ofsted was to become the principle vehicle for maintaining the reforms and maintaining the rhetoric of crisis which now appeared to be coming from an dispassionate, independent consumer service. Indeed the vocabulary of consumerism became the common sense of the educational world and its ideology was masked from view as, proportionately, educationalists became much more visible.

Indeed the rhetoric of crisis was self fulfilling: it justified the 'mission' of Ofsted and in promoting crisis it also generated it. It was, more critically, also used because any other rhetoric had been effectively ruled out: the educational discourse had become so narrowed by the vocabulary of consumerism as to see success being determined by nothing other than the pressures of competition and the need to provide value for money.

Critical to ensuring that Ofsted was the vehicle for the continuation of the rhetoric of crisis was the appointment of Chris Woodhead as its head. He was to provide a leadership style and rhetoric startlingly similar to Thatcher's. His preferred message was unexceptional: *'I see my job as trying to promote a professional debate about what constitutes good teaching.'*⁴ And though inspection was bound to be stressful it was with a clear purpose: *'The stress is not just negative. It encourages schools to work with greater determination to deal with deep seated problems.'*⁵ Ofsted's role was simply that of supplying the '*diagnosis*' he further maintained, and leave it to the 'professionals' to provide the '*treatment*'. The medical metaphor used reinforces the preferred perception of Ofsted's impartial and 'clinical' role: that of a consultant visiting the ward, directing the junior doctors to what treatment is indicated but leaving it up to them to follow through on the prescribed course of treatment.

⁴The Guardian 18/4/95

⁵ibid.

However, he insisted, any treatment must not derive from one of the despised 'progressive' egalitarian narratives: *'the old orthodoxies continue to exert their influence in too many classrooms'* he said⁶. This abiding concern, real or imagined, with 'old orthodoxies' is characteristic of the conservative discourses: it was the demonology of the Black Papers, echoed by Thatcher and later again reiterated by Walden: *'Middle class parents especially have become more concerned (about)...the little Edens of amateur learning our primary schools have become.'*⁷ Walden accuses the old 'timorous' HMI of a conspiracy of silence about such methods, praises Woodhead for breaking that silence and now with relief notes that the Labour Party *'breaking with a long and culpable tradition of silence, has joined the chorus of critics of low aspirations'*⁸ and, indeed they now have come round to the new story so far as to *'studiously refrain from attacks on the 'controversial' Chris Woodhead'*, adding, *'the Labour spokesman, David Blunkett, is beginning to speak the same language, excoriating low achievement, especially in comprehensives.'*⁹

Woodhead's constantly reiterated purpose was to remedy falling educational standards: *'I have become more worried about the failure of many children to master the basic skills, hence my emphasis on numeracy and literacy now... as I realised how low standards in some schools did sink.'*¹⁰ The culture of school had to be changed, in his view, not by force but by persuasion. Indeed applying the rigour of the law would, in his view, create too rigid a system and would be counter productive: *'Legislation cannot in itself change the educational culture, dent the orthodoxies, automatically cause teachers to teach in a different way... (government) should abandon the quest for dirigiste and mechanical solutions to transform the base metal of low standards into sparkling educational gold.'* Though echoing the rhetoric of both Matthew Arnold and Butler, he offered a solution neither would find palatable: the market: government should *'devolve real freedom to schools, audit their performance and give parents a lot more information about what is going on'*¹¹. In particular he claimed real success for the league tables in

⁶The Guardian 5/2/97:

⁷Walden (1996) p.128

⁸ibid p.129

⁹ibid p.151

¹⁰The Guardian 18/4/98

¹¹The Guardian 26/2/97

improving standards¹². Though this simple regimen occasionally led to embarrassment, for example when he was forced to order an enquiry into a school an inspection had hailed as '*a marvel*' which was to come bottom of the league tables¹³, yet he persisted in the simplicity of his '*mission*'.

The narrative redefined the problem of schooling as 'low achievement' and the solution stemmed from the application of market competition to raise standards. So when Ofsted admitted that 'failing schools' were almost invariably located in deprived areas - defined by the number of children receiving free meals - their answer was not to address the deeper social reasons why some children fail to thrive, and certainly not to advise that such schools were granted greater resources but simply to assert that these children '*were not less intelligent and had an equal right to a decent start*' but that 'right' was denied them by bad teaching: '*the teaching they experienced was more likely to be judged unsatisfactory or poor.*'¹⁴

It was the teaching that was the 'real' problem: schooling had been redefined as a means for children to be inducted into the dominant bourgeois culture. David Blunkett, speaking of the importance of a formal curriculum in nursery schooling stated: '*The longer you leave them (the children) without the skills that middle class families take for granted the more disadvantaged you are making them.*'¹⁵ The solution was to put the schools under yet more surveillance and to re-educate them through 'tough inspections', a 'crackdown on poor standards', 'swoop squads' and the 'name and shame' policy for 'failing' schools. Local authorities too were to be subject to this field of visibility: Blunkett also insisted, using the same characteristic rhetoric as Woodhead, that '*The inspection of local education authorities is a key element of our crusade to raise standards*'¹⁶.

HMI had carried out full inspections of about 50 primaries each year, Ofsted planned 100-150 inspections of primary schools each week. Adopting market methods, 'bids' for these inspections were invited and were at first mostly won by local authorities though later they were to be sub-contracted to quasi-privatised inspection bodies. Though Woodhead had expressed a

¹²The Guardian 29/1/97

¹³Strand Junior School in Grimsby: Observer 6/4/97

¹⁴Guardian 18/4/95

¹⁵The Guardian 5/10/98

¹⁶The Guardian 12/9/97

preference for his inspectors to have educational and managerial experience, many 'lay' inspectors had to be recruited to meet the target. The quality of the inspector was not always what it might be: one 70 year old ex-bank manager lay inspector, for example, triumphantly recounted her unique inspection technique: *'I thought - I've been a Brown Owl, I'll ask the teacher for a couple of Brownies and we can talk Brownie-speak. And after half an hour I asked them who was the brightest boy in the class and who was the naughtiest and then I asked the teacher if I could have them to show me around and I must say she blanched...'*¹⁷.

Woodhead's was a deliberately naive 'common sense' approach. And it was also very aggressive. Mike Tomlinson, the head of inspections at Ofsted said: *'I do not give a monkey's toss for the teachers. It's the children I care about.'*¹⁸ Ted Wragg was to accuse Woodhead of *'me Tarzan, you scum'* attitude to teachers¹⁹. For Woodhead, however, such criticism was simply evidence that he was doing a good job: he thrived on his 'bogey man' image: *'In the demonology of the education service... he is the bogey man. He beats previous Conservative education secretaries.. Keith Joseph.. and even John Patten... Resented by many teachers for his attack on their competence and trendy teaching methods, scorned by some education professors for his generalisations, judged by the majority in education to be compromising the independence of his position, Woodhead.. arouses extraordinary passion'*²⁰

Since Thatcher there had been an enduring suspicion among Conservatives that the people appointed to educational jobs as ministers or to their quangos - had ultimately failed them. Woodhead was clearly conscious of this: he had seen what had happened to Pascall and Graham and he was careful to create a tough, uncompromising persona: there was to be no danger of him or of his service 'going native'. *'...children in schools where there is much underachievement are not helped by the fact the morale of their teachers might be high'*²¹ he stated unapologetically and uncompromisingly. He rejected criticism of Ofsted and allegations of it creating low morale: *'I don't accept that we are demoralising everybody. I think we are having a positive*

¹⁷Catherine Hinds, lay inspector, quoted in Susan Thomas: *Brownie points for common sense*, TES 9/9/94

¹⁸The Guardian 5/2/97:

¹⁹The Guardian 3/9/97

²⁰Lucy Hodges: *On the Rocks with Machiavelli* TES 9/2/96

²¹Chris Woodhead cited by Peter Wilby, *New Statesman* 9/5/97

effect on morale. But this is a desperately difficult story to spin.'²² He was very conscious of the rhetorical dimension to his job in bringing about the desired cultural change. He was determined to 'spin' the preferred message: standards were falling, poor teaching was to blame and he was there to put things right. He really was the teacher's friend, if only the teachers could be brought to see that.

Indeed his rhetoric was to share many common features with Thatcher's. He became heir to Thatcher's heroic strategy and 'moaning minnies' rhetoric: *'You are there to upset a number of people. It could have been much easier if I hadn't chosen to challenge as many people as I have. I'm not sitting here whingeing about the way that the world has received me.'*²³ He shared her loathing of cultural theory: *'Do we really need research into how "schools as patriarchal institutions that are ideologically and culturally heterosexual... exercise a level of control over the private lives of lesbian teachers'*²⁴ employing her favourite derisive - and quite improper logically - use of *reductio ad absurdum*. He too spoke of the enemy within: *'There is still a job to do, the agenda out there is still not delivered and there are still forces who want to undermine our progress. I want to ensure that we travel down the right road.'*²⁵ His target, like hers, was the 'culture of dependency': *'Local authorities must not be allowed to reassert control over schools and revive a culture of dependency under the guise of helping teachers. The key responsibility facing the next government, whatever its political hue, is to ensure that the old orthodoxies and systems continue to be challenged''*²⁶.

He maintained the rhetoric of crisis with heroism: in his annual report for 1997 he asserted that 3,000 headteachers were incompetent, showing 'poor leadership', as were 15,000 teachers and 16% of lessons are unsatisfactory²⁷: Yet his annual report showed only 88 teachers performing at 'poor' or 'very poor' standard out of the inspections of 2,862 schools and 1,989 teachers were 'excellent' or 'very good'. He defended this apparent discrepancy by

²²The Guardian 18/4/98

²³ibid

²⁴ibid

²⁵ibid

²⁶Guardian 22/1/97.

²⁷Guardian 5/2/97

claiming the Inspectorate were reluctant to give low grades and thus damage a teacher's career: his estimate was the 'true' one ²⁸.

The Ofsted report on appraisal issued in 1996 cast doubts on the effectiveness of the policy and suggested, a constant theme of the bourgeois narrative that had often been promulgated but never implemented, that performance should be tied to pay. In that same year he was centre of a row over poor reading standards in Islington. The claims he made were, he admitted, based on very limited evidence and he took little account of the social context but he was giving the 'true' picture he asserts. There were several claims of 'doctoring' of reports - or at least shifting interpretation - to ensure maintenance of crisis: Gardiner and Hackett ²⁹ cite Colin Richards, former HMI, who stated that the mid point on the scale of school performance had been changed from 'neutral' to 'negative' to substantiate Woodhead's assertion in his annual report that half of all primaries were unsatisfactory.

He consistently presents himself as the arbiter of the 'real' in education just as Thatcher had been the reality policewoman of the broader bourgeois narrative, the provider of the 'true' interpretations, the 'actual' facts of the matter. Josephine Gardiner and Geraldine Hackett charted his heroic statements for 1995/96. He grandly announced that 15,000 teachers should be sacked on 'Panorama' November 1995. He dramatically timed his contradiction of the figure estimated by Labour Party as required to reduce class sizes, announcing the 'true' figure to coincide with the Conservative Party Conference. Labour's figure had been based on research by the National Foundation for Educational Research and they claimed that £60M was needed, Woodhead estimated nearer £250M but, as Gardiner and Hackett comment, '*doubt surrounds the process by which Ofsted arrived at their figure*' ³⁰ and David Hart commented: '*He has provided the Government with a number of face saving statements, not least on class size..*' ³¹.

He was often accused of being too close to the Conservative policy making process and, indeed, there is much evidence to support this. He had reputedly

²⁸ibid

²⁹Josephine Gardiner and Geraldine Hackett: *The man who is already king* TES 5/7/96

³⁰ibid

³¹David Hart: National Association of Headteachers, quoted in Lucy Hodges: *On the Rocks with Machiavelli* TES 9/2/96

reported to Tory ministers about how his boss was subverting their wishes when deputy chief executive of the National Curriculum Council (1990-91), a story he denied³² though he did admit to ‘informal’ discussions. He had links to Politeia, Sheila Lawlor’s right wing think tank where he argued that *‘trendy teachers, not a lack of money, were to blame for poor standards in schools’*³³. Of accusations that writing for a right wing publication compromised his independence, he made a characteristically aggressive defence: *‘If people cannot separate the substance of the ideas from the context in which I express those ideas, that’s their problem’*³⁴. Like Thatcher he adopted a deliberate artlessness: in political discourses, the medium is at least as important as the message. In his defence he ingenuously stated: *‘Ofsted is a government department, and the head of all government departments is the Prime Minister’* and cited Eric Bolton (exHMI) that it was a myth that inspectors had ever, anyway, been independent of government.³⁵

Woodhead had informal, long established links with education adviser Dominic Morris at Number 10 policy unit and his discussions there were apparently not reported to Gillian Shephard³⁶ which apparently led to *‘strained’* relations with the DfEE especially when Ofsted plans were announced in a speech by John Major but not cleared first by the DfEE. However, though there may have been some strain at times, some fraying of nerves about the infringement of traditional protocols, the shift in the rhetoric of crisis from the politicians to what had become in effect the new educational ‘establishment’ was eventually established. *‘It frequently looks as if he, rather than Gillian Shephard, sets the agenda on policy, and that it is he, rather than she, who has the confidence of the prime minister.’*³⁷

In his defence, however, it is clear that he is not party political: he would support anyone who maintained the bourgeois educational narrative: for him that alone seems to have authority and in his championing of it he has become an icon of it. His identity has become symbolic, transcending the actual world of education and he has come to represent the new ‘reality’. Though Woodhead’s obvious alliance with Tory education policy was to provoke a

³²New Statesman 9/5/97

³³Lucy Hodges: *On the Rocks with Machiavelli* TES 9/2/96

³⁴ibid

³⁵ibid

³⁶*At the court of the ‘brave’ chief inspector:* TES 5/7/96

³⁷Josephine Gardiner and Geraldine Hackett: *The man who is already king* TES 5/7/96

TV presenter into making a bet with Ted Wragg and Michael Barber that within three months of a Labour victory Woodhead would be out, both knew better and took the bet³⁸. Woodhead did not just keep his job but had his contract renewed, as announced on the 19th September 1998, with close to a fifty percent (including performance bonus) increase in salary. Indeed before the 1997 general election Blair had announced that Woodhead would retain his job, and such was the public image of Woodhead that this was a clear signal that Labour too had abandoned the 'old orthodoxies' and 'passionate credulities' of its traditional educational narrative and had embraced the bourgeois story which by that symbolic act was to be reconstructed as apolitical.

Indeed Woodhead was to find the New Labour administration just as sympathetic to the bourgeois narrative and he has also been accused of being too close to the New Labour government. John Dunford, the general secretary of the Secondary Heads Association was concerned about his 'impartiality': Woodhead, he claims was *'too close to the policy-making process of (the new Labour) government and (he) is not seen to be sufficiently independent in his judgements'*.³⁹

With Ofsted, Major was finally to provide, and Blair was to inherit, an apparently ideology free educational narrative with a sympathetic educational establishment to enforce it. Though there were still dissenting voices from the colleges, the universities and from the teaching unions, those voices were to become muted, less and less influential. The key to the Panopticon was the isolation of schools into individual service centres and from any influence over education policy, at the same time ruling the traditional, wider social narratives out of bounds. Woodhead's Ofsted was to place the focus on individual schools themselves to solve their problems, to find their own solutions from their own resources. The school's isolation was complete. The next step was to reinforce the isolation of teachers into their individual cells.

³⁸New Statesman 9/5/97

³⁹The Guardian 19/9/98

2. Clones and Butterflies: Internalising of the Narrative

"the monstrous complacency of teachers who despise knowledge"

John Major⁴⁰

In Generation X, Douglas Coupland describes a curious architectural feature of shopping malls. They are, he claims, lacking an external dimension: *'..shopping malls exist on the insides only and have no exterior. The suspension of visual disbelief engendered by this notion allows shoppers to pretend that the large cement blocks thrust into their environment do not, in fact, exist.'*⁴¹ The world of education was to come to exhibit this structural curiosity: isolated and denied access to the discourses of power in the external world, eventually the cement blocks of the new narrative, its ideological foundations and its at times ugly reinforcement of the market vocabularies, came to disappear from vision, absorbed into the background. Everything was viewed from the inside; all educational problems were explicable in terms of the individual school and resolvable by that school - any other speculation, explanation or potential solution was ruled illegitimate. Teachers, for example, were to blame for increasing number of expulsions: *'Children taught badly are likely to become bored, and children who are bored are likely to misbehave'*⁴². Thus the unpleasant survival imperative of the market, leading schools to rid themselves of children who might compromise their results, became not even an irrelevant factor but an invisible one. Of the ideology of the market affecting the schools, the teachers, or the learning experience of the pupils adversely, the inspectors enforced and maintained silence. The expulsion problem was kept in the class: teachers were simply judged too confrontational⁴³ by Ofsted inspectors and even the wider social reasons for misbehaviour were ruled irrelevant.

Teachers had become the problem and the solution was, in the pragmatism of the narrative, better management. The rhetoric of crisis created the perception of failing schools - perversely failing now that what constituted a 'good' school had been established - and the urgent need to make teachers visible

⁴⁰John Major: Address to the Welsh Tory Party Conference, *The Guardian* 11/6/93

⁴¹Douglas Coupland: Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture, (Abacus: London, 1991) p. 71

⁴²*The Guardian* 22/11/96

⁴³ibid.

and accountable. The unvarying rhetoric of incompetence - even in spite of the facts was to appoint accountability as the reality policeman, to borrow a phrase from Saul Bellow, to enforce the new story. 'Accountability' is a concept borrowed from the dominant business vocabulary and provides a substitute for 'responsibility' and 'duty' in the traditional vocabulary of professionalism. The last chapter discussed how professionalism had become a tainted concept, a result of not just the bourgeois narrative's discourse of derision but almost as much through teachers' own 'unprofessional' conduct and smug complacency. 'Accountability', the searchlight of the Panopticon, was to end the privacy of teachers. It was radically to redefine teachers' 'professionalism' and their role in very different terms, and it was intended to induct them into the new story.

'Choice' and 'accountability' were the prerequisites of the bourgeois democracy and its 'open society'. Michael Barber⁴⁴ describes the new era in education as '*the era of accountability*' though he dates it, not from the Thatcher accession in 1979 but from Callaghan's Ruskin Speech. Barber is an apologist for the 'New Labour' educational narrative, which will be discussed later, and he seeks to re-invent the rhetoric of accountability, utilising the crude 'we thought of it first' rhetorical gambit, to maintain the discursive emphasis on the need to control the educational narrative and to remind any remaining unreconstructed educationalists, who may have thought that the new Labour government might have a more relaxed policy strategy about whose fingers were on the buttons.

It is not, however, clear that Callaghan's speech marked this cultural change though it was clearly and important precursor to it in its themes and its demand for pragmatic solutions as described earlier. Certainly the Conservatives had claimed this to be the case but this was perhaps to re-invent Callaghan in their own image as a retrospective justification for their radical reforms. Callaghan had complained of inappropriate curriculum and the need to improve standards and argued for education to be more focused on the needs of the economy but he had not proposed the radical paradigm shift to consumerism that was the bourgeois narrative. Rather his speech was an expression of concern, calling for debate about the state of education. Though he asserted that economic concerns and the wishes of

⁴⁴Michael Barber, *The Learning Game* (London: Indigo/Cassell, 1997) p.33 and passim.

parents were legitimate, he did not assert that these were the only legitimate concerns. He did not so circumscribe the debate as to rule out the professionals, though he was to chide their demands for privacy. He said, *'It is almost as though some people would wish that the subject matter and purpose of education should not have public attention focused on it; nor that profane hands should be allowed to touch it.'* He avoided open confrontation but his pejorative use of *'some people'* and *'profane'* did clearly indicate a loss of patience with the overprotectiveness of the professionals.

It was Thatcher, however, who was to confront the professionals head on with a demand for visibility and accountability. Callaghan had been a little less heroic in his choice of phrase: he called for greater *'monitoring'* of standards but he was always careful to include the professionals: *'There is a challenge to us all in these days and a challenge in education is to examine its priorities and to secure as high efficiency as possible by the use of existing resources.'* It was this rhetoric of *'challenge'* that Blair too was to echo in his speech to the Labour Party conference in 1998. It is a rhetoric of confrontation and one which implicitly accepts that education is failing. It problematises the issue, placing teachers and educationalists on the defensive, excluding them from, and making them the focus of, the managerialist discourses.

Thatcher as a matter of procedure had excluded the professionals and this Blair has continued though not quite so heroically. However, neither Callaghan's, Thatcher's or Blair's concerns were entirely illegitimate: education and the economy are necessarily linked in complex societies. It was Thatcher, however, who was to carry Callaghan's debate through to what she claimed was its logical conclusion, to deny that there was any other purpose in education than its contribution to the economic well-being of the country and it was Blair who was to maintain this narrative. It was premised on market efficiency and effectiveness: since education was being paid for by the taxpayer, it was a clear duty of the state to ensure that their money was being well spent to that end.

Such a concern is also not illegitimate, as Barber points out ⁴⁵, but it begs the question about what *'well spent'* means, a question which Barber, a spokesman for New Labour, tends to allow to slip by uncontested. Indeed

⁴⁵ *ibid.* p.47

accountability works so as to conceal the values inherent in the narrative, its ideological base. It is a pragmatic, empirical concept which does not permit the discussion of ends, just means. The ideology behind the narrative disappears in through its concern with practical results: though its insistence that there is something which can somehow be empirically measured, charted or tabulated and that comparisons can be made by which to gauge the quality and effectiveness of teaching: more keywords of the new vocabulary.

In the last chapter, in the discussion of Cooper's 'Scholesia', Cooper made the assertion that schools, and indeed teachers, could be compared fairly unproblematically though even he rejected the crude measure of examination success as a distortion of the purposes of education. It proved impossible, however, for the Conservative bourgeois narrative to come up with any viable alternative, so locked were they into the narrowness of their construction of the purposes of education. The league tables of schools were to become the crude indicator of the success or otherwise of a school, but in the microcosm of the school itself, accountability was to be the measure of the teacher. The governing concern, however, was to be the image of success that could be created, and thus the survival, of the school - all other concerns, no matter how 'educationally' valuable they might be perceived to be by the 'professionals' - were of lesser importance. How the school was seen by its 'client group' was to become the over-riding concern of the school managers.

What was visible was only the school, as an organisation, its consumers and service providers: pragmatic managerial considerations - how to improve results, how to increase the school role, how to adapt teaching to dwindling resources, how to cut staffing costs and so on became the 'real' world of the school. And the new emphasis on management and administration was far from unwelcomed by teachers. They were to come to see this new emphasis on management as a means to re-establish their professional image, albeit in radically different terms, and to seize the opportunities for advancement that it offered. Teachers were not immune to the expectations offered by the bourgeois narrative as it became embedded into the vocabularies of the schools and, indeed, their professional associations.

As part of its strategy, the NUT carried out an advertising war between itself and the government over testing. A public relations consultant, Sir Tim Bell, was called in by NUT to investigate: *'How the union is perceived by opinion*

formers and how that image can be made more palatable.'⁴⁶ Bell, a former Thatcher spin doctor, was used to difficult projects: he had been hired to 'improve' the image of Ian McGregor during the miners' strike. The target audience for the Government advertising according to the DEE was 'very much parents, the pupils and the wider public': the NUT countered this with the with the 'Our children are paying for cheap education' an equally populist slogan⁴⁷. This use of advertising was a sign of the new times for the teaching unions, a means for them to attempt to reassert some influence over the narrative. Such an approach was welcomed, unsurprisingly, by the advertising industry, and marked new sophistication in the way that unions attempted to deal with government. However, their use of advertising was not to promote educational debate but rather a marketing ploy to recover the public image of teaching and to improve salaries and conditions.

Leslie Butterfield, an advertising executive, remarked that '*advertising can 'add value' to the profession, and at some time this can translate into financial benefit... (however) if current and potential teachers feel better about their job there will be some trade off against salary. So if the government can't pay teachers more, then a relatively modest sum invested in advertising could have significant benefits*'⁴⁸. Professionalism had thus become an 'added value', not an intrinsic aspect of teaching. It was simply a rhetorical feature of a media campaign to combat adverse propaganda: '*Government has no respect for the internal professional standards within the teaching profession... the undermining of respect threatens the very existence of the teaching profession. It could easily slip into being the teaching 'service', lower in status, less motivated, less attractive to join.*'⁴⁹

The way to re-invent professionalism was not to take a critical look at teaching nor at the recent history of education, but to adopt the language of the market. It is an example of Clausewitz's 'reciprocal'. In On War he describes how a defeated army will adopt the strategy, even the uniforms, of the victors. The teaching unions defeat could not be better illustrated than in their attempt to use the market to reassert their status. '*Market research could act in the education world to restore the mutual respect between the*

⁴⁶The Guardian 3/5/95

⁴⁷The Guardian 4/5/93

⁴⁸ibid

⁴⁹John Cronk, ibid

teachers and government.'⁵⁰ The market, acting not as savage competition but redefined as a kind of well meaning marriage guidance counsellor, would proffer '*impartial*' and '*independent*' and '*practical*' advice.

The advertising industry suggested that teachers adopt a public relations strategy. They advocated the use of 'focus groups' and interviews with concerned parties - teachers, parents, civil servants and politicians - to build up '*qualitative research*' to find common ground and build on that to give each party an understanding of the other's points of view. Such an approach, however, locates the conflict in image, not in philosophical or 'professional' considerations, but rather in a squabble over status: a matter of pride.

Education was looked at from a '*management and organisational viewpoint*' by Celia Piper⁵¹, a management consultant: her prescription was for '*responsiveness to a rapidly changing world*' as the new focus of the purpose of education. That, she argues, requires 'leadership' to '*steer the profession*'. At its heart, this presumes a pragmatic ideologically free system: the 'leader' is to act as an agent of change and she suggests a classic pragmatic algorithm: first identify problems; then hypothesise a strategy; implement that strategy and monitor progress; finally assess results and adapt the strategy to a '*concrete plan for change*'. 'Education' she concludes, '*is a service, and its effectiveness depends on the commitment of its providers.*' *It is all a matter of selling education properly: use of marketing techniques 'takes party politics out of education and frees up entrenched positions'*.

Different management consultancy Gurus propounded different organisational laws and different emphases - the Times Educational Supplement regularly now features a management section and even a casual glance at Routledge's educational books list illustrates the multiplicity of management texts. The point is not that schools do not require administration and management, or that school management should not be informed, but the overriding influence of the market vocabularies had the result that the school became reality-locked into the vocabularies of management, of efficiency, quality control and performance indicators to the exclusion of everything else. Management was seen as the solution to all educational problems and, while good management may assist in the provision of a good education, it cannot

⁵⁰ibid

⁵¹ibid

solve all problems. It is not educational theory. What the emphasis on management was to do was to lock schools and teachers into themselves, into their isolated and individual problems. The wider social issues, poverty or parenting for example, which influence underachievement were rendered irrelevant and discursively invisible in the demand that schools should look only to their own resources to educate the children.

Indeed as evidence of the teachers' internalisation of the bourgeois narrative, Gillian Shepherd considered the creation of a professional council for teachers in England similar to the Scottish GTC⁵². The threat to the narrative from teachers seemed finally over. Though she remained wary of creating another potentially hostile professional body - the BMA had opposed many of the health service reforms and there remained a residual fear that a teachers' council might become controlled by the unions and work against the opening and deregulating of routes into teaching - she stated: *'I could support such a scheme that seemed likely to be effective'*. Though such a professional body still has not been created, though New Labour has also expressed itself sympathetic to the idea: even just considering the idea that teachers might be given such status and authority did mark the growing confidence amongst politicians of the teachers' internalisation of the story. Teacher training, however, was removed from the reach of a professional body: it would be the responsibility of the Teacher Training Agency, established in 1994.

The focus of this new vocabulary was the headteacher and the 'management team' in a school metaphorically redefined as an 'organisation'. Tony Blair addressed a 'leadership skills' conference for headteachers, emphasising their importance: *'Head teachers who turn their schools round, or lead already good schools to greater achievements, deserve better recognition and better salaries and we will not be afraid to say so.'*⁵³ The bourgeois narrative represents its values as cash. The emphasis is on the 'leader' to establish control over the production processes, ensuring that the product is delivered effectively and efficiently. It is a discourse of control, over teachers, depersonalised and reidentified as *'individuals in organisations'* or *'parts of the network'*, and the devices by which school managers can maintain the correct *'organisational behaviour'* and impart the appropriate *'motivational*

⁵²The Guardian 7/11/94

⁵³The Guardian 21/10/98

impact'⁵⁴. Appraisal interviews interrogate the teacher on their managerial role in maintaining whole school policies and local authority initiatives. The emphasis is on the teacher as an individual: appraisal becomes an exercise in establishing an individualised career path and is a means of creating a conformism in methods and behaviours.

All theory, except that of management, was to be sacrificed in the name of 'progress' and 'improvement'. The rhetoric of crisis, of failing schools, had so permeated the consciousness of the educationalists that they seized on management as the universal solution to all their problems. The inability to reply to this rhetoric, against a background in which the government, the new educational establishment and the media fuelled the sense of crisis rather more than it acted as a source of assistance or as a barometer of public opinion, had created in teachers what Umberto Eco in Travels in Hyper-Reality calls the '*orphan syndrome of the disillusioned*': with their reputation in tatters, they seized on pragmatic management algorithms as the way to re-invent their professionalism.

A.H Halsey charted the orphanhood of teachers, the demise of their traditional 'professional' status. In the 1991 conference of the Scottish Educational Research Association⁵⁵ he described how the status of the university teacher has moved from guild member to bureaucrat and to a trader in the market place. He characterised the control and surveillance mechanisms as moving from the peer authority of the guild, then to the subjection of the teacher to managerialist culture - line management and appraisal - and finally to the competitive rigours of the laws of supply and demand of the market place. This development of these control and surveillance regimes was not however quite as linear and distinct as Halsey's description might suggest. Elements of all three mechanisms, not always complementary, exist as the Panopticon in schools, though universities are, perhaps, by now more securely positioned in the market.

Walter Humes is even less sanguine about the extinction of professionalism. He took the view that professionalism had been cheapened anyway by teachers' desire not so much for autonomy but for privacy. He describes their

⁵⁴Charles Handy and Robert Aitken, Understanding Schools as Organisations (Penguin, London 1986, 1990), terms taken from the Introduction and passim.

⁵⁵*Arguments for Autonomy* in TES 20/3/92

use of it to conceal their essential conservatism and complacency about the effectiveness of schools; their manipulation of it as protection from political intervention in bringing about educational reform; and its exploitation as a bargaining counter in wage negotiations. In turn he describes⁵⁶ how it was rhetorically exploited, usually in the form of the epithet 'unprofessional', by school management and by politicians to impose reforms or wage and conditions packages. Humes indeed takes the development of the deprofessionalisation of teachers one step further than Halsey, describing it as the '*proletarianisation*'⁵⁷ of teachers. He argues that the curricular reforms of the prescriptive national curriculum act to deny teachers access to the traditional vocabularies of the professional, to deny them 'professional' judgements about what they do and how they do it.

David Fielker, for example, describes how the national curriculum was received in schools - as a practical problem. Their '*worries were administrative ones*'⁵⁸. Fielker concludes complaining of demands for conformity and the demise of the professional judgement: '*Choice is no longer available in education. Quite apart from the political implications of who makes the decisions, and on what grounds, one finds increasingly that teachers are being told what to do... It (the national curriculum) removes from us (teachers) the ability to make decisions about what we teach, it negates our professionalism as teachers*'. The unions had only half-heartedly complained of the oppressive philosophy of the national curriculum: their main focus was on the teachers' conditions of service, their wages and their increased accountability. They had given up on any attempt to influence the narrative, instead they attempted to exploit the reform to better the lot of teachers. The problem was 'increased workload' and 'shortage of resources': pragmatic difficulties carried much more weight than philosophical ones in their rhetoric.

In Scotland the main teaching union, the EIS, had a similar reaction to the 5-14 Development Programme, the Scottish version of the national curriculum. They also complained of under-resourcing and increased workload. They accepted the reform as '*building on existing good practice...*

⁵⁶Walter M. Humes *The Leadership Class in Scottish Education* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1986) passim.

⁵⁷Walter Humes: *The teacher as labourer* TES 18/12/92

⁵⁸David Fielker: *How Teachers have lost the right to choose* TES 22/11/91

basically a sound structure.' The only aspect 'causing alarm' was 'the question of resources needed to put the guidelines into practice...the biggest resource implication is time..' ⁵⁹. They ignored its prescriptive undermining of teachers' professionalism, what Walter Humes was to call its 'teacher proofing', ⁶⁰ of the curriculum, and instead they made some rhetorical capital for themselves, claiming that 5-14 was a product not of ministerial heroic imposition - as indeed it was, just as much as the national curriculum had been in England - but rather it was the result of the Scottish 'consensual' tradition - an enduring and endearing Scottish myth that should have been put to its final rest with 5-14 ⁶¹. This nationalistic motif was prevalent in much of the EIS information to teachers. However, the EIS did avoid open confrontation with the government and, perhaps, as a result, the induction of schools in Scotland into the market narrative remains somewhat less pronounced than it is in England.

However, even in Scotland, the vocabularies of the bourgeois narrative were to become commonplace. Cameron Harrison, the chief executive of the SCCC, the Scottish equivalent of the NCC, declared 5-14: '*A good platform on which to build excellence*' ⁶² and he too played the nationalistic card alongside the key words of the bourgeois narrative: '*Scottish education is recognised as good - the quality of experience... is good.*' He was, however, perhaps more conciliatory, more sensitive to teachers' 'professionalism'. He added that 5-14 was not really a version of England's national curriculum, but rather a framework that must be applied: '*There is a fundamental point underlying this. It is not acceptable for us as a profession not to be able to say we are confident the young people are getting all they should. That therefore requires us to draw up a framework*'. At the same time he illustrates the pragmatism and simplification of the narrative: '*For Primary One teachers... there will be an early education file which contains all the bits they really need to know about*'. The curriculum was all that the teachers needed to know; it contained all the 'bits' that were important. And what they needed was not ideology but a practical 'common sense' curriculum, a result

⁵⁹ Scottish Educational Journal Vol 75 No 1 (1992) Editorial

⁶⁰ Walter Humes *Teacher as Labourer* TES 18/12/92

⁶¹ for further examination of the 5-14 Curriculum Programme see John McAllister The Control of Educational Thought, M.Ed Thesis, Glasgow University, 1993.

⁶² Cameron Harrison '*A good platform on which to build excellence*' Scottish Educational Journal Vol 75 No 1 (1992)

of post-ideological '*evolution*' rather than dogmatic '*revolution*' as Harrison claimed.

Schools, like the other public institutions the health service and the police, had become privatised inasmuch as the vocabularies of business dominated their organisation and purposes though the next logical step, placing them into private ownership, was never politically possible. They became characterised by increasingly rigid line management structures, increased wage differentials for those in management positions and a correspondingly increased value placed on management. In education, as in the other 'services' this created a clear 'career' structure for the individual teacher: no longer was the classroom seen as sufficient in itself. Viewed in this limited way, as organisations, schools existed to provide the individual with a clear promotion structure. The mastering of the management vocabularies allowed the teacher to ascend the progressive, pyramidal, career structure, like a freemason progressing through the levels of initiation by mastering the increasingly esoteric vocabulary and magical symbolism. The status of 'teacher' had been so undermined by the rhetoric of incompetence that achieving a managerial position became the means to regain some status and at least the illusion of power. Real power, the ability to change or amend the narrative, resided well beyond the individual manager or the school.

The creation of a career structure for teachers was not unique to the bourgeois narrative: indeed teachers had been ascending the greasy poles of promotion for many years. What the bourgeois narrative was to add was the piquancy of 'real' status: only those who competed in the stakes and who won, were of 'real' value. The heroes of the bourgeois narrative were those who strove higher and higher. The narrative excluded the managerially unambitious: indeed it simply could not comprehend the lack of desire for individual 'betterment' expressed in the race for the top. Other explanations were sought for such lack of ambition: incompetence, laziness, lack of drive... the characteristics of the unambitious were entirely negative and provided the focus of challenge for the new management discourses. A successful teacher - a superteacher - was one who was promoted: the most successful was the headteacher, the 'leader'. Indeed the headteacher was sometimes presented as a kind of superhero, leading an SAS type rescue of the 'failing' school.

Woodhead, for example, stated that local authorities should be able to 'parachute' in heads with 'streetfighting' skills to turn round such schools⁶³.

A key term of the managerial discourse was 'leadership'. Woodhead, for example, shared Thatcher's obsession with strong 'leadership'. Schools are on their own, he insists, to stand or fall by their results. Consequently, the most important aspect of the school is the 'leadership quality' of the headteacher: *'There is a culture of dependence where too many schools look beyond their own walls for salvation. Only the headteacher and the governors can take the school forward.'*⁶⁴ and: *'The weakest schools are invariably the victims of poor management'*⁶⁵. Gillian Shephard echoed these sentiments: *'I think the ability of a head teacher is without doubt the most influential factor in improving standards in everything in schools'*⁶⁶

Angela Rumbold, Under Secretary at the DES at the time of the Educational Reform Act, said that she thought that the educational management system proposed by the Act was probably the most important feature of the Act⁶⁷. This management system, it was claimed, was aimed at eventually devolving administrative and financial power to schools, though the state would retain overall curricular control. Public, independent schools were exempted from such curricular control, existing as they do in the open market, as distinct from the more limited proto-market proposed for state or local authority funded schools. Central to this reform was the emphasis it placed on the training of school administrators and managers to operate their schools. This continued a process which had been going on since the 1945 Education Act which required Directors of Education to be appointed, in whom was to be invested power in the development of an education system. However the emphasis was been subtly altered: the running and operational survival of schools was more and more devolved to school administrators: local authorities, it was intended, were to have less and less say in educational matters. The emphasis was placed more and more on the school as an organisation in itself:

'The role of headteachers... has changed in a number of respects over the last few years. Headteachers are being asked

⁶³The Independent 3/7/98

⁶⁴The Guardian 18/4/95

⁶⁵The Guardian 5/2/97:

⁶⁶Gillian Shephard in conversation with Brian Sherratt in Ribbins and Sherratt (1997) p. 214

⁶⁷in O.U. Broadcast *Curriculum and Planning: A Curious Kind of Ritual* (1990, BBC2)

*to demonstrate a range of new management skills; and training programmes, such as the SOED's management training programmes for headteachers, have been geared to fostering these skills. The development by the SOED of performance indicators (such as Relative Ratings and National Comparison Factors) is giving headteachers new tools with which to judge the effectiveness of their schools.*⁶⁸

Headteachers had to be transformed into entrepreneurs, concerned with the practicalities of production, of market share and customer satisfaction rather than educational theory. Commenting on a discussion with headteachers while working on the Dearing Review, Woodhead commented on the 'primitivism' of their dialogue: *'What struck me was that nobody laughed.'*⁶⁹ They had been talking of the wider purposes of education - of its formative function in the creation of social and personal values: these were now 'primitive', atavistic concepts, no longer either relevant or legitimate. He denied schools access to their traditional vocabularies, relentlessly driving home their individual duties and responsibilities to their children: *'when equality of opportunity translates through into any kind of flirtation with equality of outcome that has a depressing effect on the educational experience.'*⁷⁰ He reminded them of the cold market 'reality': *'The position of a school in the tables concentrates minds, it's a spur to improvement'*⁷¹. For 'modernisers', such as Thatcher and Woodhead, the market would breed diversity, experimentation and innovation - the choice of the consumer would drive the 'values' of schools. *'My job is not to protect the interests of the producers...'*⁷², Woodhead insisted, and those consumers he speaks for are not the parents of children in deprived areas but, as he reminded his Politea readers, the parents in the *'leafy, middle class suburbs'*⁷³.

'Quality assurance' was the market mechanism the management team would use to protect the interests of these consumers. Though it was seen as vitally important, its emphasis on accountability had become seen to be threatening

⁶⁸SOED (March 1992): *School Management: The Way Ahead*, (Scottish Office: Edinburgh, 1992): 3.1

⁶⁹George Walden (1996) p14

⁷⁰The Guardian 18/4/98

⁷¹New Statesman 9/5/97

⁷²Woodhead, quoted in Lucy Hodges: *On the Rocks with Machiavelli* TES 9/2/96

⁷³Chris Woodhead, *A Question of Standards, Finding the Balance* (Politea, 1995) cited in Walden (1996) p.151

by teachers. John MacBeath, for example, argued that there are three distinct aspects to it: *'The government has created a market, school effectiveness researchers have provided the criteria and Ofsted has provided the mechanism by which these two may be joined'*. Each aspect, he argued, *'only the most ideologically purblind'* would deny has *'significant benefits'*. Perhaps so, but he is attempting to remove ideology entirely from the discourse: his acceptance of the pragmatic benefits effectively masks the highly ideological market narrative which underpins quality assurance. He then places a 'New Labour' spin on it: *'true' quality assurance only comes about when the school is allowed a 'stake' too. The process - he continues - must be seen as meaningful to the school: 'It should be honest, valid and reliable; it should be comprehensive, reflecting those things that matter to people. It should also be developmental and empowering, helping the school to set and monitor its own progress in a climate of mutual accountability.'*⁷⁴ The New Labour construction of a 'stakeholder' society will be discussed a little later but it is clear that MacBeath has become acclimatised to the new vocabularies of production and has, even if unconsciously, become part of the apparatus required to render their ideology invisible.

Michael Barber is another educationalist who has embraced the new managerial culture. As mentioned earlier, he tends to avoid ideological analysis, instead preferring the pragmatic discourse. He wrote, for example, *'The problem with the debate (about testing) ... has been that it has taken place within excessively narrow parameters... Firstly, there needs to be a thoughtful consideration given to the relationship between accountability... and effectiveness. Indicators chosen for accountability purposes should not result in increasing bureaucratic practices but in increased school effectiveness.... truancy figures should lead to improvements in attendance rates...'*⁷⁵ encompassing within the vocabularies of management the whole of the educational experience. He goes on to argue that although raw league tables are intrinsically misleading they are useful though they require to be published *'alongside a Value Added Indicator'* and *'some measure of school improvement'*⁷⁶. The phrase *'value added'* became commonplace in educational discourse: it is a 'spin' expression, a piece of rhetorical

⁷⁴John MacBeath: *A stake in quality*, TES 9/2/96

⁷⁵Michael Barber: *Quality Control* TES 23/9/94

⁷⁶ibid

expediency which disguises the unpalatable in an attempt to render it apparently positive.

Barber's position had quite radically changed. When the Labour Party was in opposition he stated: *'The market model is inappropriate. Once you've bought your Hoover you don't need to be involved with the company again. But at school you've only just begun. The trouble is that the government sees parents as consumers. So they give them all sorts of performance data such as exam results and how to complain. But parents really want to be co-educators.'*⁷⁷ Barber stated that parents are generally satisfied by state schools: he added, *'What parents really want is an understanding of what their children are learning, how they are learning it, and how they can help.'* He became converted to the emblematic *'art of the possible'* pragmatism of the bourgeois narrative and came to embrace the market and the managerial culture much more intimately by the time Labour came to power.

In spite of the inflated claims for the saving grace of management, the actual prescriptions were generally unremarkable. Barber cited Kathryn Riley's *'sensible'* principles for the development of an *'education indicators framework'*:

*'Indicators must be meaningful...;
They should compare one school to another...;
They should focus on issues about which we should gather information and on which we can act;
An individual school should be able to measure itself against what it thinks is important as well as more general indicators;
Education is about social as well as academic development and indicators must include both.'*⁷⁸

Indeed not so much unremarkable as obvious. What was important, however, was not so much what was prescribed but what was ruled out. This prescriptive, pragmatic *'framework'* silenced the *'professional'* voice, claustrophobically locked schools into themselves and generated even more

⁷⁷ reported in *Government out of touch with parents' wishes for children*: The Herald 11/10/94

⁷⁸ Michael Barber: *Quality Control*, TES 23/9/94: citing Kathryn A Riley and Desmond Nuttall: *Measuring Quality: Education Indicators United Kingdom and International Perspectives* (Falmer, 1994)

school management. School policy making, development plans, appraisal, indicators of good practice, all occupied much of the time of teachers.

Teachers, and schools, were caught in a discourse of control: their authority was not that of expertise but as devolved to them from the hierarchical framework in which they were now firmly embedded. John Halliday describes the effect of the 'orphan syndrome':

'...many people do not feel comfortable with the idea that their collegial relationships are much more than a technique or device for the 'morally neutral' attempts to implement educational policy. Nor might many teachers feel comfortable with a proliferation of policy statements all purporting to prescribe the actions that they should take. This discomfort is likely to be particularly apparent if a proliferation of advisers and inspectors are appointed to guide and assess the way that teachers interpret policy directives.

In this climate three options might appear to be open to teachers. The first is to move up the hierarchy away from teaching. The second is to become 'morally neutral' technicians themselves by acting as a resource upon which students can draw as they work individually... The third is successfully to set up a business within school under the auspices of one of the so-called 'enterprise initiatives'.⁷⁹

Halliday goes on to describe how each option narrows and impoverishes schooling, teaching and the educational experience of the students. The first two of these 'impoverishments' are the subject of this chapter: the third will be discussed in the final chapter. In the Panopticon, those teachers who refuse to conform to the managerial culture find, he argues, *'the odds stacked against them'*. The conformist culture of quality assurance and its performance indicators, good practice and appraisal might well 'weed out' the bad teachers, though Blair in his conference speech at Blackpool (1998) suggested that this process, in spite of years of application of accountability and management theory had so far not proved very effective and bad teaching

⁷⁹John Halliday: Markets, Managers and Theory in Education (London: Falmer Press, 1990) p. 155

was still a serious problem in schools: *'There are too few good state schools, too much tolerance of mediocrity, too little pursuit of excellence.'*⁸⁰

Blair's use of the keywords of the bourgeois narrative are telling, as is his implication that the grant maintained and independent schools are where good education is to be found. He continued: *'there is no greater injustice to inflict upon a child than a poor education'*. Ironically it is in the independent and grant maintained schools that the kind of iconoclastic teaching that Halliday values so much is often to be found, yet such teaching is less and less valued in the conformism enforced by the policy regulated state schools. Many 'good' teachers too are likely to be 'weeded out' by quality assurance: indeed possibly more non-conformist teachers are likely to find the new climate in schools insupportable than 'bad' teachers who, like all bureaucrats, somehow cobble together the means to provide the minimum standards required.

It is the mediocrity of the conformist management culture that has come to concern Ian Westwood, the vice-chair of the Police Federation of England and Wales. He characterised high ranking police officers as *'clones and butterflies'*⁸¹. He complained that candidates for promotion were becoming identical, *'cloned from the same mould.. they give identical answers to questions and seem to have no ideas of their own'*. He added that they have a *'butterfly mentality of flitting from force to force in their search for advancement'* and he accuses the preoccupation with management training in the police for creating this new species.

Ian Thorburn on the deskilling of teachers and the changing role of headteachers as school managers and line management tellingly remarked: *'Wouldn't it be grand if teachers would just fall in with Government's wishes and admit they are not professionals but technicians? I am given to make mock of the borrowed jargons in which educational management, as susceptible to the whims of fashion as any teenager, loves to re clothe itself for every new season. But I believe in the power of words such as clothes - they not only express but shape the person whose deeds and words they cloak.'*⁸² The vocabularies of management and crisis, cloaking the consumerism and

⁸⁰ as reported in The Guardian 30/9/98

⁸¹ Ian Westwood in an address to the Liberal Party Conference in Brighton 22/9/98.

⁸² Ian Thorburn: *Bring Back the Rectors*: [Link](#) (GTC (General Teaching Council) newsletter: Issue16, Winter 1993)

the ideology of the narrative, have become more important than what is actually happening in schools. This has denied the school and the teacher anything other than the enforcement of a prescriptive curriculum and prescribed methods. In the end, that has become all there is to education - all the 'bits' required are in the standard circulars, all teachers need do is fill in the dots. All questions have been answered, the only problem is getting teachers to deliver it properly.

Any 'professional' concern about what is actually happening in schools, about the real learning experience of children and the problems they face, is distorted, ignored or neutralized by the narrative 'reality' of present crisis and the threat of future catastrophe. This has created a kind of reactionary permanent revolution which has ensured not just that power always resides in the political centre - in the room with the buttons - but it also positions education and educationalists firmly in the 'real' and 'post-ideological' world of the narrative - the market. This also, critically, created the conditions for and maintained the change in the ethos of schools: the continuing reiteration of the rhetoric of crisis maintained Thatcher's process of deprofessionalising the teacher beyond simply denying them access to the discourse of power and the creation of policy. It has opened schools up to the Panopticon, to deskilling regimes of surveillance and control designed to ensure that teachers not only will not do other than they were told, but they are willing to do so. Not only are they denied access to the discourse and to the formation of policy but that they do not see that as their legitimate concern anyway. It has created the narrative conditions to make them, in Foucault's terms, complicit in their own subjection. It is designed to create a regime which does not just forbid but, more radically, makes meaningless the traditional concepts of professionalism, 'loyalty', 'duty' and 'autonomy'.

The market domination of the narrative has lent management a pseudo-scientific, even magical, quality: it was the means by which 'reality' could be altered and the proper state of things to be achieved. Gurus proliferated, offering advice and accompanying their philosophies with esoteric devices: plastic cards embellished with Venn diagrams representing overlapping areas of control; or mystic squares and triangles linking abstract nouns like 'Knowledge, Power and Control'; or patterns of arrows, indicating communication lines... The vocabularies of education were colonised by management consultants, blithely assuming that schools were 'organisations'

and that all 'organisations' are regulated by the same set of rules: *'It is reassuring to find that many of the truths about organisations hold good across the board...'*⁸³ stated Handy and Aitken: then they pointed out that schools only differed in the '*practical application*' of these rules. In a world in which educational theory had been ruled illegitimate, management theory was encouraged and it propagated as it became the route to 'real' professionalism in what was now the educational industry.

All human endeavour was seen in this way: cultural pursuits were all commercialised - the newspaper industry, the music industry, the film industry and the football industry. In *The Learning Game*, when discussing his vision of education and schooling, Michael Barber makes repeated analogous reference to football teams. He consciously makes use of these metaphors to lighten his text and give it a New Labour fashionable laddishness, but the underpinning ideology though is not, apparently, visible to him. It is almost as if, so immersed in the bourgeois narrative has he become, like Woodhead, that the metaphors are using him. His text shows just how far the vocabularies of management and the market have become embedded into the new 'reality' of schools.

In his representation of schools, the essential identities of the school and those involved are transformed - the football metaphor provides a highly competitive context, the overwhelming imperative of improving the 'team's' position in the league table and of winning trophies; it describes the need to please supporters by attractive and winning play to ensure cash flow and thus the ability to compete successfully in the market. The importance of devising winning strategies is emphasised as is the need for team work, 'professional' attitudes and the acquisition of 'star' players and a 'star' manager in a highly competitive market. The need for constant training, practising and gaining new skills and creating team spirit are vital. The history and traditions of the team provide an important brand image which is exploited to maintain and increase market share. Barber's book is an exercise in the reidentification of teachers and schooling along these lines. It permits, in fact makes imperative, the performance rating of teachers - as in New Labour's proposed creation of 'superteachers' and the payment of teachers by results, the abiding dream of the bourgeois narrative that may well finally be realised by David Blunkett

⁸³Charles Handy and Robert Aitken, *Understanding Schools as Organisations* (London: Penguin, 1986/ 1990), Introduction.

who described that as his intention in his speech to the Labour Party Conference in 1998.

There is, however, another dimension to the football industry that Barber does not describe: not all teams can be, no matter how good they are, in the Premier Division: the league structure determines that there must be losers, that some teams must be relegated. And it is a world entirely devoid of ethics: it is the world of bribes and bungs, of 'professional' fouls, of the sanctioning of selfish, personal aggrandisement, of wildly inflated cash values placed on players, of callous disregard for anything but success, of cut-throat competition, of the glorification of physical intimidation, of resistance to and derision of authority, of the legitimisation of tactical cheating, of bullying, of the vilest kinds of tribalism and nationalism, and mob rule. It is a world where the players and supporters are treated as means to the ends of commercial imperialism, not as ends in themselves.

Such a vocabulary of schooling can only have a corrosive effect on the character of schools, teachers and teaching. The idea that somehow it is all a game and that market strategies can make one school a winner over the others morally impoverishes schooling and teaching. Whilst in these post-modern times, the authority of the traditional institutions has been eroded, to the point that equal value can seemingly be placed on football and schooling, there still remains a residual belief that somehow schooling is really more important, that it is a profoundly moral activity in which, though it must exist in the context of the market narrative politics of expediency, it should somehow only sup at the table of consumerism with a very long spoon.

Moral values are certainly not to be found in the boardroom or the football field: there, ultimately, only success governs conduct. The market narrative offers only 'promotion' as value to the individual and the search for promotion inevitably means adopting the 'clone and butterfly' character. However, schooling requires not so much individual as community effort: seeking short term advantage corrodes the character traits required to build such a community, the formation of personal narratives which sustain the identity, character and purpose of the community. The solipsistic narrative of the market legitimises only the development of ambition, and this has the danger that it may isolate the teacher, detach them from the primary purposes of teaching and from colleagues re-invented as rivals, the school re-invented

as a playing field, and create only superficial co-operation in the interests of the community. In the business vocabularies, all sense of 'community' may become fugitive. What is missing in the market narrative is any sense of purpose beyond personal advantage: all search for social meaning can become unrealisable in a world constantly in flux and where events seem merely to occur one after the other without any other pattern than the dubious and ambiguous causal connectivity of the market.

The fractured nature of time in the narrative of the market shows a world governed by short term advantage - an essentially uncertain future filled with flexible contracts, blurred roles, the competition for immediate survival linked only to this year's results, the episodic, fragmented history of people moving from position to position - and this unpredictable chaos of the market risks the creation of an educational narrative devoid of 'common-sense', in the Scottish Enlightenment use of the phrase where it signifies the 'democratic' intellect: the moral sense of the individual in a community of interests.

Even the pupil is seen in isolation: the curriculum and the school is concerned with meeting individual needs, on an individual basis in one type of school with one curriculum. It is a narrow and intolerant provision: what is good for the organisation is not identical always to what is good for individual pupils, for the community of the school, for teachers or for society. Not just teachers but pupils too are constrained in the Panopticon to conform: those who cannot are expelled for deviant behaviour or labelled as having 'special educational needs' and subjected to the same grinding curriculum with the assistance of 'differentiated' worksheets. The social needs or the needs of all the children in the community of the school may not be addressed as schooling has become divorced from the wider social narratives and locked into itself. The measure of a school becomes the sum of the 'results' of individual children and as a consequence the pupil may be come to be seen merely as a productive statistic in the results league table, as a means rather than an end. This is a characterisation of people that Richard Rorty has defined as 'cruelty': the erosion of 'solidarity' needed in a liberal democratic state.

"A liberal society is one which is content to call 'true' (or 'right' or 'just') whatever the outcome of undistorted

*communication happens to be, whatever view wins in a free and open encounter."*⁸⁴

The Panopticon has been established and internalised: there are no 'free encounters', only the illusion of freedom and power in the managerial discourse as the 'common sense' of the narrative has become embedded in the consciousness of educationalists. Social and professional ties - seen as potentially destructive, the 'enemy within', in the amoral narrative - have been weakened. Loyalty to the school as a purposeful community rather than organisation, to the students or to colleagues, is in the new narrative secondary to upward mobility and maintaining the success of the organisation. In the unpredictability, the headlong speed and the inherent instability of the narrative, there is no time for character to develop and unfold, no space for ideals to evolve, no vocabulary to allow a reconstruction of 'professionalism' which means more than the calculated thuggery of an experienced football player.

3. A Story Without Qualities

"The bourgeoisie...compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into its midst, that is to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image."

Marx and Engels (1848) The Communist Manifesto

The abandonment by the left and the right of 'grand theories' of society or social justice in these post-modernist times has created a discursive vacuum which the bourgeois narrative has colonised with its 'post-ideological' story. While Marx and Engels' economic historiography might be quite mistaken, their understanding of cultural domination by the middle classes was acute. While each concern discussed in this chapter - accountability, management, standards - is legitimate in any educational narrative, the closed nature of the framing consumerist bourgeois narrative, with its narrow characterisations of

⁸⁴Richard Rorty, Contingency, Irony and Solidarity, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) p. 66/7

schools, pupils, parents and teachers and its single minded pragmatism has created an impoverished story.

"Tests... are a very good preparation for life and it is very foolish to say that they are not" ⁸⁵ insists Sheila Lawlor but even Brian Cox ⁸⁶, a leading Black Paper polemicist, has criticised the national testing regimes as leading to bad teaching, and claims that they were designed to cow the teaching profession into submission, threatening fundamental rights such as the freedom to learn. He sees the tests as means of control, through the pupils' submission to authority; reducing the learning process to sterile note taking and rote mechanical exercises; and reducing assessment to the ability of the pupils to repeat the teacher's notes or to pass bland multiple choice tests.

Cox speaks in the now illegitimate language of the classic liberal discourse of education. He asserts that education should be about self-fulfilment, tolerance, sensitivity, the discovering of one's humanity and should generate a positive attitude to culture: all qualities he sees being diminished by the new narrative. He objects to a curriculum so manipulated by politicians for ideological purposes and he despairs of the left response to the bourgeois discourse - the only serious objections the NUT and the NASUWT have, like the EIS, concern timing and workload.

There are few dissenting voices. John McFall, a Labour Scottish Education spokesperson, pronounced himself ⁸⁷ in favour of teacher appraisal: '*bad teachers could leave behind educational cripples*' and he implied his party's acceptance of the 5-14 Programme though he assured teachers he would, using his '*sensitised antennae*', be attuned to their problems of implementing it. Tony Worthington in the run up to the 1992 General Election was to address the Socialist Educational Association on '*quality in education*' ⁸⁸ to promise '*excellence*'. Tony Worthington spoke of education in terms of "*top quality structures*" and in the same debate, Ian Davidson, former Chair of Strathclyde Education Committee and now a Labour MP, stated: '*Even with a Labour government, we will require to switch resources and that does imply more efficiency and a quality audit.*' Jack Straw, the Labour Party spokesman

⁸⁵Sheila Lawlor of the Centre for Policy Studies: in Open University broadcast : *Curriculum and Planning: A Curious Kind of Ritual* (1990, BBC2)

⁸⁶Brian Cox in *Opinions* (1993, Channel 4 TV)

⁸⁷John McFall, May 1993, in a speech to the EIS Conference, as reported in TES 7/5/93

⁸⁸TES 20/3/92

on education at the time of the 1992 election, made several statements criticising teachers and commenting on the decline in standards, "*I have made standards the centrepiece of Labour's policies*"⁸⁹. Indeed apart from Straw's rather muted attack on the market, his policies, where they are clearly discernible, broadly accept Tory reforms, wishing to see them implemented by local authorities '*without evasions of responsibilities*'. Barber has taken up these themes in the 'New' Labour narrative with enthusiasm.

Chris Searle⁹⁰ recorded the demise of the progressive story. Its speakers appeared inevitably doomed to failure - usually fairly spectacular failure - with much critical comment from the press and the political establishment who seemed always eager to grasp any opportunity to gain from the debacle more narrative credence for their rhetoric of 'standards' and 'traditions' and 'loony teachers'. Duane's 'Risinghill', McMullen's 'Countesthorpe College', Toogood's 'Madely Court' and Searle's recent failure in the Earl Marshall school in Sheffield provided the politicians and the media with a long line of 'failures' in attempts to influence the dominant story or to gain any legitimisation for progressive ideas. R.F. MacKenzie, on the demise of his version of the story, stated:

*'We had believed the comprehensive system would help our pupils and would support us in our efforts to restore to them, the sons and daughters of Fife miners, the feeling of their individual worth, the confidence to walk the earth upright, unabashed by anybody. We hadn't realised that the Labour Party accepted the old curricula, the old academic assessments on children.'*⁹¹

Labour had never really adopted the egalitarian story and it was to come to speak the bourgeois narrative without much narrative dissonance. Maria Eagle, an advocate New Labour's adoption of the bourgeois narrative, referred to her mother's '*failure to get a proper education*'⁹² because although she had passed the 11 plus, she was unable to attend the grammar school because her parents could not afford the uniform. Mrs Eagle had gone to the grammar school for two weeks, '*in pink frock and NHS spectacles*' but

⁸⁹The Guardian 17/3/92

⁹⁰Chris Searle: *Living Community, Living School* (London: The Tufnell Press, 1997)

⁹¹R.F. Mackenzie: *State School* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970) p.140

⁹²Maria Eagle, recently elected Labour MP, speaking on *Westminster Women* ITV 11/1/98

had to leave and attend the local secondary modern. Labour's answer is not egalitarianism nor any grand narrative vision, but to apply the consumerism of the market, to embed it even more deeply into the 'common-sense' of education. How this was achieved will, however, be discussed in the next chapter.

Kenneth Baker had asked: '*...those who have comments to make about the Bill (The 1988 Education Reform Act) not to misrepresent its nature and purpose. It is about enhancing the life chances of young people. It is about the devolution of authority and responsibility. It is about competition, choice and freedom... It is about quality and standards... It is not about enhancing central control.*'⁹³ The Labour Party has no philosophical objections. Blair wrote: '*Education is the best economic policy there is.*'⁹⁴ Mimicking the conservative pragmatic narrative they do not seem to see the reforms as being ideological; they discuss practical problems, to be tackled with common sense measures to eliminate 'professional' and 'ideological' objections.

Adrian Townsend, a headteacher who had 'turned round' a 'failing school' and was invited to the House of Commons for 'recognition' of his leadership skills and achievement, replied with his resignation. He announced that he was leaving because he had become so disillusioned. He wrote that the regime of '*harsh unyielding*' inspections had created a climate in which individuality was '*stifled*' and teachers' self confidence and morale were '*destroyed*'. He added:

'I looked at the way education was going and decided that the system no longer needed or valued my own skills. There is now so much central control and training that we are almost at the point where we are being taught how to hold the chalk.

*I feel I have no control or input into my own school... And I am not the exception. Within two miles of here two headteachers are off sick and another quietly resigned last year. I know many heads feel the same way I do.'*⁹⁵

Teachers, the 'professionals' caught in the Panopticon, were constrained either to develop the characteristic 'qualities' of the narrative - to become the

⁹³Kenneth Baker, 6th January 1988: Speech to the North of England Education Conference

⁹⁴Tony Blair: *New Britain* (London: Fourth Estate 1996) p.47

⁹⁵The Telegraph 20/10/98

ambitious clones and butterflies, or to develop a hard skin of cynical realism, the 'orphan syndrome of the disillusioned' generated by their powerless view that they have no influence over the system and nothing much can really be changed. Either way, a 'professional' quietism was created that has radically disconnected the 'ordinary' teacher or educationalist from the policy process despite their real experience and expertise that might have informed that process. Exclusion is at the heart of the new narrative - 'professionals' are made to think that they are not part of the process, day after day: the establishment trades on the cynicism of the excluded to succeed.

Management discourse in schools, promoting the consumerist story via its various Guru-isms, has institutionalised an educational free-masonry which has created organisational policy and promotional ladders on fashion rather than theory. What stands for policy in schools now is the reiteration of the buzz words of the latest fashion by cloned educational 'wannabes'. This will not re-connect the already disenfranchised with the political process: no talk of 'ownership' or 'stake-holder' inclusion will alter, though it does conceal, the exclusive nature of the politics of education and the policy making process.

Chapter 10

The End of the Story

'Nothing interests us any more.

*There are no ideals worth living for, let alone dying for, and strong beliefs are the monopoly of the single-issue fanatics and self-appointed thought police. Celebrity is prized, especially when it is unhampered by achievement. The suburbanisation of the soul leaves us without even the guilty pleasures of decadence.'*¹

Stuart Hall argues² that to understand Thatcherite and post-Thatcherite political narratives, it is vital to acknowledge that the process of the cultural democratisation of Britain in the 1960s had a profound effect. He describes how the sixties marked a paradigm shift, not so much in social narratives but in the beginning of an understanding of the cultural mechanics of social narratives. Though the 1960s was a time when the established and traditional 'common sense' narratives - of society, of religion, of sexuality, of family, of education and so on - were subject to critique and their certainties were subverted, these traditional narratives and institutions did survive the process, weakened but '*recognisably intact*', re-invented in the bourgeoisie narrative: the 'suburbanisation of the soul'. This failure of what he calls the '*revolutionary tradition*' to effect profound political change - the comprehensive movement's failure to combat the grammar school as the ideal and to establish a 'common sense' of egalitarianism in education for example - created a crisis in left wing political theory. This, he argues, in turn gave rise to cultural theory - a means by which the re-invention of traditional narratives could be explained and, more importantly, an understanding of the mechanisms of culture and how culture, and the narratives that underpin it, may be manipulated.

¹in *Signs of the Times* The Observer 31/12/95

²Stuart Hall in conversation with Martin Jacques: *Cultural Revolutions*, New Statesman 5/12/97

There was nothing apparently new about the educational system preferred by the new narrative - it seemed broadly much the same as the old grammar schools - though the educational narrative had profoundly changed. The purposes of education and the essential identities of teachers, schools and pupils had all, however, been metaphorically reidentified in the narrative. In effect, Hall was describing the Panopticon which had become firmly established in schools when he wrote: *'It (cultural manipulation) has become intrinsic to modern management. You can force people to go to work when they have to clock on and off, but you don't own their souls. With the management of culture in the modern corporation, however, the idea is that people regulate themselves, they are invited to share the ownership of the project, they become a new entrepreneurial subject. Foucault uses the wonderful term 'subjectification', which means at one and the same time to become a subject and to be subjected to. In other words it is double-edged.'*³

It is, Hall argues, vital to understand how politicians manage and manipulate culture. He defines culture as *'the structures of meaning that people use to understand what is going on in their lives'*⁴: in effect what are called in this exercise 'narratives'. Hall goes on to argue that current politicians, such as Blair and Clinton and Hague, are children of the 60s, products of a new, radical cultural democratisation, tutored in the vocabularies of cultural theory and consequently sophisticated manipulators of cultural narratives. Blair's revision of the educational narrative of the Labour Party will be discussed in this chapter. Thatcher was an instinctive cultural manipulator but, though she was not versed in cultural theory, nor had she any patience with theory or theoreticians, yet she was to make a radical revision of the social and educational narratives of the Conservative Party. Blair, however, is much more adept. His seamless appropriation of the Conservative bourgeois narrative of education, exploiting the contradictions in it which so troubled the Major administration and the effect of this on the educational narrative and on any possible reconstruction of professionalism in teaching, is the subject of this final chapter.

³ibid. p. 24

⁴ibid. p.24

1. Virtual Professionalism and the Discourse of Skills

*'Everything now depends on the willingness of teachers to contribute to the consultation. I do very much look forward to receiving your views.'*⁵

Doug MacAvoy was to say that: *'1993 was the year when teachers asserted their professionalism..'*⁶ However his was a very narrow construction of 'professionalism'. Though 'professionalism' had often coded a demand for privacy and obscured a smug complacency about educational standards and purposes, and though it had often been expediently invoked in wage demands and calls for better conditions of service, as in MacAvoy's usage, yet there does remain some hope - and this exercise is an expression of that hope - that it might come to retain more than vestiges of its implication of expertise and authority, particularly in its intellectual and moral demand for critical thinking about the purposes and the effects of education.

'Professionalism', and the expertise that such a claim may bring, might provide a discursive forum for open discussion, experimentation and the reassessment of the narrative even if such discussions might sometimes prove impractical. In order to do so, however, it would have to be in the context of what Rorty calls an 'edifying discourse': an open debate where argument inevitably involves passionate conflict based on contradictory ideologies. In line with the conformism and solipsism of the market narrative, however, such discussions are, it seems, at present reduced to whether or not the participants are - to use the current idiom - 'on message'. In the 'post-ideological' world, debate has been reduced to a discussion of means: the ends are, seemingly, incontrovertible and, in the enforced consensus, rendered invisible.

The bonfire of the professional's vanities has reduced the discourses about education to 'pragmatic' questions - the 'theory' has been settled before any consultation and beyond their questioning. Any 'professional' claim to

⁵Chris Woodhead, on the revision of the National Curriculum: writing as Chief Executive of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority in *The Career Teacher* No.98, newspaper of NASUWT.

⁶Doug MacAvoy cited in: *That was the year that was...* *TES* 24/12/93

influence policy, to alter the narrative or even to question it meaningfully, has become a pretence: a virtual discursive reality in which 'professionalism' has become a matter of ensuring that the 'common sense' of the narrative endures. The subject of the discourse has become its object: passive, silent and conformist. Baudrillard in The Consumer Society describes this process as the new form of resistance in the consumer society, quietism rather than consensus, an extreme form of alienation brought about by the helplessness to even see, never mind influence, the dominant narrative. The ambience of consumerism is, as Baudrillard remarks, repression. This is the central thesis of this study.

Professionalism in the now 'post-ideological', 'deculturised' narrative has come to represent a simulated world, a hyper-reality, where the 'game' is played out for symbolic exchange - the repositioning of the player in the matrix of power relationships of the institution becomes their prime motivation, the object of their desire. It is this manipulation of desire that Baudrillard maintains is the deepest form of control of the consumerist narrative. 'Professional' discourse has consequently become more and more about status and carving out niches in the educational world where power, albeit limited and sometimes illusory, can be exercised. Vocational education, TVEI and the rise of business-industry-school links is a clear indication of the entry of education into hyper-reality.

In deconstructing the educational narrative of the ERA, Stronach and MacLure locate it in the narrative linkage of education to the wider story of future of the capitalist economy. They term this *'the discourse of vocationalism'*⁷. However, the traditional Respectable narrative opposition of 'academic' and 'vocational' education had not been, anyway, a material opposition - at least in the sense that an 'academic' education had profound vocational significance - as in entry to the professions or as a route to a white-collar job. The distinction, rather, was a coded reference to the selective elitism of the system. Thatcher's distrust of unproductive 'academic' studies was a signal for the re-description of schooling and the school curriculum: it was a signal that teachers, schools and universities had to take much more account of the 'real' world: of the utility of education in the reconstructed narrative reality - bourgeois society and the market. That

⁷Ian Stronach and Maggie MacLure: Educational Research Undone: The Postmodern Embrace (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997) Chapter 5 and passim.

accounting was not, however, to be performed on the vocational discourse of education, but rather the discourse of skills. 'Skills' were to be what education was about: they were to become the marketable educational commodity.

The OECD 'Jobs Study' report in 1994⁸ was to become seminal in the introduction of the discourse of skills. It was an economic document which was to finally locate education and the economy indissolubly together. This document complained of the 'skills gap' which was to become the central justification of the Blair appropriation of the Conservative bourgeois narrative and 'skills' was to become the keyword of the New Labour version of the narrative. The report diagnosed the unemployment problem in advanced nations. The report acknowledged that *'many new jobs are likely to be low-productivity, low-wage jobs'*, but it argued that *'life-long learning must become a central element in a high- skills, high-wage jobs strategy'*. It recommended reform in education *'to stimulate enterprises to undertake more skill development'* to enable *'advanced'* countries to compete by creating a flexible workforce, by providing better training and education. Gordon Brown, the then Labour Shadow Chancellor, welcomed the *'high skills, high-wage jobs strategy'* of the report. The report was also welcomed by the Major government as a vindication of their reforms. They too began to emphasise the need for 'skills'.

Vocationalism, the discursive identification of the purpose of education and employment, became even more fully institutionalised with the merger of the Departments of Education and Employment in 1995. This lent justification for close 'hands-on' government intervention in education, clearly now reidentified with training. Shephard, remarked: *'education and training are for the individual a continuum'*⁹. On the creation of the DfEE she spoke of it agriculturally. It was an example of *'productive cross-fertilisation... You can imagine the 'bonus' the merger has been - for example the development of Careers Education and Guidance - how good it has been to look at literacy and numeracy across the board, with TECs now involved.'* This new cross breed 'industry' was to initiate a *'qualifications drive'*, not in the traditionally cultural educational expansionist tradition that motivated Butler but much

⁸*The European Elections: Political row erupts over OECD jobs study, The Independent*: 8/6/94

⁹Gillian Shephard in conversation with Brian Sherratt in Ribbins and Sherratt (1997) p. 212

more narrowly to expand the 'skill base' of the populace. She remarked: *'...there is a very different culture... because education has always been run by others, not by government, and therefore the Department of Education had a policy role, a regulatory role, but not a hands-on role. That has changed a little over the years, but that has been its role, whereas of course the Employment Department has always had a hands-on role...'*¹⁰.

The discourse of skills was to supply the opportunity for that 'hands-on' role, providing now a fully coherent educational narrative, linking education directly and unapologetically to the economy, to the market and to the expectations of the bourgeoisie, making it visible, accountable and useful. Educational policy thus became even more controlled by those in the room with the buttons.

The policy community welcomed people from the business world: the consumers of the 'skills'. Stronach and MacLure point out that vocationalism: *'recruits agendas, interventions and audiences'*¹¹. It carves out a power base in the educational narrative for those speaking the 'correct' vocabulary. It limits the educational agenda: it excludes moral discourse in favour of the empirical and is silent to questions about whether its policies ought to be followed; it requires answers only to demands as to how policies can be implemented. It denies space to competing narratives, squeezing them out of the 'real' world of education it has created. Further it allows the voice of business and industry not just to be heard in the educational discourses but to be given substantial weight. Thus, the business world came not just to advise but also to control educational training schemes; 'work experience' schemes became more widespread and formed an important part of the purpose and function of schooling; and business was allowed to have a pervasive presence in schools with the introduction of TECs and TVEI, GNVQ and ScotVEC courses, and the development of 'partnership' and 'link' schemes in schools.

Thus there had been created the discursive space for the transformation of the meanings of core educational terms. 'Standards' for instance, could no longer be considered as 'academic' markers coding the elitist functioning of schooling as in the Black Papers - increasingly now seen to be an atavistic concern - but rather as coding the effectiveness of education to the consumer,

¹⁰ibid., p. 212

¹¹Ian Stronach and Maggie MacLure (1997) p 87

to business and to industry. Consequently the media is filled with the complaints of the leaders of industry that the traditional education provided was not, for them, useful. 'Skills' are paradigmatically useful; they are marketable, and 'transferable' and 'productive' in ways that 'education' and 'ability' in the traditional vocabulary is not. Chris Patten asserted the economic 'common sense' of the linkage of education and training echoing the OECD report: *'What we have to do is raise the skill level of the urban poor. Their best hope lies with better teachers and trainers, not with protectionist trade officials.... With more manufacturing being sourced in poorer countries, the supply of unskilled workers has enormously expanded. The result is falling wages or rising unemployment for the unskilled in richer countries'*.¹²

Eschewing the cultural and moral maze of justifying criteria for educational policies and pedagogies - creating indeed a narrative silence about them - in favour of a simple, clear and, above all, apparently measurable criterium has clear rhetorical advantages, particularly when advocating the reform of an allegedly failing system. The discourse of skills, consequently, became a discursive vehicle for perpetuating a sense of crisis in education, lending the reformist narrative discursive space to continue its rhetoric of the perversity, futility, jeopardy and betrayal of the educational professionals and institutions. This was to reinforce the already popularly perceived image of education - of incompetent teachers and the failure of schooling and schools to meet the needs of the pupils or, indeed, the country. 'Crisis' and 'skills' were rhetorically locked together, each feeding the rhetorical impact of the other, creating the new 'reality' of schooling. 'Standards' was to become the coding of the failure of schools and other educational institutions to meet the challenge of filling the skills gap. Nick Tate stated: *'We will depend increasingly on our expanding technician workforce for a successful economy... unless there is a real cultural change we will never reverse the economic decline (which) has been going on for 100 years.'*¹³ Crisis and the promise of future economic catastrophe was to maintain and justify the discourse - the common culture of the narrative was narrowed to the economic well being of the middle classes.

The middle classes has become the new concept of society: the 'classless society' which excluded 'the poor' and the shire aristocracy, except when

¹²The Telegraph 28/10/94

¹³The Times: 25/8/95

they became useful as a rhetorical device. Phillip Gould, for example, claimed that Labour lost the 1992 election because it was faced by the dilemma of hitting the poor or the middle classes in its manifesto tax policy. Gould advocated: *'If we don't do something for the middle classes we shall lose the election.'*¹⁴ Neil Kinnock, however, refused to *'hit the poor'*, and promptly lost the election. Gould is a leading New Labour apologist and his analysis of events is perhaps simplified. He does, however, illustrate the narrowing of 'New' Labour's narrative vision.

This conception of education manipulates the hopes and ambitions of people caught in the indeterminacy of the market. The traditional Labour narrative had emphasised social justice and egalitarianism. New Labour interpreted this as a betrayal: *'Old Labour took a machine gun to the hopes and aspirations of the majority: the great swathe of the working middle classes.'*¹⁵ The New Labour narrative included only the 'working middle class', those who John Major had characterised as the 'classless' society of the bourgeois narrative. The future of the 'working middle class' is characterised as essentially uncertain. Education is no longer to be anchored to the concept of a job for life but in a personal narrative where career changes would have to be made several times to keep up with the changing conditions and needs of the marketplace. This breeds anxieties which in turn maintain the 'common sense' of the discourse of skills and the demand for a culture of permanent reform in education, driven to keep pace with change.

'Skills' provides a concept that is much less ideologically charged than 'vocationalism' and undercuts the conventional debate about education and training. It subsumes both of these into a single 'ideologically free' pragmatic discourse. Arguments about the need for a cultural dimension to education simply fail to register in the discourse. That under Major these still remained was to trouble the Conservative discourses, as will be discussed in the next section, but they did not hinder the hegemony of skills in the educational discourses. 'Skill' is activity related, a concept much more amenable to the application of empirical measurements like 'performance criteria' and more easily broken down into behavioural objectives. It means something that someone could do: and that is what is to become the only legitimate meaning of education in the new vocabulary. It makes 'accountability' and the 'real'

¹⁴Phillip Gould: *Labour's Tax Nightmare*, New Statesman 30/10/98

¹⁵Philip Gould, on Newsnight, BBC2, 22/10/98

world, the competitiveness and uncertainty of the market, manifest in the educational narrative.

'Skills' are seen as an investment in the economy with a clear cash return, as well as a market value. Money spent in education is required much more narrowly to be seen to have a clear, unambiguous return and as a consequence the effectiveness and appropriateness of the traditional A-Levels and Highers has been brought under increasing pressure: Are they really appropriate for everyone? Are they an efficient use of resources? What is their value to the country and its economy? The new narrative of education is driven by the concept of 'progress'. Competition would breed efficiency and improve quality and productivity. This in turn would give a greater edge to the institution to compete, to breed even greater efficiency and quality and so on... Skills are a measurable commodity, the marketable product which has become an integral part of this cycle.

Meanwhile, it is clear that the discourse of skills harmonises well with the consumerist narrative and has created a market demand for an increase in further and higher education - a demand the reconstructed education 'industry' has to fulfil to survive. 'Skills' make traditional regimes of selection outmoded: selection inevitably becomes less rigorous - a skill depends less on 'ability' than on the willingness of the student to 'acquire' it and the adequacy of the 'enabler'. It makes the virtues of the bourgeois character the essential educational virtues: all comes to he or she who tries. It is a caustic irony that this redefinition of the teacher echoes the progressive educational story, decentering them from the educational processes and, in addition, that in providing 'skills', it was first necessary to deskill teachers.

James Avis¹⁶ maps out how characteristically progressive educational concepts, such as negotiation with pupils, pupil profiling, reporting policies, criterion referencing - and he might have added differentiation policies and the priority of addressing pupils' interests and meeting pupils' needs, which are all central features of the national curriculum - have been appropriated by the bourgeois educational discourse of skills. The strange fate of such progressive ideas in education is, according to Avis, their reinterpretation, not

¹⁶James Avis: *The strange fate of progressive education*, in Education Group 2: Dept of Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham : Education Limited: Schooling and Training and the New Right Since 1979, (Unwin Hyman: London, 1991) pp 114-139

as important theoretical, political or philosophical issues, but as technical problems with technical, bureaucratic solutions within a narrow, vocationally inspired curriculum framework.

The positivistic empirical framework of the curriculum, with its stress on practical results and unambiguous behavioural outcomes and their assessment on narrow and rigid strands and levels of response leads inevitably to an epistemological hardness: learning becomes a closed activity - a finding out of what is already known. What is relevant is what is immediately accessible - through direct observation - to the pupil rather than what is important but perhaps abstract and complex. It is such curricular systems that liberal educators such as Arnold criticised as 'mechanical', a metaphor he obsessively uses and which, ironically as we have seen, is a label which the national curriculum wears with pride. Arnold abhorred the instrumental reasoning applied almost algorithmically to social institutions such as education. It was the rise of capitalist modes of production of Arnold's time, principally the dominant factory input/output model, which provided Arnold with this metaphor. In our time the dominant metaphors are those of commerce and business, particularly the managerial vocabularies of the post-industrial service industries. Business ethos and management systems, now, are seen as the way to model education and to provide the solutions to educational problems.

This discourse of skills has operated to open education to these, and only these, vocabularies. This discourse, for example, breaks down the traditional epistemological barriers of 'subjects' in the curriculum, the conventional demarcation lines of the 'professionals'. It has created a discursively more flexible education service, geared on 'modern' lines. This remains, perhaps, now the only potential arena of struggle between the teaching unions and the government. 'Flexibility' is rarely good news for a workforce: *'While the words 'flexibility' and 'deregulation' trip glibly off the tongues of ministers, they have a sour taste for workers; for many employees know that 'flexibility' means a short term contract... and 'deregulation' means the removal of redress against exploitation.'*¹⁷ It remains to be seen how the flexibility that the discourse demands will be implemented or how the unions will react. This thesis would predict, however, that the unions will almost certainly use

¹⁷John Monks, General Secretary of the TUC, quoted in *The Career Teacher* No. 98, newspaper of NASUWT: March/April 1994

'professionalism' as usual in their reactionary rhetoric to accede to the reforms but to demand improvement in their wages and conditions of service.

Nothing remains of the concept of an 'educated' person in this new vocabulary. The complexities and ambiguities of educational theory are simplified, controversial issues are destimulated, and 'common sense' pragmatics takes the place of often messy, inconclusive theory and debate. The discourse of skills closes the narrative: there is nothing left to be said. Values in education become peculiarly redefined as 'skills': *respect for persons* becomes not an ethical concept but a 'skill' which can be gained though writing an essay about access problems for the disabled and a couple of days placement in a hospice - provided the acquisition of the 'skill' is 'accredited' within the 'framework' of certificate-bearing 'modular' provision. In effect values education becomes meaningless as it enters this certification hyperspace: where it exists at all will be in the nebulous hidden curriculum of the school, unauthorised, unacknowledged and lacking substance.

Humes locates the de-professionalisation of teachers in the new focus on skills in the educational narrative and this, indeed, is perhaps to encapsulate the full realisation of the bourgeois narrative. While the A-Level has, at least so far, withstood threats to abolish or significantly alter it and has been preserved in England as the 'gold standard' of the educational story, in Scotland the equivalent, the Higher, has been the subject of significant change. Helen Liddell, the Scottish Education Minister for Education writes using the discourse of skills to introduce an alternative to the traditional Scottish Higher examination:

'Higher Still is being introduced to meet the deficiencies identified by the Howie Committee. The two terms plus dash for the Highers wasn't working... the standard of achievement reached was below the standards of most European countries, and often did not develop the study skills needed in higher education. Nor in practice were Highers nourishing the traditional Scottish virtue of breadth of attainment. There was a damaging split between academic and vocational

qualifications which led to vocational qualifications being undervalued.'¹⁸

The rhetoric used is of New Labour's need to 'modernize' in order to 'compete'. There is heavy emphasis on vocational and practical end-use value of education. She continues: *'Core skills will be developed to provide a sound basis for lifelong learning and the career changes many pupils will face in later life.'*¹⁹ There is continuous emphasis on these 'core skills': *'It is no accident that 'working with others' is one of the core skills that are an integral part of Higher Still.'*²⁰ The vocabulary used to describe these 'core skills' is the pragmatic vocabulary of the service providing manager:

*'The place of core skills in the Higher Still, UK and international context are described and definitions of core skills and their component parts are provided. Implications for whole school and departmental delivery are described. Detailed appendices outline the core skill framework (the policy upon which all core skills developments are and will be based), draft unit specifications, the pattern of embedding and partial embedding in mainstream subjects at Standard Grade and in Higher Still courses and units. They also contain examples of core skills assignments (that will make it possible for subjects to deliver the remaining parts of core skills easily) and an audit of a school option choice form which establishes the priorities and possibilities for practical implementation of core skills.'*²¹

Educational problems are addressed as managerial problems. The problem is not how to teach. The 'framework' will, it is assumed, meet the needs of pupils and of the economy. All that remains is to 'embed' these skills in the 'framework'. The emphasis is on 'breadth of attainment': the traditional

¹⁸Helen Liddell: in a letter issued to all Scottish secondary teachers, 12/10/98 under The Scottish Office banner.

¹⁹ibid.

²⁰Helen Liddell: *Minister Announces Additional Resources* Higher Still Newsletter (SCCC/Higher Still, Edinburgh: Issue 10, September 1998) pp1/2

²¹*Important information for MANAGERS:* Higher Still Newsletter (SCCC/Higher Still, Edinburgh: Issue 10, September 1998) p.4

Higher has become seen to be inappropriate, too woolly and academic, to meet the need for 'skills' and far too selective to fill the 'skills gap'.

'Higher Still' marks a narrative change that so far has not occurred in England, even though England's educational system is otherwise much more 'on message' with the entrepreneurial and consumerist narrative. Scottish education had not been quite so affected by the consumerism of the market narrative and, historically, the class distinctions in education were somewhat weaker than in England. Private education, especially outside the largest cities, is much less commonplace than in England and the Grammar school is not so iconically significant in the more democratic tradition of the Scottish narrative. The discourse of skills, however, assumes that the Scottish middle classes do not have so much of their narrative ambitions caught up in the traditional Highers as the English middle classes have in the 'gold standard' of the A-Levels. This interpretation has lent impetus to the curricular reform in Scotland. It will be vital to this reform, however, that it maintains the confidence of the middle classes. This is a challenge that Higher Still must face: if it does not provide the narrative expectations of the middle classes, clearly meeting their ambitions and desires, then it will surely fail.

There is, however, every sign that these ambitions and desires are indeed what it is designed to fulfil. The discourse of skills redirects the educational narrative away from the traditional bourgeois concern for values and academic studies towards the acquisition of marketable skills, widening access to the middle classes, redefined as the 'working middle classes', while still allowing the bourgeois its traditional educational advantages. 'Higher Still' is an example of New Labour's attempt to rebrand education; to break with the traditional narratives and to widen the market appeal of educational policy and provision.

This rebranding, however, is the subject of the final section. In the meantime, it is clear that Higher Still continues the process - in its provision of 'frameworks', its prescriptions and its rigid assessment regimes - of 'deskilling' the teachers and rendering them more visible. The significant internal assessment element of the new Higher produces a scheme of certification on demand. Those who demand most, and can articulate their demand effectively, will gain most. Schools caught up in the competition of league tables must accede to customer demand or go under. In the Higher Still

reforms, however, it remains to be seen whether the middle classes will see their advantage in this way and break with the traditional narratives which served them so well. They, like their counterparts in England, are essentially conservative about changes that seem to strike at the heart of their hegemony.

There remain consequently some tensions - or at least potential tensions - in the narrative. The educational world has not yet become entirely caught up in the discourse of skills. This discourse leaves unfulfilled the unreconstructed 'professional' and bourgeois desire for stability and some sense of continuity of culture and tradition, some element of the transmission of Arnold's '*all that is good*' and, perhaps more expediently important, the traditional examination system provides a relatively simple, and exclusive, vehicle for the reproduction of bourgeois culture and cultural values. In Scotland the traditional 'Highers' and the 'A Levels' in England have produced this sense of continuity and this mechanism for cultural reproduction. Butler and Bantock recognised the importance of this, so did the Black Paper writers and even the egalitarian narrative did, though in different terms. The 'skills' discourse, however, refuses to recognise the importance of continuity: it is a discourse caught up in a sense of permanent crisis. This has the potential to create a clear dissonance in the purposes of education as viewed by parents, pupils, teachers and school managers. How this dissonance is managed in a discursively redefined political and social space is the subject of the final two sections.

2. Losing the Plot: The End of Conservatism?

*'We have to appeal to different audiences,
apparently saying different things.'*

Michael Portillo²²

Portillo locates the Major election defeat in the inability of that administration to narrate its story in a way that showed that it truly had both strands of bourgeois desire - ambition and continuity - at heart. Thatcher had presented an intensely ideological story but had double-coded it: to the established bourgeois - often termed the neo-traditionalists - she had offered moral rearmament, a justification by faith in their moral order, a return to the Victorian values of distinction between the *'deserving and undeserving poor'*²³; and to the *arriviste* 'working middle classes' - often termed the neo-liberalists - she had offered the solipsistic individualism of the market as the route to achieving their ambitions. There was only one narrative, the bourgeois narrative, the distinction between the established bourgeois and the *arrivistes* was a matter of emphasis rather than a material difference: both represented their identity, paradigmatically, in consumption of both material and cultural artefacts.

Thatcher had refused to disguise the ideological base of her version of the bourgeois narrative - indeed she revelled in ideological confrontation. Her heroic approach had been successful in laying the narrative foundations of a new consensus but heroism alone had not been enough to establish it. Her secretaries of state for education all complain, if only by implication, of her lack of understanding of the need to persuade and cajole the educationalists: their approach was a softly, softly one, hers was by 'handbagging's, threat and dictat.

She had, however, maintained an uneasy narrative equilibrium through her double-coding of the Conservative bourgeois narrative: the hard instrumentalism of the market was counterpointed by the rhetoric of traditional cultural values and moral regeneration. John Major, however, was unable to maintain this equilibrium. He was uncomfortable as an ideologue,

²²Michael Portillo: *Portillo's Progress*: Channel 4 TV 20/9/98

²³Thatcher (1993) op.cit. p.627

constitutionally preferring a 'softly, softly' approach. That he had won the election was not because he had offered the electors anything new or different except in his less confrontational image. His policies were a re-iteration of Thatcher's though uttered at times with less confidence. His victory was perhaps more a result, as Phillip Gould ²⁴ discusses, of the ineffectual response to Conservative tax reforms by the Kinnock opposition, laying the Labour Party open to charges that it was essentially anti-middle class. Kinnock was unable to double-code his story and present himself as providing principally for the aspirations of the middle classes and yet at the same time not 'betraying' the traditional Labour narrative. He was unable to 'spin' the right message and Labour was successfully presented by the Conservatives as the essentially anti-middle class party of increased taxation.

Yet neither was Major able to maintain the correct 'spin'. It was not, however, his educational policies that led to his demise, but rather his inability to cope with his disruptive and rebellious backbenchers and the 'bastards' in his cabinet over Europe and its influence on economic policy. On educational matters he broadly maintained the Thatcher double-coding, as discussed in the last chapter, and with Ofsted and his Citizen's Charter, completed the surveillance stage of the building of the educational panopticon.

These two competing interpretations of the bourgeois story were to converge in the Blair narrative but, until then, the apparently competing discourses added somewhat to the narrative chaos of the nineties. The result was an educational narrative then in constant flux, which was to give rise to what critics such as Ball and Stronach and Maclure have described as '*policy hysteria*'. In spite of neo-traditionalist scruples, however, the emphasis in the new narrative was almost wholly instrumental: 'consumption' remained the central metaphor of the Conservative educational narrative, as indeed it was the key metaphor of all their social narratives. Educational identities and relations had, by the nineties, become re-identified in terms of product and producer, customer and provider. The succeeding educational debates were about the means to achieve success, not on whether the ends of the bourgeois educational story were worthwhile in themselves - that the bourgeois story was correct was never in question.. The emphasis was on people - parents,

²⁴Phillip Gould: *Labour's Tax Nightmare*, New Statesman 30/10/98

teachers and pupils - not as ends in themselves but as means in the wider economic story of the country.

This instrumentalism was a symptom of the new 'post ideological' political world. The denial of ideology, breaking the hold of the old grand narratives, was to signal the end of ideologically based party politics. It was his failure to see that clearly which, perhaps, was Major's greatest fault. The ghost of Thatcher still haunted the Conservative Party: her strident call for an ideology - *'I think they've got the sex wrong, they've got the willpower wrong, the reasoning wrong... his is a conversion of convenience. I had to make a revolution. I had a conviction.'*²⁵ - coloured Conservative thinking, especially the 'dry' Conservatives like Portillo. They had not quite realised that the revolution had occurred, that the social narratives had changed, that they had won. They carried on the battle yet what they had to do was not fight but to show their effectiveness in the economy and thus be seen to meet the aspirations of the middle classes. Major's was not a material defeat but a public relations defeat: he had not been able to provide the right image.

Cairns Craig describes the tensions between the *arriviste* and established bourgeois strands of the narrative which Major found so untractable:

'The new conservatism of the '70s and '80s may have drawn its political dynamic from the hard-nosed grammar school escapees from the lower middle classes, but it drew its cultural energy, as opposed to its economic theories, from the reassertion of an ideology of England...' ²⁶

Major found himself, as a consequence, locked into a defence of England against Europe, yet at the same time he, as Thatcher had before him, brought Britain closer and closer to Europe, more and more under its influence. It was a contradiction he could not manage. The double-coding of the narrative, to satisfy potential dissension, was largely ignored and tensions were allowed to fester. In education this contradiction expressed itself in different terms.

²⁵ Margaret Thatcher, on being compared to Tony Blair, reported in The Guardian, 10th April, 1997

²⁶ Cairns Craig, Out of History: Narrative Paradigms in Scottish and British Culture (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1996) 140.

The educational equilibrium was always uneasy. The national curriculum, for example, was seen by neo-libertarians like David Sexton - the spokesperson of the *arriviste* tendency - as state interference in the 'natural' operations of the market. Neo-traditionalists, like Roger Scruton for example, saw that this concern with people as means rather than ends as profoundly disturbing. Scruton's philosophy, or at least something very much like it, was to prove to be important in ultimately establishing the cultural changes brought about by the bourgeois story - but ironically not as a Conservative discourse but as part of the Blair appropriation of the bourgeois narrative.

Roger Scruton had offered a way out but - though Major sympathised with the critique of the 'bastards' in the *arriviste*, market strand - the time never became favourable enough to allow him any real influence over policy making. Yet Roger Scruton is the philosopher of the English bourgeois, in many ways the unacknowledged founder of what was to become Blair's 'Communitarianism'. He offered a means to code the narrative to satisfy everyone, even if he did harbour a grave distaste for the *arrivistes* of the market strand. He offered a coding that escaped from the contradictions of the narrative. He provided a philosophical base - though not intentionally and certainly not acknowledged - for Blair's 'post ideological' educational narrative though he was to be ignored by the Conservatives. Such was to be the strange fate of the Conservative story: they had undercut the egalitarianism of socialism in their construction of a bourgeois educational meritocracy but, as the Conservatives lost the plot, their bourgeois narrative was to be appropriated by Blair and culturally established by him.

Scruton attempted to build a respect for persons morality - what Blair was to re-describe as 'Third Way Communitarianism' - into the foundations of the Bourgeois story. Blair's Communitarianism allows the double-coding of the bourgeois narrative of education: as the discourse of the acquisition of skills and as the discourse of 'Values Education', and uniting these codings is that Values education is ultimately a kind of skill acquisition in itself.

Scruton's primary concern was with 'Values Education': the bourgeois story's ability to create and maintain a common culture. He recognised the need for the narrative to become an integral part of people's own individual stories and he doubted that this could be a product of crude liberalism and the market

though, like Blair, he recognised the domination of the market narrative and its instrumentalism.

Though acknowledging, as did Frank Field, Blair's Social Security Secretary, the *'pivotal role of self interest'*,²⁷ Scruton asserted that some individual freedom is rationally and necessarily given up, and acceptance of the *'constraints of a common culture are adopted and its rewards enjoyed'*. Those constraints and their concomitant rewards are the inheritance of the people, and it forms their respective identities in a kind of cultural map which gives a direction to their desires, duties and privileges: not a socialist doctrine, but the Third Way, emphasising individual responsibility to maintain the narrative and the interests of the community.

Scruton is concerned to see that culture and morality are not seen as *'some quirk of private life'* but of central concern to the politician. Scruton is narrowly reactionary: he sees the need for 'progress'. This is the central problem for the neo-traditionalist strand of the narrative: how can an educational system adapt to changing economic and social forces and yet still maintain the traditions of the 'common culture'? It was this problem that exercised Butler and which was to further excite the educational policies of the sixties and seventies. 'Unnaturalness' and betrayal - of the country, of the national traditions and heritage, of moral and political principles, of the aims and purposes of education - became the most prominent discursive motifs of the subsequent educational narratives.

Indeed it could be argued that the Respectable Conservatives in their moral panic about lack of values and disintegration of order, authority and tradition are only being mawkishly sentimental and nostalgic about a myth; comfortable fictions of a time gone by that never really existed and a character - the true Englishman - that never existed. They are themselves believing a comfortable fiction that they, or people such as they, had created to control, *'to preach contentment to the toad'* as Kipling puts it. The myth became their 'Mask of Anarchy' and was, for a time, more effective and more insidious than the crude violence of Castlereagh at Peterloo.

²⁷The Guardian 30/7/98

It is precisely preserving something like Hogg's '*mystique*' of '*good myths*' - though modernised - that the Communitarian is concerned to uphold. Scruton's argument begins with the typical Conservative, though it has now become the de-politicised, post-ideological Communitarian, myth of human nature: that the person is essentially a social and political animal. The basis of the argument is the Hobbesian or Lockean myth of the Social Contract: that in order to flourish and to obtain the maximum good, rational beings will agree to limit some of their desires, give up some of their freedoms and co-operate in some form of society, with which they will metaphorically make a contract; the alternative being anarchy in which they would find it impossible to maintain any 'natural' right to property or privilege. Politicians oversee this fictional contract, are concerned to balance the desires of people with their responsibilities, and the stability of the state with its ability to maximise benefit. The Communitarian political and aesthetic discourses seem concerned merely to magnify the sacrifices made by the bourgeois to maintain the fiction of community which, ironically, maintains their hegemony. It is this self-indulgent bourgeois angst which, for example, drives the economic discourse.

The Communitarian is concerned that any shifts in the balance are not such as to change radically the fictive power of the 'good myth' of the social contract which Scruton identifies with a traditional social order, values and institutions which are, he further claims, the national heritage, the foundation of the common culture. Blair's Communitarian has more regard to a 'modern' re-invention of these institutions to meet changing economic and social needs, but the logic is identical. It is only in this meta-fictional common culture, they and Scruton argue, that the notion of being human has meaning: "*Man's nature is constituted by the specific cultural context within which it is ineluctably to be found*"²⁸

For the inequality inherent in his view of society, Communitarianism makes no apology. Differential attainment in education, and in acquiring the common culture, is a necessary part of the whole story of Communitarian society. That some people are more 'cultured' than others is, perhaps, unfortunate, but it is a 'natural' function of the social order, in particular the 'natural' institution of property. Education is a kind of property. Scruton, for

²⁸ Christopher Berry, *Human Nature* (London: MacMillan, 1986) p. 73.

example, citing Locke on property, claims that just as a man has a natural right to the products of his labour, so he has a natural right to whatever he may obtain from education. Though the ownership of one's rightfully obtained property is an 'natural' institution of the state, what one owns is not equally distributed and nor are the goods obtainable from education equally distributed: like property, they depend on a persons 'natural' ability to obtain them and on 'prior social standing'.

On economic matters, Scruton maintains an uneasy silence. He does not discuss directly the acquisitive materialist capitalism of Conservatives such as Hogg; he does, however, justify structural inequality in wealth on the basis of merit or inheritance and he rather naively, perhaps intentionally naively, ignores the more intransigent and, in his view coarser, ethics of free market capitalism. The Communitarian argument perhaps might be, that while admitting that the economics of this social order could justify *"an ungodly and rapacious scramble for ill-gotten gains, in the course of which the rich appeared to get rich and the poor poorer"* ²⁹ such excesses would be disciplined within the moral sensibility of the narrative.

Scruton, for example, uses his Communitarian theory to attack Neo-Liberalism. He considers insidious and dangerous the increasing popularity of von Hayak's and Milton Friedman's neo-liberal philosophy of unfettered individualism and the denial of society, seeing in it a paradox: *'culture is a process which endows the world with meaning'* ³⁰. Scruton iterates the classic Communitarian argument: the world comes ready made with the marks of appropriate actions, desires, choices and responses to it. Above all the world is essentially social or nothing has meaning or value, even the individual. As a rational person, one needs a measure by which to assess one's reactions and responses to the world and events in the world that impinge on one, and that it is in this social context that personal identity resides: take away the social context then there is nothing of value, nothing of meaning.

The stories that make up the bourgeois common culture allow for the individuality and essential subjectivity of the agent, but escape solipsism because while the perception of experience is essentially subjective, the

²⁹ Quintin Hogg (1952) p.52.

³⁰ Roger Scruton (1979) p.64

meaning of experience is objective because culture is immanent. It is in this relation between subjectivity and objectivity that identity lies. What is wrong with crude individualism is not that it is some kind of moral disease; individuality is an essential condition of human nature, but solipsism is not and the 'health' of the individual is not separable from the 'health' of the community as a whole, or at least the major parts of it.

"..we shall have to abandon the attempt to erode whatever is 'established', whatever has a vested power to overcome opposition, which is the single most striking feature of liberal thought. Which is not to say that we must accept all that is established, or refrain from establishing an order that is new. But we must never lose sight of the fact that, whatever we postulate by way of an ideal, the ideal itself may have no life outside the social arrangement which provided the concepts and perceptions of those who pursue it." 31

The Communitarian state exists to form the 'correct' desires. While Scruton is reluctant to define the function of the state this candid way, he does demand that the state will 'limit' desire by determining which desires are 'legitimate' and which 'illegitimate'. And it is the primary duty of the state to see that 'correct' desires - identified in terms of consumption and a crude nationalism - are instilled in the people through the processes of education.

'Culture' is a product of upbringing and education in its widest sense, not through narrow vocational training. It is a matter of acquiring the 'correct' sensibility, of the 'correct' emotional as well as intellectual response. It is knowing how to feel. Culture is commitment to the bourgeois way of life. It is knowing what to do, what to say, what to choose in given situations. But this commitment is not to be understood as an existential leap of faith, rather, Scruton argues, as a rational and compelling choice. Scruton is not a moral relativist: he rejects the view that there is no objective right or wrong, simply the authenticity of experience as mediated by our intuitions. Nor will he seek justification for the 'correctness' of this sensibility from what he regards as crude and naive 'scientific' positivist epistemology which can only validate simple truisms and either declare meaningless or suspend judgement on moral

³¹ *ibid.* p.66

and aesthetic propositions. Rather Scruton takes a Kantian analytic approach to discover the a priori, objective truth of the 'correct' emotional response.

Communitarian 'Values Education' is a matter of acquiring the 'appropriate' reaction to a situation. It is *'learning the arts'* ³² of the emotions and it has knowledge as its aim, not knowledge of ends or even of means but the practical knowledge of a way of life, knowing who one is and how to feel, and consequently demanding the political imperative of maintaining this way of life. The argument for this is very much like Kant's for the moral law: emotional response and moral choice are not clearly separated. Scruton is not an emotional or moral situationist; a specific emotional response to an event is not in itself right or wrong, nor does it give any guide future events. Scruton brings in the notion of universalisability - *"In educating such emotions one is educating a man's values, and providing him with a sense of what is appropriate not just here and now but universally"* ³³

And it is not just values, but, more importantly, identity which is learned: there is an intimate connection between what one feels and who one is. Scruton's argument continues on the lines of the Kantian Categorical Imperative: I feel what I feel *"in obedience to an imperative which is applicable beyond my present situation, in accordance with universal law"* ³⁴. It is an essential part of the Communitarian human condition that in similar situations everyone would have felt the same. Though the rational person gives this law to oneself, the law is both determinate and necessary.

Kant illustrates the categorical imperative by discussing promise keeping ³⁵. Promise keeping is a rational institution, a critical foundation of bourgeois society. It is irrational to say that I should not keep a promise and hold that not keeping the promise can be right, for promise breaking only makes sense if promise keeping is the universal rule, otherwise no promises would be made. Only universalizable moral dictums are rational in this way. The Categorical Imperative recognises both the fallibilities of human nature, the need to allow for the satisfaction of desires and the need for stable social organisation to guarantee social transactions. It is laws like keeping promises

³²ibid. p.58

³³ibid.p.59

³⁴ibid. p.59

³⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* in H.J. Acton, The Moral Law (London: Hutchison, 1948/76) p.85/6.

which cement people together; if they are not universally held to be true, even if they are at times broken, then society will descend into anarchy. Kant claims that when rational people consider what they ought to do, they are not guided but rather commanded by practical reason to choose to act independently of their particular desires. What is at stake is the very foundation of the society they live in, its established values and institutions which hold it together

It is odd to think that emotional responses can be chosen in this same way. However, perhaps that is not really what Scruton is proposing, although it might form part of a powerful argument against his view. Scruton is empiricist enough to consider that emotions and desires are the basis of action and of moral choice. He sees emotional responses in much the same way as Kant sees his moral laws, they are the cement that binds society together "*..the education of these universalised emotions is an essential part of moral development.*" ³⁶ It is, then, the formation of desire that becomes the principle duty of the state and its educational philosophy. The emotions are 'natural' products of the social situation, in the same way Kant derived his laws, and, although they are personally felt, the appropriateness of the emotional response is determined by the principle of universalisability.

The principle of universalizability, Scruton goes one step further, demands that the response is obligatory, not simply in order to ensure the continuity of the social structure but to ensure personal identity which is not separable from the social world: "*..if a man tries to shift it (the obligation) then automatically he puts his personality at risk*" ³⁷ Since man is a social animal, the constitutive premise of Scruton's argument, to fail to make the appropriate response is to deny something essential about one's own humanity. It is somehow irrational and dangerous not just to oneself and one's own sense of identity but it also may threaten the very fabric of society itself because it denies society, the essential community of interests and the continuity of the traditional values of the common heritage: "*..a common culture provides two things... a way of understanding of the world in terms that invite emotion , together with a recognised pattern of appropriate behaviour.*" ³⁸

³⁶ Scruton(1979): p.59

³⁷ibid.p.59

³⁸ibid. p.60

Values Education is important to the Communitarian as initiation into the 'proper' sensibility and the 'appropriate' desires: "*..to be educated in the constraints and perceptions which it (the common culture) embodies, to transform knowledge into certainty.*"³⁹ Emotional responses and moral actions are metaphysically and epistemologically connected in a transitive relationship: in the absence of particular emotional or moral experience, having been taught what to do at the same time teaches someone what to feel; being taught how to feel will in turn determine how to act. The continuity of the common culture depends on what Scruton calls '*ceremonies of universal application*': grief over a death, for example, reminds the subject of his '*participation in the common lot*'⁴⁰. To be part of a common culture is to have the '*certainty*' of one's feelings as right, as the same feeling that another would have in the same situation - 'certainty' about the objective correctness of the emotion or action because of the strategic, material necessity of social order and a common way of life. Scruton is clearly vitally concerned to make a clear justification for the bourgeois social order as the basis of human society.

It is an objection to Kant's argument that though his logic is, perhaps, compelling, the first principles he starts from are particular ideological constructs of society. His vision of particular social institutions - a particular version of a common culture - prefigure his moral laws and consequently this law is not absolute or objective but culturally and ideologically relative. There are many other, alternative visions of different societies and social institutions that might be equally valid: the procedural logic of Kant is equally applicable to them and the laws so derived equally valid. Further, given that a society values particular institutions, it does not follow that they are therefore morally right nor that the law derived from them is right. The moral rightness of the institutions is another, and separate, question which cannot be established by Kant's *a priori* logic.

Such arguments do not morally justify any particular social practices, their real purpose is to mask the creation of a nationalist cultural hegemony. Scruton, for example, points out that a common culture could exist in a society with very different beliefs and practices, but he is primarily concerned

³⁹ibid. p.63

⁴⁰Berry (1983) p.61

with the continuity of what he sees as the "*customs and observances of English life*"⁴¹ or as Hogg commented: '*Being Conservative is only another way of being British*'⁴². Scruton never considers that the '*customs and observances*' of the true Englishman can be anything but right. There is here in Scruton, as in Hogg, a narrative which is permeated by the sense of the immanence of an unbroken, organic English tradition, stretching back to the Glorious Revolution and Magna Carta which guarantees the correctness of their interpretation of the Conservative economic and social order and justifies it. In it the specialness of the English, their traditions and institutions, are revealed. Raymond Williams describes this:

*'..the history of England was that of a deeply, almost, it seemed, providentially favoured country, favoured by circumstance, by the spirit of its people and institutions from an early date, and by its history (it) was qualified to be the tutor, not the pupil of a distracted world.'*⁴³

Or, without Williams's sense of irony, the Conservative MP David Willetts writes:

*'In Britain at its best, the common sense is so deep and powerful as to become true wisdom.'*⁴⁴

It is only in the social context - the 'common' English, bourgeois, socially ambitious culture - that any conception of personal identity makes sense. Christopher Berry notes that: "*A radical break (in the traditional English social order) will have to de-nature individuals, that is, will have to strip them of the sources of their identity.*"⁴⁵ Scruton's common culture would not, in spite of its liberal pretensions, allow free dialogue, what Habermas has called 'domination free conversations': too much is at stake. While perhaps not going as far as Worsthorne's, '*The principal purpose of politics (is) the evolution and maintenance of a securely established ruling class with a justified sense of its own honourable superiority.*'⁴⁶, yet Scruton would

⁴¹Scruton (1979): p. 67

⁴² cited in Davies (1995) op. cit. p. 348

⁴³ J.W. Burrow, *A Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) p. 35.

⁴⁴ David Willetts, *Modern Conservatism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992) p.6.

⁴⁵Christopher Berry, '*Conservatism and Human Nature*' in Forbes and Smith (eds) *Politics and Human Nature* (London, Frances Pinter, 1983) p.62

⁴⁶Peregrine Worsthorne, cited in Davies (1995) op. cit. p. 62

exclude 'foreign' radical and dissident narratives which threatened the fabric of his community.

Scruton, for example, is a notoriously spirited apologist for fox-hunting and writes with 'certainty' that his is the correct view. About blood sports, for example, he writes of *'the ethic of combat, which arises spontaneously in the contest with the quarry'* and of giving the hunted animal *'respect'* and a *'fair chance'*, and of *'chivalrous behaviour'* ⁴⁷ on the part of the human hunters. Fox hunting is described as, *"a rich source of human social life and happiness"* ⁴⁸ and he lyricises it as *"an innocent joy"* ⁴⁹. Those who object are suffering from *"the vice of sentimentality"* ⁵⁰ - they have been miseducated.

It is not the intention here to discuss the morality of blood sports, but to ask who is it who is to judge 'appropriate' emotional responses? It is not clear that considering fox-hunting wrong is irrational or misplaced; it is not 'certain' that Scruton's emotional responses or moral judgements are correct. It is not clear that appeals to a common culture or a shared heritage would convince those who would oppose such judgements, or who would regard those emotions as barbaric, that they were wrong. Communitarianism is perhaps too sanguine in its assumption that its version of the common heritage is so widely shared and that the appropriate emotional response - characterised by Scruton or Blair and those like them - is so easily policed.

Scruton uses his 'common culture' as a rhetorical device; it is a myth by means of which he attempts to evangelise for a particular, and relatively narrow, form of life - embodied in the Communitarian reinterpretation of the bourgeois narrative. It is inherent in his 'certainty' that only he, and people who have been educated and initiated like him, have the entitlement to judge. Like Bantock's, though without the frankness of Bantock, Communitarian culture is an exclusive club. This Scruton is not likely to deny. He has candidly stated : *'...in all healthy societies, it must be the needs and values of the strong which should ...dominate.'* ⁵¹

⁴⁷Roger Scruton, *Animal Rights and Wrongs* (London: Demos, 1996) p.91/2

⁴⁸ibid. p.93

⁴⁹ibid. p. 35

⁵⁰ibid. p. 99

⁵¹ Roger Scruton, cited in Davies (1995) op. cit. p. 62

What Communitarianism and its 'Values Education' seeks to maintain is not an objective reality which underlies appearances, which Kant and Hegel attempted in order to legitimise their moral and social discourses. It admits that we live in a world which we cannot experience directly and in which the only objective value judgement possible is that there are no value judgements; for Scruton the narratives of science have exposed objective reality as a bleak, deterministic, value-free, cause and effect realm governed by relentless biological and physical laws. The narratives of science ultimately scrape away the *'thin topsoil of human discourse'*⁵² leaving nothing.

Communitarianism's purpose is to *'save the appearances'* which scientific narratives seem to dismiss, the fictions which keep us human - freedom of action, beauty, God, morality, love - through a justification by faith alone. Its intent is not to locate these in an objective reality but rather to maintain the realms of appearances, the fictions: and while these fictions may not be rooted in reality, in the world of truth and falsity, yet they are important in that they keep us human: we act as if they were true. But for Communitarianism, not all fictions are admissible. Egalitarianism is excluded as 'unnatural'- the only legitimately 'natural' fictions, the only ones worth preserving, are the 'common sense' traditional stories of the bourgeois order.

Clearly, the achievement of Scruton's version of 'common' sensibility is not universal, and its exclusivity is concealed by Scruton though he does assert that the *'uprooted, alienated and disenchanting'*⁵³ do not partake of this culture, this *'shared humanity'* as Scruton puts it, which does open Scruton to some serious objections. Are these people less human? How disenchanting must one be before being exiled from humanity? What implications do this charge of being less human have for the way these exiles are to be treated by the society? Scruton offers no answer to the problem of such *'marginal humans'*⁵⁴, as he calls them, with obvious frustration that anyone could choose not to share his sensibilities. They are: *'difficult cases... an intractable problem when our instinctive reverence for human beings is thwarted by their inability to respond to it.'*⁵⁵ Communitarianism's bourgeois culture is a culture of canonical sentiment for re-invented 'traditional values'; of the

⁵² Roger Scruton, *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Philosophy* (London: Duckworth, 1996), p.161

⁵³ Scruton (1979): p.62

⁵⁴ Scruton, *Animal Rights and Wrongs*, (1996) pp. 47-9.

⁵⁵ *ibid.* p.48/9

nature of these values it generally maintains an uneasy silence. As evidenced in his discussion of the virtues of fox-hunting, when Scruton does try to flesh out these values his common culture becomes more than faintly ridiculous.

Ted Honderich ⁵⁶ points out that Conservatist moral discourse is not quite moral discourse even when it has, like Scruton's, been borrowed from Kant. He argues that it has been generally accepted in moral philosophy that the idea of universalizability is basic: no moral principle is truly moral if certain groups or classes in society are considered exempt from the duties and obligations imposed by it. The implied universalizability of Scruton's common culture and cultural values - and indeed Blair's community - masks their essential specificity, to a particular, constructed social context.

Cairns Craig ⁵⁷, in his discussion of the work of Raymond Williams, describes what he sees as Williams' strengths and weaknesses. As a strength he cites Williams' determination to escape the confines of a typically Left emphasis on a narrow class analysis of English culture. He writes:

'The basis of Williams's approach lay in an insistence that 'culture' should not be defined simply in terms of the aesthetic values of the middle classes - that it should include the signifying activities of all classes and that the expressions of different classes should be examined in terms of the historical realities of their class situation rather than in terms of some abstracted definition of what constitutes 'good' or 'high' art. ⁵⁸

As a weakness, however, Craig describes how Williams's analysis is locked into the class structure of English society:

'In accepting the language of class as the sole medium of his argument, Williams allows himself to become part of the internal operation of English culture and English history and

⁵⁶ Ted Honderich, *Conservatism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990) .

⁵⁷ Cairns Craig, *Out of History: Narrative Paradigms in Scottish and British Culture* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1996) .

⁵⁸ *ibid.* p. 147

*English self-perception, even as he seeks out a universal statement about class relations in a developed society.'*⁵⁹

The Communitarian discourse has little of William's strength and much of his weakness. Scruton's vocabulary has become curdled round the specificity of a historical social class - or rather his petit-bourgeois re-invention of the tweedy, chocolate box, fox huntin', shootin' and fishin' shire aristocracy. He had, himself, shallower roots in the working classes: his culture is a quest narrative, a justification of social climbing, to seek the grail of aristocratic good breeding. His 'universalisability' is a sham: his analysis of a common culture does not attempt to escape the borders of England, nor does it go much beyond the comfortable existence of the bourgeois and the country homes of the English landed aristocracy in the Tory Shires.

This kind of narrative is not exclusively English. In *'Imagining Scotland'*⁶⁰ Fintan O'Toole describes how nationalism needs a story to tell itself if it is to survive, preferably a simple story, which he characterises as *'a narrative of conquest and resurrection'*. The typical plot of the story tells of a once proud race defeated by foreigners. It will relate their history from a Golden Age when they were independent, through the trials of invasion, the gradual subversion of their culture and their forced adoption of an alien way of life. The ending of their story, indefinitely deferred, will be the restoration of their mythical past. In hyper-reality, the 'real' and the 'imaginary' collapse into each other and form what Baudrillard calls a 'simulation'. Baudrillard comments, for example, that Disneyland masks the reality that the 'real' America is itself Disneyland - in its fantasy architecture, gun lobbies, rampant and ludicrous materialism, rank sentimentalism and nostalgia for a time that never existed. Simulation, he argues, resurrects myths of origin and authenticity - like the 'unbroken English tradition' - as panic stricken productions of the 'real'⁶¹.

Scruton's story, like the Black Paper writers, exhibits elements of this type of plot: his naive romanticised view of educational history, re-invented as a mythical Golden Age; his characterisation of England as a once great nation humbled; his culturally atavistic obsessions; his panic stricken rhetoric of the

⁵⁹ibid. p. 147

⁶⁰ Fintan O'Toole, "Imagining Scotland," in (ed) Ian Jack: *Granta 56: What Happened to Us - Britain's Valedictory Realism* Winter 1966: pp. 60-76.

⁶¹ Charles Levin: *Jean Baudrillard: a study in cultural metaphysics*, (Hemel Hempsted: Prentice Hall / Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1996) p. 113 and passim.

subversion of the educational discourse by foreign ideas and the betrayal of the enemy within, the progressive educationalists and egalitarians characterised as a 'parcel of rogues'; and their struggle for restoration. His narrative is sustained by his tragi-comic sense of England's unfulfilled destiny. Communitarianism, the Third Way, is a 'good myth' in Hogg's terms, justifying, in the end, only the bourgeois order.

Scruton's common culture hinges on Burke's rebarbative idea of a '*better class of persons from the swinish multitude*'⁶²: the bourgeois audience is addressed exclusively. The quiescent majority, the apathetic as well as the recalcitrant and the deviant, the dispossessed and the nonconformist are silently labelled 'marginal humans' who, since they do not partake of this exclusively bourgeois 'common' culture, have by definition no place in the moral order and no justification or authority for their opinions. Instead of addressing the poor, those without a job or even the hope of a job, the dispossessed and the low self esteem of those living in the inner city slums, they are packaged and re-described in Blair's Communitarianism as '*the excluded*', a euphemism that hints that they live on the margins intentionally and which suggests that spending money on them would be inappropriate: that their inclusion is a matter of them making a better choice, of them grabbing a stake. Their exclusion from the discourses of power is reinterpreted as their own choice, therefore legitimised and, ultimately, they have no voice or even any significant social identity despite the rhetoric of inclusion to which Scruton and Blair aspire.

The bourgeois story, though, has become the most powerful in political discourses. Bernard Ingham, Thatcher's Press Secretary, for example, was not a Tory: he had been a prospective Labour candidate, losing to a Tory at the 1965 Election. He had, however, suffered from being passed over in his career as a journalist at the Guardian and as a press officer in the Labour Party by what he saw as his social, not intellectual betters. He was hard working, ambitious, clever and blunt. He was frustrated by being unable to break the old school tie glass ceiling and his clear resentment of 'cronyism', to borrow a current Conservative soundbite spin, drove him to serve Thatcher because she, in his terms, was not a Tory. Coming from a similar background to him, she too was an outsider. She sought to break down the old social institutions

⁶² Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France, cited in Honderich (1990), p. 47

that were a bar to bourgeois ambitions. When offered the job as her Press Officer he said: *'I think I'll do it. The thing is, we are both radicals'*⁶³. He, with the zeal of the convert, was concerned in his career more to preserve Thatcher and her bourgeois narrative than the Tory Party - many of whom he found contemptuous. John Biffen was to find this unswerving loyalty to Thatcher and her story unnerving: *'One would begin to imagine that we have in Mr Bernard Ingham some sort of rough-spoken Yorkshire Rasputin who is manipulating government and corroding the standards of public morality'*⁶⁴. That Thatcher was to become such an icon in the bourgeois story was in large part due to Ingham's 'spin' but the success of the spin was in Ingham's and Thatcher's ability to catch the popular mood of the 'decent, working middle classes' and to manipulate their ambitions and desires so effectively that all political stories since then have found themselves constrained to follow the same plot.

This too is the essential premise of Communitarianism. Zygmunt Bauman⁶⁵ writes - for DEMOS, the New Labour 'thinktank' - of society after moral certainty, where there is post-ideological 'emptiness of political space'. He notes, without cynicism, that the instrumentalism of business is what *'makes it tick'* and that the ethical considerations appropriate to the individual would be counter-productive in the market: his ethics are for the individual in the community, and he presents ethics divorced from the means and forms of production of society. MacIntyre in *After Virtue*⁶⁶ supplies a critique of managerial instrumentalism: effectiveness as a substitute for ethics. In the market, he argues, the criterion of success is the ultimate test of conduct and traditional morality is reconstructed as a *'theatre of illusions'*⁶⁷.

MacIntyre is describing, in effect, what has become the Communitarian post-modern ethic of sentiment, of feeling rather than belief. The individual has an ethical role only in her democratic relationship as an individual with the community, not as a part of an organisation. While the community supports the behaviour of the institutions and corporations which form its

⁶³ cited in Robert Harris, *Good and Faithful Servant* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990) p.72

⁶⁴Hansard 7/2/83

⁶⁵Zygmunt Bauman *Alone Again: Ethics after Certainty*, (London: Demos 1994)

⁶⁶Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: a study in moral theory* (Duckworth, London, 1981, 1985).

⁶⁷ibid. p.77

economic and social life, the individual must concur. Bauman rejects ⁶⁸ Habermas's combative, emancipatory critical theory which interrogates discourses to expose the forms of domination which underpin them. Rather he espouses the ethics of post-modernism, placing his faith, like Richard Rorty, in the liberal imperialist tradition of '*western civilisation (which) seems to have found the philosopher's stone all other civilisations sought in vain, and with it the warranty of its own immortality: it has succeeded in reforging its discontents into the factors of its own reproduction.*' ⁶⁹

Bauman does not, however, utter these words with Willets's Anglo-triumphalism, rather they are expressed, almost reluctantly, an ambiguously eulogistic comment on how liberating and yet also how bleak the post-modern vision can be. Those on the '*margins*' of this common culture, Bauman asserts, find their identity in their ability, sanctified by the liberal democratic tenet of free speech, to express their discontent in single-issue politics - in '*the privatisation of grievances*'. The problem oriented, pragmatic dynamism of western culture and the '*alluring power*' of consumerism - '*the market sponsored production of needs*' ⁷⁰ - eventually absorbs the malcontents and politics consequently becomes a matter not of providing a unifying, 'common' grand narrative but of maintaining power through the calculation, manipulation and exploitation of the popular mood. This is what Communitarianism is, not a narrative but rather an advertising campaign to give the correct caring image to New Labour.

Bauman's Communitarianism, like Scruton's, is a convenient, expedient morality: it permits the 'appropriate' expression of individual moral distaste - the privatisation of conscience - without carrying the imperative to do anything about it. It predicates the reduction of citizenship to consumerism where even ethics is a consumer product, a brand identity. It creates a feel-good, self-indulgent ethics of sentiment, a moralising rather than a morality, which leaves the potential injustices of the market untouched.

Yet, later, he calls for a '*reason-guided society*', where a '*moral self*' may develop '*take root and grow*'. A society '*that engages its members... in.. the*

⁶⁸Zygmunt Bauman: *Intimations of Postmodernity* (London, Routledge 1992) p.217 and passim

⁶⁹ibid. p.182

⁷⁰ibid. p183

*task of caring for and running common affairs so that the common life could observe the standards of justice and prudence - such a society requires neither disciplined subjects nor satisfaction-seeking consumers of socially provided services, but rather tenacious and sometimes obstinate, but always responsible, citizens.*⁷¹ What he is describing, however, is not right reason, but right **feeling**: a society of people who all have the same basic feelings about things, have the same broad desires, the same narratives about themselves and their community. What comes first is the feeling of the continuity of a common culture and a common way of life, not the creation of a narrative but the creation of an emotional state. As Blair puts it: *'The Labour Party believe that we are one community, one people and citizens of one society. We make our future together or not at all.'*⁷² Thus the hysterical popular reaction to the death of Princess Diana or to the evil empire of Saddam Hussein - or even more tellingly to the imprisonment of Deirdre Barlow, a fictional soap character - is manipulated by the politicians and their media in the new commonwealth of emotion.

What Bauman and Blair offer is not philosophy - Scruton makes an attempt at that at least - but the soundbite. Post-ideological politics has suffered, in Baudrillard's terms, a 'loss of the real', an implosion of image and reality. What 'Communitarianism' provides is not a narrative, nor a philosophy but simply a vehicle for the discourse of 'Values Education', double-coding the New Labour narrative to manipulate the popular mood: *'Decent people. Good people. Patriotic people. When I hear people urging us to fight for 'our people', I want to say: these are our people. They are the majority. And we must serve them, and build that new Britain, that young country, for their children and their families.... One Britain: the people united by shared values and shared aims...'*⁷³ Blair's rhetoric mixes the cultural values of his audience, the 'working middle classes', with corporate managerial vocabulary and crude nationalism to rebrand Britain.

Major, too, had attempted to evoke traditional values: *'Fifty years from now, Britain will still be the country of long shadows on county grounds, warm beer, invincible green suburbs, dog lovers, and - as Orwell said - old maids*

⁷¹Zygmunt Bauman *Alone Again: Ethics after Certainty*, (London: Demos 1994) pp44/5

⁷²Address to the Labour Party Conference, 30/9/93

⁷³Tony Blair (1996) *New Britain* op. cit. p. 53

*bicycling to communion through the morning mist.*⁷⁴ Major's is the sentimentality of the chocolate box. Davies comments that Conservative descriptions of social order typically employ such kitsch rural imagery, Christmas card scenes of Merrie England - though never Scotland, Ireland or Wales whose pastures are presumably neither as pleasant nor as green as England's which were: "... replete with cosy nostalgia for a mythical time when everyone knew their place, masters were kind and never sacked anyone, and the workforce touched their forelocks and never went on strike." ⁷⁵ Their rhetoric of the 'green fields' of England, the singing of 'Jerusalem' at Tory party rallies, cricket matches on the village green and so on, act as a kind of mirror in which the Tories see themselves, with a willing suspension of disbelief, as they ideally wish to be. They provide an exclusive cultural habitation in which to feel secure, comfortable and privileged.

Blair's project is to seize ownership of this host narrative, to promote the image that New Labour now is the gatekeeper of the bourgeois green and pleasant land. Blair's is the soundbite rhetoric of the '*stakeholder society*', '*modernising Britain*' of '*youth*': '*The party renewed, the country reborn*' ⁷⁶ and '*a new young Britain - a young, self-confident and successful country which uses all the talents of its citizens and gives them a stake in the future*'⁷⁷. But this is sentimentality too, less descriptive perhaps, and directed to the future, but just as evocative. Blair too quotes one of Orwell's romanticised pictures, this time of technology driving the future as in those Soviet Union propaganda posters for their post-war Five Year Plans: '*...the "skilled workers, technical experts, airmen, scientists, architects and journalists, the people who feel at home in the radio and ferro-concrete age" who would lead Labour's drive for change after the war*' ⁷⁸. He presents a romantic picture of technology and 'skilled' technologists as the 'modern' force for good, in the end no less kitsch, contrasting Major's 'retro' vision of Merrie England with the ultra modern bridge of the Starship Enterprise.

All such 'post-ideological' political discourse, in its soundbite, cultural coding, is forced, in the drive to power, to aspire to '*the condition of muzac*', as Michael Moorcock satirically re-described the aphorism of Walter Pater.

⁷⁴ John Major, as reported in *The Daily Telegraph*, 23rd April, 1993

⁷⁵ Andrew J. Davie (1995) p. 51.

⁷⁶ Blair (1996) p.53

⁷⁷ *ibid.* p.86

⁷⁸ *ibid.* p.14

Political discourse is reduced to populist propaganda, to bottle-bank disposable objects of consumption. Milan Kundera laments the ultimate meaninglessness, sentimentality and narcissism of the political discourses of a world devoid of anything but consumption:

*"Kitsch causes two tears to flow in quick succession. The first tear says: How nice to see children running on the grass!
The second tear says: How nice to be moved, together with all mankind, by children running on the grass!
It is the second tear that makes kitsch kitsch.
The brotherhood of man on earth will be possible only on a base of kitsch"* ⁷⁹

Milan Kundera defines 'kitsch' as *'the aesthetic ideal of all politicians and all parties and movements'* ⁸⁰. This 'kitsch' attitude is not poor taste, but the enemy of art, and also of truth and morality. Kundera writes: *"it is the need to gaze into the mirror of the beautifying lie and to be moved to tears by the gratification of one's own reflection."* ⁸¹ Scruton and Blair would be appalled to be accused of kitsch but they would be more appalled if their description of a common culture should be accused of authenticating anything other than the bourgeois society of the decent, ambitious, 'working middle classes'. The direction of their rhetoric is to justify a *'beautiful lie'* and to see themselves reflected in it. In the end, removing the metaphysical pretensions that is the central feature of these 'philosophies'; it is this kitsch spirit which infuses their moralities and their discourses.

⁷⁹ Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984) p. 251.

⁸⁰ *ibid.* p. 251

⁸¹ Milan Kundera, "Sixty-three words," *The Guardian* June 3rd, 1988.

3. The Rebranding of Education: Virtual Education for a Virtual Society

'The Nineties are the perfect decade for John Major: they don't seem to be about anything at all.... The fascination with foodyism, the commercial success of 'Hello!' magazine, the institutionalised whingeing of the Citizens' Charter and the political philosophy of New Baywatch..' ⁸²

And the perfect decade for Blair to begin his project of rebranding Britain. Ted Honderich in his attempt to define what Conservatism is reaches the conclusion: *'(it) is not that Conservatives are selfish. It is that they are nothing else. Their selfishness is the rationale of their politics, and they have no other rationale. They stand without the support, the legitimation, of any recognisably moral principle. It is in this that they are distinguished fundamentally from those who are opposed to them.'*⁸³ While 'One Nation', Respectable politicians might argue, with some justification, that such a judgement is too harsh, it certainly does seem to reflect the amorality of the market and the bourgeois narrative. But what if there is no opposition and no legitimate narrative left to oppose this narrative? What if Thatcher's narrative has been appropriated by the Labour Party and there really does not seem to be any alternative? What if all that remains is a consumer society driven by the market, soundbite politics and kitsch sentimentality? The end of the story, the narrative, may be in sight.

What is important in creating this content-free pseudo narrative of sentiment and ambition is, *'education, education, education'* - with education reduced to the indoctrination of consumerist 'ethics' and the discourse of skills. Michael Barber writes that Blair must carry through a *'learning crusade'*: *'Blair must maintain his high-profile support by weaving education into his speeches whatever their primary purpose. The message that learning is at the heart of Britain's social and economic transformation must remain a central one.'* ⁸⁴

The discourse of skills has conceptually re-described the vocabularies of education - to render meaningless the 'old' narratives and to replace them

⁸² Andrew Roberts: *Signs of the Times* The Observer 31/12/95

⁸³ Ted Honderich, Conservatism (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990) 238/9.

⁸⁴ Michael Barber *Labour, education and deja vu*, New Statesman 18/10/96

with a new, but empty, story. Egalitarianism, for example, has become submerged in this consumerist discourse. The bourgeois story is the story of a 'classless' society, at least insofar as everyone is considered to be middle class and, since everyone who mattered was now of the same class, with the same opportunities, then egalitarianism is rendered meaningless. Its use in current political discourse, when it is used at all, is either to code some vestigial dissatisfaction with the Blair revolution or simply a vacuous soundbite.

'Opportunity' has taken its place: we are all equal in the bourgeois society, the only society that has a voice. Major had made a determined attempt to create this reality of a 'classless' society and this has continued in the current educational policies of 'New' Labour. In the discourse of skills, the distinction between Comprehensive schools and Grammar schools has been blurred: each offer the same thing in the new vocabulary, inequalities are made invisible in the talk of opportunities, the 'marginalised' people who cannot yet grasp these opportunities are ignored, at best. They eventually become redefined as 'skillseekers' and subject to increasingly oppressive social policy as they perversely fail to grasp the opportunities offered.

Teaching and schooling have succumbed to the 'post ideological' pragmatic business and consumerist vocabularies of Education Enterprise Zones, to school and individual 'contracts' with its 'consumers', to learning plans and partnerships, in quasi-legal, 'service pledges' about 'quality delivery', and 'Excellence Funds' to reward the schools which become most complicit in their market re-orientation. In Blair's Third Way Communitarianism, behaviourist, narrow, goal-directed 'team spirit', its game imagery redefining participants as players, as means rather than ends, has taken the traditional place of society, even of 'community', in the political discourse. The traditional ethical centre of teaching, that it is a profoundly moral activity, and one which requires the most careful critical consideration, has largely disappeared in the crisis thinking of the discourse. There is no time for such critique, and anyway, the teachers are told, we have done the thinking for you. Be quiet. Just get on with it. Follow the development plan.

Barber's book, for example, speaks of the importance of the '*individual learning promise*' in the '*millenium curriculum*' of a reconstructed educational narrative with the ultimate purpose of creating '*the learning*

society'⁸⁵. He places his faith in technological advances in communication, believing that with greater access to information people will become more active citizens, more responsible for their own futures, their welfare and education. The new 'learning' society - with the soundbite philosophy of '*education, education, education*' at its heart - will embrace the Internet as its totem: information will provide the basis of the new hegemony for the millenium. The current dichotomous, problematic relationships in society, between the market and the welfare state, between the people and the state, between libertarianism and socialism will be resolved not in the domination of one but in a new, 'liberated' information society where all schools, and ultimately all citizens, will be connected in the Internet. The new Leviathan is the interconnection of citizens in a hyperspace community. The contradictory grand narratives, subject of much of this exercise, will wither in the 'new' reflective information society. Its pious belief is that people are thrown back on their own resources as individuals and are denied the comfort of fictions, firmly locked into the 'real' world, they will grow to create a healthy political community, free from Barber's 'passionate credulities' that have so dogged the twentieth century.

The metaphors are of development and maturation: the old narratives are the fairy tales of childhood, replaced by the cold market 'realism' of the consumer society re-invented as the information economy. Barber does recognise that the education of the young cannot be entirely driven simply by reaction to the market - to the changing demands of fashions or to the changing technologies and economic imperatives. Education cannot 'keep pace' with the mercurial market. But the market dominates social life - it is the ultimate justification for reform, it is the sole legitimate vocabulary. In this new society - free from the taboos of the old grand narratives - all educational problems have a managerial or a technological solution, accredited by their 'modernity' and their place in the story of the information society, rather than any theory of educational practice: if the children cannot write, give them a laptop computer; if they cannot spell, give them a spellchecker; no books, nor properly qualified teachers nor indeed a school, use video conferencing... Being part of the 'information revolution' is, in New Labour's 'modern', 'youthful' vision, the ultimate answer to everything.

⁸⁵ibid.

Information is become the essential commodity of this re-invented market economy. Charles Handy ⁸⁶ writes of Microsoft as *'the parable of our times'*, creating wealth out of nothing but the ideas of two people. *'Modern economies will be not be constrained by lack of resources but only by lack of imagination, of creativity and ideas.'* He calls for a redefinition of the enterprise culture in which *'Hierarchies will have to be built on respect rather than on power.'* The challenge is, he says *'the bonding of the individual to the organisation'* and the ability of education to *'create knowledge rather than to collect it'*.

Handy is more than a little disingenuous in citing Microsoft as the model for our times. Bill Gates is fighting an anti-trust legal case in the USA for his attempt to corner the 'information' market and his activities in promoting his case are hardly edifying. If Microsoft's greed and opportunism is Handy's vision of the future then we have a narrative which has moved away from any sense at all of a just society. Further, and more seriously, Handy speaks of there being no need to worry about *'lack of resources'*. This suggests a narrative which has abdicated from any responsibility or concern for the environment or for the real lives of people. Bread will still have to be on the table, clean air and water will still be required: even Handy's hyperspace inhabiting consumers will need something more substantial than what they can download from the Net. They may be virtual citizens but virtual food will not nourish them, in fact or metaphor. Also he seems not to worry too much about the quality of information to be 'traded' on the Net: the currently most visited sites are the pornographic ones and, in particular, there is a thriving exchange of child pornography. Yet, in the strict market terms of Handy's discourse, this would be 'good' because it was profitable. The number of 'hits' on a site is a measure, in his discourse, of its value.

Yet this 'information society' is the central metaphor of the Blair narrative. Thus the 'three R's' are to be replaced in the educational hyperspace by the four 'S's, according to Demos's Geoff Mulgan ⁸⁷: *'Simulation'*, *'Selection'*, *'Sharing'* and *'Service'*. These are to be the 'key skills' of the information revolution as the three R's were of the industrial revolution. All systems can

⁸⁶ references are to Charles Handy's introduction to Mulgan et al (eds) *The new enterprise culture* (London: Demos, Issue 8, 1996)

⁸⁷ all references to the Four R's are from Geoff Mulgan: *The new basic skills: from the 3R's to the 4S's* in Mulgan et al (eds) (1996) op. cit. p.34

be *simulated* on a computer to be understood. There is, apparently, no pressing need for any 'real' contact with the world: everything can be modelled and thus may provide the learner with '*a good mix of learning and doing*'. '*Selection*' is important so that in the mass of information available the learner can '*sift the wheat from the chaff*'. '*Sharing*' represents the need for team-work: '*The capacity to share questions, ideas and 'knowledge is now a basic competence, and can be learnt through new tools such as groupware*'.

The fourth 'S', '*Service*', is Mulgan's unifying metaphor: information technology exists to serve. Service, Mulgan insists, has too long been seen as a negative term. The idea of service has been, in his view, too long coloured by *Upstairs, Downstairs* connotations of domination and subservience. Rather '*service*' is to be understood as the understanding and fulfilment of people's needs. Technology will improve, he claims, '*the fundamental quality of service... but with leaner managements and central control functions*'. IT skills will be the foundation of the new economy and the new focus for education as higher wages are offered to attract highly skilled staff. *Service*, as the central metaphor of this vocabulary, '*will require models of learning that inculcate the habit of service from an early age. And it will require a cultural shift to see service not in terms of servility but in terms of a commitment to an ideal of quality...*'. People will inhabit '*a society of networks... a global learning infrastructure... where GNVQs have been taken up around the world..*' creating a '*knowledge infrastructure based on personal means of access*' which will be the foundation of '*a new enterprise culture*'.

Mulgan becomes a little over-stimulated. His vision of society is not of real flesh and blood people but of virtual people in a virtual society, exchanging virtual commodities for virtual reward. He has confused the map with the place. Everything is reduced by simulation to 'models' of 'systems': yet the world is a real place and inhabited by real people who will not be simplified or reduced by the limitations of computer simulations. Education is more than just the acquisition of the skills needed to surf the net - it is a social activity as much as it is narrowly vocational, and children need real people and real interaction to develop their whole potentials. They need the often messy and contradictory successes, pressures and pains of the classroom and the playground, both the overt and the 'hidden' curricula, to become 'real'

people. Mulgan offers a simulation of education, with simulated learning by simulated people and, ultimately, simulated certification.

Further, sifting the *'wheat from the chaff'* requires a value system which is transcendent: how will this be taught in the absence of any traditional sense of community? The market will establish the value in his individualised 'information society': so will child pornography be wheat or chaff? His narrative requires answers to some hard questions but he remains stubbornly silent about what 'information' has value or the means by which value is established. His bankrupt vision of *'sharing'* is exemplified by the importance of *'groupware'*: his learning society is as morally and culturally nourishing as its computer programme: there is no room here for human interaction except on a virtual level. His society and its learning are ultimately impoverishing as he and his ilk lose sight of any underlying reality, any humanity, in the smug computerised complacency and the solipsistic isolation of their virtual world.

And Mulgan's world is exclusive. What of those on society's margins who cannot, or do not, choose to be 'connected'? What of those who are 'off line', who are not 'on message'? The 'New Labour' story has been heralded by the rhetoric of 'social inclusion'. However, rather than to make material changes in educational provision through policies of positive discrimination, as in the traditional egalitarian Labour narratives, Blair has attempted merely to re-brand education, just as Labour had re-branded itself under Blair, changing its image with immediate and spectacular success. To re-brand is to re-market a product, under a different name perhaps, as reaction to market decline. It is often a result of a take-over of a failing company, and acts as a means to assert the control of the new owners over the production processes and personnel through their exploitation of the anxieties created by market insecurity. It places image above everything else. There is a greater emphasis on presentation of company policy and of the product - through market research and 'focus groups' - to manipulate consumer demand through a new, vigorous marketing campaign. 'Consumer reaction' becomes the driving force behind company policy; its need is to create 'customer satisfaction' and increase its market share.

Education has moved beyond policy. Winning elections requires not better policies but the manipulation of image. Educational policy, like any other policy, has become a matter of branding and re-branding - providing an empty

narrative which yet provides *'a storyline that plays up continuities and gives the inattentive voter something to identify with. A different type of think-tank has sprung up to fill this need, concerned less with concrete policy, more with social description and brand creation'* ⁸⁸.

Mulgan, for example, invented the Ufi, the 'University for Industry', that has been taken up by Gordon Brown and the Treasury, not by the DfEE, as the foundation for Britain's economic success: *'The Ufi is at the heart of the government's vision for life-long learning. It will be a public-private partnership to boost the competitiveness of business and enable individuals to improve their employability... It will broker high quality learning products and services and make them available at home, in the workplace and at learning centres countrywide.'* ⁸⁹ It exists, however, only in hyper-reality: it has no actual location though its administrative headquarters are to be in Sheffield; it has no teaching staff; it will create *'learning sites'* around the country but will not actually deliver any service other than to *'facilitate access'*. It is neither a university nor is it wholly for industry: it is rather an information clearing 'site' for giving advice and the location of training courses, consultancies and institutions, in particular, it states, *'at the lower end of the skills market'*.

Ufi is, it acknowledges, a 'brand': a concept not a thing - a virtual institution leading to a *'revolution in aspiration'*. It exists only in the educational hyper-market. It has been so registered, leading to the DfEE to ban its use by any other training or educational institution or quango under its aegis. Celia Weston suggests that this branding by the Treasury is the realisation of the shift in the control of the educational narrative from the DfEE to the discourses of crisis, skills, bourgeois ambition and economic recovery of the Treasury, through Gordon Brown's *'fear that the education professionals - who have failed on numerous previous occasions to deliver the adult and life-long learning goods - will simply amoeba-like absorb the Ufi and the money it represents and carry on failing to deliver.'* ⁹⁰

In Scotland, educational certification too will become a 'brand':

⁸⁸Gerry Holtham in his valedictory address to the Institute of Public Policy Research, cited in *New Statesman* 30/10/98

⁸⁹This and subsequent references taken from the Ufi Prospectus, as published in *New Statesman*, 13/11/98.

⁹⁰Celia Weston: *A new acronym on the block*, *New Statesman*, 13/11/98

*“SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) will brand the new qualifications as ‘National Qualifications’. This name will also cover (as well as Higher Still) the existing Standard Grade, National Certificate and Short Course provision.”*⁹¹

This branding is necessary as part of the ‘*overall marketing strategy*’ to promote the desirability of SQA qualifications to its consumers: ‘*employers, parents, centres and candidates.*’⁹² Since SQA has no Scottish competitors it must be assumed that they seek to defend their market share from English competition or to expand their business into England. Alternatively, it is possible that this use of marketing language, in the absence of a market, actually means nothing at all, simply a rhetorical mechanism to drive educational certification as well as schools further into a simulated world. The vocabularies of the market thus portray education in metaphors which have no ‘real’ referents - sense without reference, the simulated meaning (or meaninglessness) of Baudrillard’s hyper-reality.

‘Values’ are reduced to becoming a promotional ploy of the educational simulation, the brand image. As the engagement between education and reality is weakened, so the values promoted by education become less committed, less securely embedded into the fabric of the school and the curriculum, less concerned with life and much more concerned with ‘lifestyle’, in particular the materialistic brand consumption of the image conscious, socially ambitious, consuming classes. Quentin Skinner⁹³ describes how the state no longer sees itself as the servant of the weak but as the instrument of the bourgeois narrative: its vocabularies, constitutive of bourgeois democracy, construct and exploit the foundations of any perception of a ‘real’ world.

Consumerism might once have been defined as commodity fetishism, in hyper-reality this fetishism has moved from the object to the entirety of the closed signifying system, the metaphorical structures of the bourgeois narrative which encodes it. Douglas Coupland satirised this in *Generation X* where he writes of ‘MacJobs’: not ‘real’ jobs which provide a sense of moral

⁹¹ *Questions and Answers*, pamphlet issued to schools and colleges by the Higher Still Development Unit and the SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) (Edinburgh, November 1988), p.3

⁹² *ibid.* p.14

⁹³ *New Statesman*, 9/3/96 p.30

or cultural satisfaction or of the fulfilment of social responsibility or even of providing a sense of social position. ‘MacJobs’ are essentially transient, discardable, non-engaging activities endured solely to pass the time and earn some money in order to pursue a ‘lifestyle’. These jobs are not even alienating since the workers are not so much denied but actively refuse to seek any sense of ownership of the means of production or the fruits of their labours. In Generation X the work ethic has been replaced by vacuous consumer chic: I am therefore I shop. Coupland’s people have no defining identity: they exist only so that brand names have something to attach to.

What education faces is the prospect of becoming ‘MacEducation’: an unengaged, uncommitted activity for both pupils and teachers, a simulated profession for a simulated society where one’s education is defined simply by the ‘National Certificates’ one has obtained, electronically engraved on a smart card.

Education must not, surely, become so simply defined. If anything, this encapsulates the thesis of this study: educational debate must remain open and passionate in a healthy society. While the ‘passionate credulities’ of the conflicting traditional grand narratives may have created confusion yet at the same time they also were both firmly grounded in notions of social justice and in the importance of education in reproducing culture and values. While the competing grand narratives - Bantock, Elliot, Scruton, Butler, Hogg, the Black Paper writers, the egalitarians, the progressives and the Unpopular Education cultural theorists - may together have created a complex, confusing, contradictory and ambiguous narrative, yet it was a narrative rich in possibilities and characterisations.

It was a real world they discussed, an irritatingly, sometimes apparently irrational, open, pluralist, paradoxical world: one not so readily understood or so comfortably closed. Dissent, debate and critical thinking were possible and retained meaning even if debates did sometimes become incoherent. The Blair Communitarian revolution threatens an empty consensus which, with the Orwellian newspeak of consumerism, smothers dissent and with that the richness of debate. As Wittgenstein said in his *Tractatus*: ‘*Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent*’.

This study is an attempt to bridge that silence.

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