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Ideology and Educational Policy

The increasing distrust of vaguely expressed political and social ideals that is perhaps best symbolized by the title of Daniel Bell's *The End of Ideology* has made it increasingly difficult to relate educational problems to societal problems with any degree of logical or scientific warrant. But is this distrust of political and social philosophy, this distrust of ideology, merely another ideological proclamation? What accounts for our hesitancy to venture into thinking about the educational development of persons who are capable of alleviating or resolving contemporary societal difficulties? Is this hesitancy due to the indirect support of education resting upon suppressed premises, i.e., upon an ideology?

From certain *facts* such as another nation's technological accomplishments or an increased proportion of people attending or wanting to attend college there follow *no* schooling recommendations at all without additional premises because it is not clear that or why nations should compete technologically nor is it at all clear as to what is the best preparation for college. Although there is a widespread opinion that there was nothing philosophical about Sputnik I and subsequent policy making in education, it is characteristic of ideologies, by definition, to fail to recognize their own value commitments as such. On the contrary, it makes as much sense to say that the fundamental philosophical event of the century was Sputnik I, for never before had the problems of men, of how to live together, been thrown into such sharp focus. That a chunk of metal floating overhead could cause the widespread consternation, flurried activity, and apparent loss of perspective that have dominated the "innovations" in schooling practices in the last decade is no little cause for surprise, for what Sputnik I demonstrated beyond the power of words is the necessary and inescapable unity of the world and human life thereon.

It also established that the fundamental problem, educational and otherwise, is the alienation of people from each other. If one wishes to reflect upon the problem of the educational development of the kinds of persons that can resolve or alleviate present difficulties, he is confronted with formulating an educational program than can contribute to the reduction of alienation between men. The implications of Sputnik I would then fall into the non-cognitive dimensions of the schooling process, within the

moral aspects of educating. If this is so, there has been very little response thus far to an alleged crisis in education stemming from events on the international scene. If the problems are indeed non-cognitive, one does not quite know how to understand what has happened. No matter what foreign policy the nations may adopt to suit the exigencies of the more or less cold war, from that policy nothing is entailed for school policy. This is true in any case. It is particularly valid if the educational development of people should be directed to balance or ameliorate the existing state of affairs. If the general problem is how to live together, in other words, this problem can be approached in different sectors of experience in ways that may even be logically incompatible: foreign policy decisions concerning how to live together possess neither logical nor ideological entailment for school policy decisions respecting the modes of coexistence that might be promoted in schools. A raising of the phenomenon of public schooling into view will precede the discussion of one item illustrative of how policy might be considered if schooling were to respond to the moral problems raised into orbit with Sputnik I.

The phenomenon of public schooling consists of elementary, junior and senior high schools, community junior colleges, and tax-supported universities in Alabama and Alberta, Harlem and Highland Park, Toronto and Tanganyika, Peking and Buenos Aires, Moscow and Minnesota, and so on and so on, by definition of what free, public, universal, compulsory schooling is, regardless of certain factual considerations to the contrary. Schooling can exist as public only if it is free, compulsory, and universal. The basic criterion that any consideration of policy has to meet in order to be relevant to schools that are public is that it has to be equally applicable to all public schools, wherever, even where they have not yet been brought into being. Otherwise it lacks scope, comprehensiveness, and adequacy. It lacks applicability to public schools because its application changes them into something else. It lacks adequate consideration of the moral dimension of schooling because it overlooks respect for the possibilities of the children in the various places not taken into account, especially if the places are under- or over-privileged. This criterion (of applicability to all public schools) is not proclamation of a vague, humanitarian sentiment because it is precisely opposed to the humanitarianism that can degenerate to the "white man's burden" or "Yankee imperialism." It is not ideological because it is the *only* means available to assist in the derivation from the phenomenon of public schooling of that which may assist in preventing parochialism or provincialism, ideological bias or prejudice, ethnocentricism or cultural relativism. It is desirable to avoid these by transcending them because they constitute alienation and contribute to further alienation from other people. Public is public, arbitrary boundaries to the tax-bases of school financing notwithstanding.

From the view of what public schooling is, it appears that the preliminary step in the reduction of the alienation of men from each other is the establishment of a common schooling system: a common curricu-

lum on a world-wide basis. Any policy that could not be instituted universally contributes to alienation because it arrogates to some children that which is thereby denied to other children. This is almost but not quite a version of the Kantian categorical imperative to act such that all one's actions are capable of being legislated universally because it is not an imperative, an ought, at all. It merely indicates how one would recognize policy that showed partiality and privateness, that failed to recognize the responsibility involved in the publicness of schooling and in what schooling signifies. It is not an ought because it has not been said that schooling should "function" to alleviate contemporary problems. It is merely descriptive of what public schooling is and perhaps indicative of what the outlines of a response to Sputnik I might resemble were anyone to decide to take it seriously.

Prior to the existence of common schooling, mere attendance forces the child to live immorally in an unjust world. It lets and encourages him to arrogate to himself possibilities that are not accorded to other children. He must and ought to attend, yet for him his actions are not universalizable. He grows up immorally, alienated from others, and guilty.

Public schooling, moreover, exists perforce as mass schooling. Although this feature has been raised into prominence by the growth of population and the development of mass communication and mass transportation, that public schooling is compulsory and universal makes it inherently mass schooling. It occurs in the realm of anonymity. Teachers and pupils are anonymous. Anyone who is prepared can teach. Anyone can go to school. Schooling is average, everyday human existence, especially when it pretends explicitly to oppose the anonymity of everydayness through encouraging "individuality" through various well-known devices. Self-conscious attempts to achieve "individuality," in school as elsewhere, are express recognition that one is not individualized. In the assumption that people are different the basic alienation is to be found, for before they can be said to differ they have to be compared on some impersonal dimension or isolated "property." That people are either different or the same is not understandable. Each person is simply himself, nameable only by his proper name, e.g., "Bernice."

In individuation is a modification of the temporal structure of human being, if it is basically a matter of how one projects forward into his own possibilities, in his achieving a "self-constancy" through concrete tasks, then whatever is done in schooling cannot contribute to individuation directly because of what childhood and adolescence are in any society that has compulsory schooling. The existence of public schooling constitutes a *de facto* assertion that the child or youth cannot project into his concrete possibilities, that he cannot be himself, that he is not ready to choose his own possibilities, that he can choose his own future for himself only on condition that it includes schooling along the way: public schooling

is mass schooling perforce. It not only constitutes itself in the realm of anonymity but is the "instrument" of "society," i.e., of anonymous everydayness, for it is the deliberate attempt to perpetuate "society" in its averageness (so-called cultural transmission). Concern with general policy, finally, is concern with the mass aspects of schooling, with precisely the average dimensions of the everyday enterprise that is schooling by definition of what the phenomenon of *policy* is: that which stretches across all teachers and within which concrete, pedagogical decisions occur. There is no possibility of pulling up one's skirts, so to speak, through attempting to avoid the "mass" aspects of schooling at the level of general policy, for they are wedded to each other. The average everydayness of schooling is its facticity, its that-it-is, such that to try to avoid it is to avoid the existence of the public school itself. All departures from the mass aspects are departures from how public schooling constitutes itself and all have to fail when instituted because they have to become the "new" form of everydayness by being instituted.

An examination of one such "departure" will serve to illustrate how policy might be decided if one were to accept the facticity of the publicness of schooling as universal and compulsory education. One item will suffice to indicate a way to grapple with the relation of educational problems to societal problems, to indicate the kinds of policy decisions that could be made if one wished to promote the educational development of the kinds of persons who might be able to solve or alleviate the problems of the post-Sputnik world. "Ability grouping" will be discussed as paradigmatic of the "innovations" that have been widely advertised to "cure" whatever it was that ailed public schooling. The treatment will focus on the moral dimension of the problem.

Very often the decision to group or not to group is made on political or empirical grounds: to suit the majority or most powerful interest groups within a community or to increase the acquisition of knowledge as allegedly indicated by empirical studies. The latter can be discounted because the necessary information is not forthcoming. It is beyond the range of empirical research. An adequate study of the effects of various instructional groupings would require:

- (1) Perfectly matched instructional groups, individual for individual and classroom interaction for classroom interaction. Two people who are perfectly matched on all the objectively attainable data including Rorschach and T.A.T. findings may not be matched at all on the subjective data. They would still have differing projects of being, differing having-beens, differing temporal structures, or, in empirical language, differing motivations and experiential backgrounds, and face their own future in differing ways. They have differing home lives during experimentation and different people sit across the aisle from them during experimentation. They cannot be matched. To rest content with statistically matched groups or random sampling does two philosophically arbitrary things, the first of

which is to remain within very gross, abstract preconceptions of what it is that is examined in inquiry. The second is the postulation of a metaphysical thesis as soon as the findings are used for something other than the direction and redirection of further inquiry. When "empirical findings" are taken to represent the real, a very non-empirical system of natural law is postulated in the best rationalistic, realistic, metaphysical manner. The findings have to be presumed as embodying generalizable laws of human conduct that exist in the world as soon as existential, experiential decisions of policy are based on them. The scientific inquirer himself does not have to make this assumption that his findings are of general value or that they correspond to anything apart from his context and method of inquiry. He will not make it if he is cognizant of the limitations of his inquiry. He cannot make it without leaving the area of his specialization and entering the area of philosophy.

(2) Perfectly matched teachers. An adequate study would necessitate teaching all groups in an experiment the same way: same teaching style, same personality, same method, same classroom atmosphere and mood, same competence of the teacher in the subject matter, etc., so that all pupils in all classes within both heterogeneous and homogeneous groupings and within both experimental and control groups, including both "fast" and "slow" groups within "homogeneous" groups, are taught in the same way. They would have to be taught in the same way in the most minute of detail in order to insure the stability of the variable under inquiry and to make a common achievement test possible. If they were taught differently, or if any other of a multitude of variables were not held constant, the achievement test would not be a common test and there would be no way of making it common. There is absolutely no way of knowing whether one has all the variables under control or not, except by assertion. All this means is that there could be no way of knowing what happened within the experiment because there is no way of insuring that exactly the same thing happened except for the variable being examined, the grouping itself.

(3) Continuous study "habits." It would have to assume that all students in all groupings worked equally efficiently from day to day, always at the "same" rate according to their "capacities." This would seem to involve a very atypical teaching situation, if not a teaching utopia. To assume that day-to-day differences were statistically negligible or perfectly correlated but unresponsive to the groupings tested is rather bold, convenient, and question-begging. To ignore the issue is to retreat to a very gross level of experience.

(4) Equivalence of fact and values. Assuming the "empirical" information were at hand, it would still require a value judgment to go from the proposition, "Students, by and large, learn most when X-grouped," to the proposition, "Schools ought to have X-grouping." It would require a great many other considerations as well. That schools are a place for learning

is still an open question despite the declaration of some ideologies to the contrary. What "learning" means is still an open question because it presupposes an idea of what knowledge is. What "knowledge" is is still an open question despite the declarations of ideologies to the contrary, because current arguments for "revelation" and "intuition" make as much sense and have as much appeal and exert as strong an influence among philosophers, among first-rate philosophers, as various forms of, say, positivism. Besides suggesting that experimentation of instructional groupings could not be carried out unless a *decision* were made concerning the nature of knowledge, which might mean that any findings were limited to groupings within the conception of knowledge that was accepted by commitment, the crucial issue here is that even if it were accepted that the implication of Sputnik I (and similar events) for schooling is the maximal diffusion of knowledge, the second proposition does not follow from the first. One has to know which groupings promote which kinds of learnings, which students learn more, how much more of which kinds of learnings are learned by whom over the entire span of schooling, and if sufficiently more of some kinds of learnings is enough to warrant priority over other kinds of learnings and other considerations. Because "maximal diffusion" is two words, the maximal acquisition of knowledge is not necessarily the maximal diffusion of knowledge. This would be so even if it were clear as to what knowledge is. From neither the world situation nor the college preparation situation, then, neither the maximal acquisition nor the maximal diffusion of knowledge follows directly. It is neither clear as to which should follow nor if either should follow, except to some ideologies.

The value, or moral, dimension of this item of policy, in other words, is the *decisive* issue. It is that which makes a decision possible. It is the decisive issue particularly when it may sound as though one is referring to facts, for it is *precisely* then that the value issues dominate because they are mostly submerged, like an iceberg. From the moral point of view, "ability" grouping contributes to the alienation of men from each other and from themselves because it institutionalizes differences and qualities that are unrealizable in personal experience. One cannot "feel" or "see" or experience in any way various "levels of intelligence" in oneself or in others. That is why they made tests. People who think they can experience "levels of intelligence" in themselves or others are living their decision to approach living situations in a stereotyped and preconceived manner, their perception obstructed and the flux of human experience objectified in such a way that a living encounter with other people is prohibited. The *being* of levels of intelligence and intellectual achievement lies out there in the world in a more (or less) finely articulated, more (or less) coherently interrelated contexture of meanings that become possibilities of action through projecting into them: differences between apparently slow and bright pupils are differences in the structures, fluidities, depths, and possibilities of their worlds, out there in front of them. The

institutionalization of "ability" grouping suggests to them that the differences are over here, inside the skin, as properties one already has. This promotes alienation because it (1) considers human being with categories appropriate to non-human entities, (2) places "societal expectations" on pupils not with respect to who they are but with respect to what they are, (3) structures the worlds of pupils in such a way that it makes subsequent authentic coexistence impossible, and (4) is the institutionalization of the desires of dominant social groups, who collectively constitute an oppressing class. These will be discussed in some detail in turn.

(1) Because "ability" groupings define the predominant structure of the school, they suggest that the decisive aspect of human being in respect to schooling is "intelligence" or "intellectual capacity" or "academic achievement." Because the child's horizons are opened up in their way, they suggest to the child that the most important aspect of human existence in general, in social life and in the cosmos, is the same as that by which he is grouped in school. This is necessarily so because he is "learning" all these at once regardless of attempts to isolate the school from its social and cosmological context because these attempts do not isolate but define a different relation to the "outside" world. The point, furthermore, is not that "intelligence," etc., are unimportant to schooling but lies in their reification and in the concomitant reification of the pupils. "Intelligence," "intellectual capacity," "academic achievement," or whatever, do not exist except in action, yet the atmosphere of the school under "ability" grouping not only reifies them but reifies them as the most *significant* "attribute" that the school is concerned with. More important than the value hierarchy (hence ideology) that is thereby implied is the fact that the major criterion for making room for the pupil within the school is an unrealizable. He cannot make room for himself in the same space that room is made for him without undergoing alienation from his own world, which includes the other children that he finds within it. He cannot be conscious of this "thing" by which he is grouped, nor can he go to the world, making room for himself, by what he can be conscious of.

Although no one else can be conscious of the reified "thing" by which "ability" grouping is instituted either, the practice nevertheless implies that "ability" is something one already has; it becomes a metaphysical, unknowable *Ding an sich*. Whereas the traditional conception of the superiority of "character" to "intellect" may have underestimated "intelligence," particularly in respect to its place in the attainment of "character," it does seem correct to say that if the honors student does not contribute significantly five or ten or twenty years after schooling is completed and if the "B" student does, then the significance of the latter's *schooling* achievement is greater than the former's. Although it may be correct to predict greater achievement from the former, schooling achievements are in some respects irrelevant to who one is, especially when human being as a totality is considered. They may be irrelevant to future achievement (i.e., low correlation). Predicting future achievement, moreover, may be

irrelevant to the tasks of schooling. Then advocating schooling policy on the basis of a future promise may overestimate the importance of schooling to authentic achievement, committing what Aiken has called the "educator's fallacy," and it may overlook the possibilities of the present for the sake of a non-existent future. What are needed, if one wants "empirical" information, are tremendously comprehensive and extensive longitudinal studies, more precise and controlled than Terman's or the Eight Year Study. It might be interesting to find out, for example, what becomes of National Merit Scholarship winners in the United States in order to see if the expense, annual disruption of school life in almost every school in the country, and distortion of curriculum entailed is actually worth while. Perhaps the money involved merely to administer the tests might be as well spent if it were donated to any college selected at random. How would one know? What kind of social contribution might one expect from "winners" to make the examinations worth the time? What percentage of "winners" might make wholesale administration of the tests worthwhile?

In general, that is, there has been little awareness of long range effects of recent "innovations," including "ability" grouping, and little attempt to examine thoroughly those things that sound good. The absence of longitudinal examination of the "innovations" such as "ability" grouping, that is, the absence of significant estimates of their value, accompanied by wide acceptance, can only make one wonder why they are considered desirable. At least part of the phenomena of being a good student has been a "capacity" to "learn" more from any schooling experience than "average" pupils, and at least part of the phenomena of "giftedness" has been doing whatever is assigned and finding more on one's own, i.e., until recently part of what was meant by "academic talent" was *less* need for teachers and schools. *Less*. Conceptions of good students or academic talent that do not focus on "self-motivation" as revealed in action are based on a belief in "magic": "talent" or "giftedness" is an entity that resides within the person that he already has and that is separable from what he does. To think that someone can do something because he has a "talent" or "gift" or "ability" for doing it rests upon a mode of reasoning from effect to cause whose paradigm is magic: to explain something is to name its "cause" even though there is no assurance that what is named actually exists. Then invocation of the name is supposed to produce the effect. It is also reminiscent of faculty psychology: "talent" or "ability" or "giftedness" can be improved through special exercises of the faculties that "ability" groupings are supposed to enable. They are either supposed to accelerate the acquisition of information or develop "abilities" (i.e., faculties). Because there is nothing holding any "talented" or "gifted" pupil back in any heterogeneously grouped class, and because faculty psychology is at least indefensible if not completely outmoded, one can only wonder why homogeneous groupings are deemed desirable in the absence of clues as to their worth.

If there are any students who need *no* innovations on their behalf, it would be good students, the "academically talented." All that the words *academically talented* could possibly mean is doing well in school. Then "innovations" in schooling to help those who do well in school are rather redundant. One can only wonder how redundant items of policy become taken to be a response to societal problems. One can only wonder at the motivations of people who advocate redundant items. It is not appropriate to question the sincerity of persons advocating, teaching, or enrolled in "fast" classes: (a) such questioning would be *ad hominem* to which only an *ad hominem* reply would be appropriate, which would end all chances for dialogue; (b) consideration of policy has to suppose a context wherein the decision is open to decision, i.e., a specific school system that is contemplating institutionalizing "ability" grouping. This supposing can be purely imaginative, for imagining what might be is sufficient to free thinking from the bonds of previous decisions. Then, in imagination, one can question motivations, for in concrete situations motivations are as relevant to the outcome of deliberative proceedings as evidence and logical argument are. From the viewpoint of any depth psychology they may be more decisive. If so, then one can legitimately question why "talented" or "gifted" pupils would want "ability" grouping: to relieve the anguish of not being able to be conscious of one's own "talent"? To avoid later trial by concrete action? To achieve one's being at a stroke? To achieve merit once and for all as if it were not the kind of thing that had to be earned anew in each situation? To avoid the risk of schooling with the "average"? Why would parents want it for their children? To insure a "head start" in later life "competition," i.e., to put their child's being out of question? Why would teachers want it?

The item takes on new dimensions if one asks *why* rather than *whether*. If the pupil's way of existing in school is related to his later way of existing in social life, then the most relevant question concerns his desire to enroll in "fast" classes and the sanction given his reason through permitting him to do so. Some of the reasons might be related to (a) unwillingness to accept the responsibility of relying on merit alone, that is, on action alone, without the aid of special privilege, which is failure to live up to the human condition of having to be responsible for one's actions; (b) anxiety, when it is motivated by accepting societal "values," i.e., later vocational success, before having the experience that could make "accepting" them a responsible choice of concrete alternatives; (c) alienation from others, for it arrogates to oneself an assurance of later societal success that is concomitantly and in inverse proportion actively denied to other students, the "average" ones, who can only return the hate later when they sense the fraud perpetrated at their expense; and (d) alienation from oneself, when it is prestige or success or power that is desired, for these depend upon the admiration and compliance of the unsuccessful in order to constitute themselves as "prestige" or "success" or "power," which is to place one's being into the hands of others. This inexhaustive analysis

suffices to suggest possible concomitant effects of groupings based on unrealizable, non-human categories: alienation from one's self and from others is promoted.

(2) When "ability" grouping is advocated as part of an attempt to develop human resources, particularly when it is part of an attempt to discover, motivate, and develop "talent" for ends that are *a priori* as far as the "talented" pupils themselves are concerned, the overt suggestion is that the "talented" child or youth has no right to solve the problem of existing for himself as best as he can, that he has no right to dirt farm, paint, write poetry or novels, wash dishes, or any number of things to which schooling is not necessarily a help. It might not be tragic if a "gifted" youth, say, drops out of school: it could only seem to be when viewed through someone else's "values" when those "values" are projected on to him trying to dominate him, as if someone else knew what the youth's future should be, or what his best future could be. Advocating the discovering and motivating of "talented" children, in other words, is arrogant, deficient solicitude. It presupposes that "gifted" children can and should be "helped" by schooling. A great variety of questions concerning the "motivation" of "giftedness," of which very little is known, thrust themselves forward. What if the greatest possible motivation for the greatest possible contribution to society stemmed from and only from total neglect and indifference on the part of the school? What if it came from imaginative wanderings during dull classes? Or from rebellion and impatience with unimaginative teaching or with the "duly constituted" social order? Or from compassion developed through insight into the problems of quite ordinary classmates? What if premature recognition ruins "talent" or its "motivation"? What if long periods of solitary, undisturbed, and unrecognized periods of gestation are the *sine qua non* of solid creative accomplishment? How would one recognize a "talented" person such that "investment" would be properly directed? What if societal recognition or "success" ruins "talent" at least sometimes? Or what if Sartre was at least partly right when, after his existential psychoanalysis of Genet, he said, "Genius is not a gift but the way out that one invents in desperate cases"? Might it not make as much sense to institutionalize the conditions conducive to the happening of desperate cases as to institutionalize the conditions that might tend to prevent them? Who would try *that* experiment?

The foregoing questions are not the kinds of questions that can be investigated "empirically": if something is once tried, it is not possible to tell what might have happened had it not been tried or had something else been tried, except with different people. The teaching profession, moreover, unlike the medical or legal professions, never sees its own failures. Teaching and schooling failures are all mixed up with pupils' failures during school years. Apparent school "successes" may manifest themselves as "failures" ten or twenty years hence in another town, or they may be "failures" that never manifest themselves as such at all. That is,

if "potential talent" is ruined by schooling either through being channeled through accelerated classes, through failure to be channeled through accelerated classes with other students of more discernible "talent" or through a myriad of other possible ways, it does not and cannot show. What might have been never shows. The "positive" results of ability grouping can be ascertained, but only to some degree because results in any case might have been better for all anyone can know. Negative results simply do not show.

The questions are not empirical in another sense. Even if they were amenable to research the application of the results is not an "empirical" question. Because any application involves children's lives, application falls *ipso facto* within the area of normative anthropology guided by existential concern for better or for worse. How life should be lived is a question of normative anthropology no matter who does it under whatever label. How other people's lives should be lived is guided by existential concern no matter how lucidly.

(3) Under "ability" grouping the structure of the life of the school structures the world of the pupil, both in school and afterwards. Because human temporality is not a continuous progression, a remembrance of school days years later brings the social structure of the "past" right into the present world. If vividly enough, the "past" remembered can be closer and more relevant to the present situation than incidents of the same day. Later remembrance of "ability" grouping prohibits authentically human relations because of the "earlier" inauthentic relations. "Ability" grouping is being there in school inauthentically with others because the grouping is based on ontic grounds: it has no foundation in human being and cannot be based on ontological differences between people. The "inequalities" it is based on are "real," within the assumption of certain methodological procedures that make them real, but they have no being apart from the bracketing of a particular method of inquiry. Groupings on ontical properties prevent the formation or development of an underlying "we are in it together" that is necessary for corporate action, i.e., authentic human relations. If Sputnik I demonstrated that there is only one world, and if the educational development of pupils is assumed to promote the kinds of persons who are capable of overcoming societal difficulties, then "ability" grouping runs counter to the main pedagogical intent. That children can come to "accept" or "adjust to" "ability" grouping when it is introduced early enough, then, is not a mitigating but a damning factor, precisely where tragedy may lie. Explication of this will lead to the final point.

In his criticism of "American culturalism," Sartre suggested that its mechanistic approach treated societal roles as essentially things *past*, removed from the temporality of a living perspective, but that

everything changes if one considers that society is presented to each man as a *perspective of the future* and that this future penetrates to the heart of each one as a real motivation for his behavior . . .

because the societal possibilities are his possibles.¹ To understand a society, therefore, it is necessary to study the structures of the future that are presented to children. How are the structures available in the future presented in schools that have "ability" grouping? How are they presented to pupils within *their* temporal structures? As each person is "defined" by his societal possibilities, each is "defined" negatively by the societal possibles that are impossible for him; for the underprivileged each societal enrichment is one more impoverishment, one more societal possible that is impossible for them. Each schooling possibility that is added for only some children becomes another impossible for other children, another impoverishment, because it increases the number of routes forward that are closed to them. It increases the number of doors marked "No admittance." Whether "average" groups are college-bound or "college material" or not, "ability" grouping cuts off their future by institutionally (i.e., legally) negatively defining it. This is necessarily premature because it murders hope. Separate facilities are once again inherently unequal.

"Homogeneous" groupings provide segregated schooling that is necessarily unequal in the humane dimensions. The ontic property on which "ability" grouping is based is as irrelevant to schooling as the ontic properties of skin color or hair texture if schooling has anything to do with opening up future possibilities of being to children and youth. It is very difficult to see it doing anything else. Then the institutional elevation of some people on ontic differences is inherently immoral because it alienates pupils from future possibilities, i.e., from themselves, as well as alienating them from each other in their major institutional deliverance to the broader society.

(4) In light of the preceding, there is no "explanation" for the existence of "ability" grouping in any system other than the reinforcement of the dominant group by filtering off "talent" for its preservation (except for unawareness of the ramifications). This constitutes oppression of those who are not "acceptable." To define other people negatively by defining their impossibles for them is oppression. Any other term would be descriptively inadequate. A few facts help. The trend since Sputnik I has been a return to traditionalism: renewed emphasis on college preparation, acceleration, "ability" grouping, and the return to "standards" and "hard subjects" in the "new" suburban curriculums, as well as team teaching and educational television, not to mention "machines," have all been part of the Thermidorean reaction to progressive education. The recipients of these "advances," of these "conservative innovations," have not yet reached the labor market, but there still seem to be major difficulties abroad in the world that are *not* caused by shortages of trained scientists and technologists, and there is less assurance today that solutions can be found simply through having greater supplies of trained personnel available.

¹Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method* (New York: Knopf, 1963), translated by Hazel E. Barnes, p. 96. Italics his.

The schooling response, in other words, has been out of proportion because it has been a response to the demands of some and only some organized interest groups who collectively constitute a dominant or oppressing class in respect to schooling because their impact has in fact dominated and has in fact tended to negatively define children and youth by negatively defining their futures for them. It also constitutes exploitation of the rest of the public insofar as it is the utilization of public facilities for private interests, so that wherever there is "ability" grouping, there is oppression in the strictest Marxian sense. That this may have been accomplished without awareness of the consequences does not change the consequences.

Concerning the item selected for analysis to indicate how educational policy might be reflected on within a normative concern: if one begins with the phenomenon of world-wide, compulsory, free schooling and attempts to reflect on the arrangement that admits of the educational development of the kinds of persons capable of resolving or alleviating contemporary societal problems, one finds that it is so-called heterogeneous grouping. Other items of policy could be examined in a similar manner if it were decided that the basic educational issue raised by Sputnik I were in fact that of how to live together and that this issue were to guide policy decisions. All that would need to be done to escape ideological justifications would be to keep the phenomenon of the publicness of schooling in view.