

veto powers. Their ability to guide us by saying "ouch" when it hurts and "stop" when it hurts too much insures the feedback of information to us. By refusing to establish a channel to provide that information — by choosing to ignore the ghetto resident — the school of education chooses to persist in ignorance; to practice education in the urban ghetto as a Bad Samaritan.

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## School Without Chairs

Suppose that the role of the university today is not the same as its role a generation ago. Suppose that if the university was once conceived on the model of a community of scholars, an institution of "higher" learning, today this is only *part* of its role; that knowledge exists in action as well as in hard covered books, and that a pertinent academic question is "How will it help clean up Lake Erie?" Suppose, that is, that because of man's growing dominion over nature ideas today have discernible consequences and must meet the test not only of consistency but of applicability.

Suppose further that because of the moral decisions which this dominion imposes, education is equally to be cultivated; and that, were he alive and well today, Socrates might be teaching, if not in Argentina, at Esalen in the Big Sur — having been ostracized from the professional academic community (no Ph.D.). Suppose that in fact the university now serves as a midwife to many of society's crunch problems. Suppose, too, that education is a process involving the total environment, which can only occur in a total community, in which each individual participates equally in making the decisions which importantly affect his life; that the class character of age in our society subverts education, and that the young are not too young to teach nor the old too old to learn.

And finally, suppose that the goal of education is to develop a society in which people can live more comfortably with change than with rigidity, that the capacity to face the new appropriately is more important than the ability to know and repeat the old. Suppose that colleges today are producing surrogate computers, turning out people who can give answers to questions which have already been posed, not teaching them to pose new questions. Were we to include the supposition that the natural state of man is ecstatic wonder, we would have an educational package with something in it to offend everyone.

But just for the practice, pretend for a minute that these suppositions are not outrageous, that they represent the thinking of a growing minority.

How would they affect the unspoken principle that the classroom is where the academic action takes place; a classroom where chairs as well as times are fixed; where a teacher standing up front lectures a captive audience in a hot medium; where the students' day is blocked off into unrelated knowledge areas? A fragmentation of time, space and "disciplines": uninvolved, fragmented man, non-participating in a curriculum imposed from outside and inflicted in a style developed before the turn of the century, the unilateral lecture.

Project, if you will, the following courses into such a teacher-centered classroom: Computer Methods, Movie Making, Primitive Body Movement, Psychodrama, Power Structure Research, New Tactics for Social Change, Understanding Environments, Advanced Fantasy, Urban Guerilla Warfare, Peace Games, Black Liberation for Whites, Survival, Ecstasy, Politics and the New Music, Beyond the Technological Society. Some fit the classroom, some don't, all in varying degrees. But notice that we have to outlaw some of them as extracurricular *because they don't fit the classroom format*; others because they don't fall under existing departmental headings.

Given our presuppositions, this suggests that a review is in order, both of our conception of the classroom as the principal means of academic communication and of what constitutes an appropriate university curriculum. It is not suggested that the existing course offerings have outlived their usefulness; if many have, many have not, but these need to be supplemented, and in ways that enlarge our conception of curricular interaction — ways other than the occasional seminar, where the arrangement of chairs is actually meddled with and we simulate being a peer group. A prominent educator recently recommended that college presidents could perform an immense service to education by having chairs removed from the classrooms and replacing them with thick rugs.

Two developments demand this review. First, the sheer quantity of information conveyed by press — magazines — film — TV — radio, far exceeds the quantity of information conveyed by school instruction and texts. This challenge has destroyed the monopoly of the book as a teaching aid and infiltrated the very walls of the classroom. Book wisdom is only half the story. A corollary to this challenge bears on what media theorists refer to as a switch from linear to cluster configuration. In the use of electronic tapes, information is fed from several points at once and in concert. This is a radical departure from the one-thing-at-a-time or "ABCDE mindedness" of the highly literate culture to which the classroom is so aptly geared.

These new media push written English (which teachers speak) toward the spontaneous shifts and freedom of the spoken idiom and help us recover the intense awareness of facial language and bodily gesture. Its logic is that of the new cinema, the TV commercial: abrupt zooms, elliptical editing, no story line, flash cuts; an idiom not of the non-

participatory classroom, but of the school cafeteria, the library steps, the chance encounter, the protest movement, the open-ended get together, the teach-in. One reason for the prevalence of campus demonstrations, not often recognized, is that they provide a forum for non-didactic, university-wide exchange.

Second, it will, I think, be granted that ours is a cultivated young generation who ask more and different questions. Because the majority of them are children of the affluent society, their immediate concerns are not material. Their fathers' and grandfathers' concerns were about food, shelter and clothing; they had to try to make things better. Youth today says you have to make the world spiritually, morally and ethically better. This is a transfer of values. Can we structurally accommodate this transfer, short of soliciting students' help in determining both curriculum reform and new conceptions of information interchange? Students have less to forget of yesterday's preconceptions, and this is not always a liability in a rapidly changing time. After all, otherwise it is only their fathers and sons of their grandfathers who strive to effect these reforms, and this resembles self-reform: operation bootstrap. One of these fathers, having seen the electronic light, recently had this to say of the classroom and emerging values:

The classroom is now in a vital struggle for survival with the immensely persuasive "outside" world created by new informational media. Education must shift from instruction, from imposing of stencils, to discovery — to probing and exploration . . . The young today live mythically and in depth. But they encounter instruction in situations organized by means of classified information — subjects are unrelated, they are visually conceived in terms of a blueprint . . . (The young) want roles — R-O-L-E-S. That is, total involvement. They do not want fragmented, specialized goals or jobs. (M. McLuhan, *The Medium is The Massage*).

Yet this is precisely and almost exclusively what the present curriculum is designed to furnish; it is effectively a screening process for the American meritocracy. The one thing that its format and style rules out is an active role. Decision-making ability means the ability to exert significant influence over the forces which order one's life, and this should be a conspicuous product of education. Yet the principal force which orders the student's life is the educational system and, paradoxically, it is just here where decision-making is withheld.

There are of course reasons for this. In the first place, a professor must see the preservation of his discipline as his prime motivation and he is ill-disposed to admitting that the existing disciplines are not the most relevant way of communicating knowledge. Robert Theobald has made this point. What about the students?

The student really does not desire change either. The student in the college has been brought up to like a system in which he does not have freedom. Having been taught to value protective structures,

he is deeply suspicious of and unable to deal with the freedom essential to creative thinking. (Theobald, "Education for a New Time").

Theobald recounts having gone to colleges and proposed to students that as president pro-tem he is willing to offer four years of studying what they want, with no grades or required courses. Of course, as a *quid pro quo*, the teachers do not have to teach unless the student can convince them that he wants to learn. Degrees are guaranteed. After giving the students a week to decide, Theobald plaintively reports that in general they did not want this kind of freedom.

"Education must shift from instruction, from imposing of stencils, to discovery — to probing and exploration . . ." I have hinted that this shift might be effected in part by crossing stereotyped departmental lines or ignoring existing curriculum proprieties and instituting, instead, courses that for one reason or another educators have heretofore not even dreamed of. The free universities here serve as a model. The operative principle is not "data be damned"; obviously education must have content. Rather the stress is on life participation disciplines, self-discipline deriving from expression of fact and feeling in action. Hereupon the student emigrates from the teaching ghetto and assimilates data to his experience, rather than his experience to our data. Knowledge becomes an ability to manipulate knowledge. Education, like metaphor, comprises departure from as well as deference to precedent.

## II

But there is another dimension to this shift from instruction to exploration that is the more subtle matter of medium and format. And this reform can be accomplished *within* the existing curriculum. Our notion of the *classroom* as the cardinal medium of academic interchange unduly limits instructional possibilities. In order to meet new needs we have to augment our vocabulary of instructional formats. I suggest *project* and *teach-in*, plus the notion that ideas must seek a *testing-ground*.

First the teach-in. Whereas, according to McLuhan, the dropout represents a rejection of nineteenth century technology as manifested in our educational establishments, the teach-in represents a constructive effort, switching the educational process from package to discovery. "As the audience becomes a participant in the total electric drama, the classroom can become a *scene* in which the audience performs an enormous amount of work." (Italics added.) The audience as performer; the principles of the teach-in imported into the classroom or, better, the classroom exported into the wider university setting, the *paideia*. The idea of information exchange as a living theatre needs to be structurally entertained. Alternative models to that of the classroom monologue and seminar, whereby the teacher is a purveyor of (someone else's) ideas, have to be erected. Imagine a director among players, Socrates at a party; information exchange as erotic and agapic.

This is what the educational experience is ultimately about. The campus demonstration is a disguised effort to move education out of the classroom. Theobald:

An entire society was structured around a prestige structure, a knowledge structure, in which the old passed on knowledge and the young simply received it. But the enormous speed of change in our time, brought on by the cybernetic revolution, necessitates a total change in this structure. We have created a situation in which we cannot assume that simply because somebody has been studying an issue all of his life, he knows it best. We have created a situation wherein the fact that somebody understands a discipline is not very helpful.

For too long the learning process has been institutionalized in ways that are essentially irrelevant to the two features noticed earlier, the shift in value orientation and the communication explosion. It has remained ideational and linear in a post-ideational and mosaic society, remained exclusively overground when education today requires exposure both to overground and underground media. It has patronized students as youngsters rather than as junior fellow learners.

In terms of relevance and adaptability, the curriculum recalls that of the Grand Academy at Lagado, which included attempts to prevent the growth of wool on sheep, to soften marble, to build a house from the roof down, and to extract sunbeams from cucumbers. The principle that the mark of an educated man is to be articulate about everyday, contemporary things withers in the literary thicket of academe. Thus it took 62 students at the University of Chicago last winter to take a building and risk their futures to get a say in curriculum reform that everyone said they should have been asking for all along. Of course, as noted earlier, many students themselves remain delinquent in the matter, so benumbed have their *seats* of learning become by a career of sitting and notetaking. Presented with problems as closed and soluble, they no longer see the human being as himself "a problem in search of a solution".

Education:

rite words  
in  
rote  
order

I mentioned the notion of project as a means towards educational reform. Recall the activities of the 68 revolutionaries on the campus of Caltech two summers ago. They went all the way into relevant education. They organized a study around a research project designed to attack a major social problem, air pollution. The work, programmed to run for several years, is entirely under the students' control. They are fighting for more freedom in charting their own education so that independent student research may become a fixed part of the educational picture at Caltech. The very presence of the project already offers students a new alternative: student as performer.

Other projects come to mind. Many liberal arts courses might profitably be removed from the classroom cell into the editorial room of a projected information - entertainment medium, a newspaper modelled (say) on the McLuhan Dew Line, a TV or listener subscription radio program (like WBAI in New York), or even a cinema. Ideas relevant to the course may thus be *implemented* in the medium itself, class members constituting an editorial board: Class converted into project, the classroom into a scene — “in which the audience performs an enormous amount of work”.

Both project - types suggest how ideas might be tested as well as proclaimed. The educator must look for a testing - ground, often to be found outside the somewhat hothouse atmosphere of the classroom. Attention to this possibility mobilizes the principle that the great question today is the responsibility of knowledge. Because technology can work today's ideas into the structural features of tomorrow's reality, ideas can no longer be divorced from their applications.

Returning now from the neverland of our unwilling suspension of disbelief, we can conclude with a rhetorical question and suggest a reply. If some of the presuppositions posed at the start are sound after all, how is the educational establishment meeting its challenges? Recently Nathan Pusey, President of Harvard, warned students against assaults on academic freedom. “Growing numbers of students,” he said, “have chosen to exercise their frustrations in the academic arena in insufficient awareness of what a university properly is . . .” (*New York Times*, 1/19/69). We can only wish that educators would be more explicit about what a university today properly is. Thus we wonder whether it differs in any significant respects from what it properly was yesterday, say when Mr. Pusey went to college. Evidently he thinks not. In the same statement he thanks the professors for reiterating “the ancient privilege of the teacher to teach and the student to learn in an atmosphere of free inquiry”. It is *this* which presumably is meant by “academic freedom”. In a word, to today's student, it is paternalism. The pie of freedom is sliced in the old ways, and it is difficult to distinguish such a statement from one simply enjoining us to perpetuate the status quo. Theobald sees education at a crossroads; “We have to make a fundamental choice: do we continue with teacher - centered, storage - and - retrieval forms of education, in which the medium is the message? Or do we enable students to accept the initiative and responsibility for their own education, thereby to discover that they are the message?”

#### “School”

The older,  
     the farther play becomes.  
 No longer does child  
     explore  
     world

through senses  
 and imagination.  
 Smell is outside learning.  
 Child drops the sound  
 of real  
 his words  
 and haunts books  
 of others'  
 written words.  
 No more does he listen to subtle  
 whisperings  
 outside  
 but only the authoritarian  
 which he repeats  
 back.  
 Adapting,  
 he never realizes.

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## Foreign Language Teaching at the University Level

For more than a decade the teaching of foreign languages has been oriented toward the audio - lingual method. At the elementary and junior high school levels, this approach has produced results, especially if sufficient time was assigned to practise transformational skills. At some colleges and universities this method has frequently failed to achieve the desired objectives, because of the limited hours of instruction, the somewhat tiresome and repetitive nature of the exercises, and the inability of an adult "to learn as a child does," however much he may wish to do so.<sup>1</sup> There should be a meaningful relationship between the objectives and the methodology of foreign language instruction. The audio - lingual method did not always attain the objectives of foreign language teaching at particular universities. In addition, the objectives may differ for various age levels or even for individual students. Some students study a language for extrinsic reasons; they may consider the target language as a useful tool in their occupational advancement. Others have intrinsic reasons; they appreciate other cultures and would like to prepare them-

<sup>1</sup>William Moulton, *A Linguistic Guide to Language Learning* (New York, 1966), p. 3.