

criterion which all science must ultimately employ, the criterion of usefulness. If the knowledge of the social world gained by using these approaches is more shareable, more public, more reproducible, more predictive, than that gained by others, then sociology of knowledge will have proved its own value.

Cet article essaie de montrer l'importance de la sociologie des théories de la connaissance et de la recherche, pour faire avancer le champ de la sociologie en général, et de la sociologie de l'éducation dans certains domaines. Les principes de bases de la sociologie de la connaissance critique et de la sociologie positiviste sont discutés; et d'importants écrits de la dernière décennie reconsidèrent les approches de l'ethnométhodologie, de la sociologie phénoménologique, et plus précisément de la sociologie structuraliste de la connaissance.

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Joel Spring. *A Primer of Libertarian Education*. Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1975. \$10.95 (cloth), \$3.95 (paper).

A Primer of Libertarian Education is less than magnificent failure. A primer is a book for beginners. As such, it should be conceptually lucid, explicating ideas gracefully so that the uninitiated can grasp the essentials without feeling shortchanged and practical, providing historically and socially specific strategies for educational change. *A Primer* does neither.

Spring's task is to mine the libertarian (anarchist) tradition for a critique of modern education. Central to the libertarian tradition is the severe criticism of authoritarian relationships (all authority?), in particular the bourgeois state. This severity has a positive contribution: the critical light is beamed so intensely on the use and misuse of power that the seldom recognized links between the political economy and public schooling are illuminated. However the libertarian analysis, unlike the Marxian,¹ does not accept the "correspondence principle": the school's function in a capitalist society is to produce a labour force equipped with the requisite values and beliefs and the job competencies to work uncritically in milieus that are bureaucratized and hierarchically structured. The social relations of the school correspond to the social relations of the economy. Simplifying the Marxian position, the school is not an autonomous institution, since its historic task is to transform raw youth into alienated labourers. Students are workers in waiting and shifts within the productive apparatus will be reflected, sooner or later, in the school. Where Marxists see the everyday activity of the school as a *necessity*, given the nature of the core capitalist institutions, libertarians see mainly institutional *control*, which is rooted not in the nature of capitalist institutions, but in the individual's submission to Authority. In other words, libertarians tend to posit a presocial individual essence, that once freed from the dominance of the ruler's ideas, will express itself in non-authoritarian "institutions." Thus, Spring's purpose is to scrutinize the social mechanisms that create the submitting, passive individual. And this scrutinization is prerequisite for the creation of the "non-authoritarian person who will not obediently accept the dictates of the political and social system and who will demand greater personal control and choice" (p. 14).

To accomplish this, Spring orchestrates his book in 3 movements: first, he examines Max Stirner's little known (outside libertarian circles) works (*The Ego and His Own* and *The False Principle of Our Education*) to understand how the individual becomes the slave of the state, the church, of abstract ideals; second, he turns to Paulo Freire and Marx to understand the relationship between consciousness and social reality and thirdly, to Wilhelm Reich and A. S. Neill to understand characterological barriers to self-liberation. Spring's reason for proceeding in this fashion: each thinker complements the other. Freire supposedly adds a social dimension to Stirner's extreme individualism and Reich is called upon to save Freire, when it becomes obvious that self and social awareness does not lead automatically to social change.

While an argument could be made against Spring's mode of organizing his book (lack of theoretical coherence), this review will examine the conceptual inadequacies of the "libertarians" (Stirner, Freire and A. S. Neill). To begin with, Spring says that "Stirner's

¹For a summary of this position, see Herbert Gintis, "Toward a Political Economy of Education: A Radical Critique of Ivan Illich's *Deschooling Society*," in Alan Gartner et al, *After Deschooling, What?* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973) and Samuel Bowles, "Unequal Education and the Reproduction of the Social Division of Labor," in Martin Carnoy, ed., *Schooling in a Corporate Society* (New York: David McKay Company, 1972).

analysis of the relationship between student and teacher was one of the most profound contributions to the understanding of the enslavement of humanity in the modern world" (p. 49). This is an overstatement: valid only if one accepts the argument that any participation in any institution is enslaving. To be sure, individuals give over power to the institution, one side of the self-in-society dialectic. "They" have power because we allow them to. But having proven that the ideas of the state, emperor or school do not correspond to reality, that they involve a slave-conception of the self, Stirner stops short. A state does not stop being a state after it has been pointed out that if here were no subjects, there would be no state! That was the crux of Marx's critique in *The German Ideology*.

With specific reference to education, Stirner's argument is simply this: the very existence of a teacher-student relationship freezes the will of the student, who is the object of a planned program (anathema to libertarians!). This may be easy to proclaim: however, it is problematic and less than profound. In fact, "free schoolers" like John Holt and A. S. Neill in their critique of schooling have argued along similar lines: the school as institution violates the essential nature (the metaphysically given propensity to freedom) of the child. Says Neill: "Abolish authority. Let the child be himself. Don't push him around. Don't teach him. Don't lecture him. Don't elevate him. Don't force him to do anything."² Re-reading Stirner does not take us beyond the "child as noble savage" mythology so much in evidence in "free school" writing. The libertarian critique is essentially reactive: the crucial point, which a primer should at least provide a few hints, in the context of the school, is not to abolish authority from the teacher-student relationship but to understand the legitimate role of adults as caretakers of youth and, if the "correspondence principle" is theoretically valid: to understand present tendencies in education ("humanize the schools") in terms of the demands for new forms of labour power and ideological shifts within the modern enterprise (away from the externally motivated to the self-directed worker who is both flexible and capable of working in small groups, all the while believing he is self-actualizing).

Stirner's views on self-ownership are based on the metaphysical assumption that it is possible for the individual to free himself from institutional ingressions into the psyche and find a space where he can think his free thoughts. Stirner's self is an abstraction from a whole complex of social relationships, of selves in relation; in a word, it is a fiction. Given that Spring senses some of the limitations of Stirner's thought, one wonders why he has been resurrected at all.

While Spring recognizes that it is not enough to "talk about the spooks controlling human consciousness without talking about the social reality which produced those spooks" (p. 61), his subsequent reading of Marx is not satisfactory. In the mid-70's (particularly!) we need concrete, historically specific analysis: we do not need to be told, in abstract language, that consciousness is tied to social reality. What we receive from Spring is a muddled synthesis of Freire and Marx. This is strange. Freire is not a particularly important (or original) thinker: his philosophy is eclectic: an unintegrated mix of Catholic, existentialist and socialist ideas, expressed in near incomprehensible jargon. Spring observes: "For Marx, Freire, and the twentieth-century psychologists, it is in the realm of consciousness that the contradiction between freedom and determinism is overcome. While consciousness and life activity are determined by material conditions, a person who has no consciousness of self, who has nothing but life activity, is completely propelled by social forces. But the person who is *aware* of these forces and *conscious* of their nature is able to break with the trajectory of history and participate in the radical change of self and society" (p. 65). This is a particularly revealing quotation. For one thing, Marx did not resolve the contradiction between freedom and necessity in the realm of consciousness. That is an idealist solution, a misreading of Marx. This misreading typifies Spring, though, who reads Marx carelessly through the 1844 Manuscripts as a "humanist." In later writings Marx repudiated a "humanism" that critiqued societal institutions from a place beyond history, i.e. from the vantage point of an abstract human nature. More characteristic of Marxian analysis would be *The Eighteenth Brumaire* and *The Critique of the Gotha Program*. Spring assimilates Marx to Freire and loses the fundamental thrust of critical Marxism: its historical specificity. For Freire, then, enlightenment (the breaking out of the "culture of silence," conscientization), which develops in dialogue with the problem-solving cultural workers, leads *directly* to revolutionary praxis. The language of Freire (dehumanization, humanization, cultural action for freedom, the banking-concept of education, etc.) is appealing on first reading, but leaps beyond history precisely when we need to walk the road of the present into a possible future. Freire, unlike Marx, does not care to give us a careful analysis of the class composition of a particular social totality, identifying the contradictions within that totality; the class or alliance of classes that can confront the exploiting class; the actual process of developing class consciousness; the organizational expression of the class-for-itself

²A. S. Neill, *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing* (New York: Hart Publishing Company), p. 4.

and the political tactics appropriate to the society's historic development. This is a fatal flaw in Freire's works, as much as I appreciate the social vision buried in the jargon. Spring wouldn't agree.

Moreover, it is naive to suggest, given some understanding of the history of the working class movement in Europe and the Americas, that if a person is *aware* of social forces and conscious of their nature he will be able to break with the trajectory of history. That's whistling in the darkness: more to the point would be an answer to this question — why haven't workers and their children in the schools in advanced capitalist countries become "class conscious"? This question is beyond Freire who operates within a human/dehumanized framework. He can only leave us dreaming about an ideal human world of the "ought" separate from the "real" world of warring classes. Yet if we turn to Marx for an answer to our question, we do not find it. According to Bertell Ollman in a recent paper, "Toward Class Consciousness Next Time: Marx and the Working Class" Marx's error "is that he advances from the worker's conditions of life to class consciousness in a single bound; the various psychological mediations united in class consciousness are treated as one."³ To illustrate the scope of the problem:

First, workers must recognize that they have interests. Second, they must be able to see their interests as individuals in their interests as members of a class. Third, they must be able to distinguish what Marx considers their main interests as workers from other less important economic interests. Fourth, they must believe that their class interests come prior to their interests as members of a particular nation, religion, race, etc. Fifth, they must truly hate their capitalist exploiters. Sixth, they must have an idea, however vague, that their situation could be qualitatively improved. Seventh, they must believe that they themselves, through some means or other, can help bring about this improvement. Eighth, they must believe that Marx's strategy, or that advocated by Marxist leaders, offers the best means for achieving their aims. And, ninth, having arrived at all the foregoing, they must not be afraid to act when the time comes.

Without even a beginning attempt to adumbrate the complexities of *class* consciousness (even suggesting ways we could think about the problem), Freire is easily coopted by liberal reformers: his method (dialogue around thematic representations of reality), once detached from the firm base of historically specific social class, is trivialized. One example: "One can go about implementing Freire's method in various ways, depending on the skills and imagination of the group leader. For instance, one might teach reading in a middle-class suburb by beginning with some thematic representation of a community problem — pollution, perhaps, or on a more unsophisticated level for small children, one might take up such everyday themes as play, fights, or family problems" (p. 78). It is not all clear how this particular application of Freire, the radical pedagogue, differs from the problem-solving approaches of the typical progressive school and thus underscores the muted desperation of "applying Freire" to concrete situations.

Spring recognizes that Freire's method assumes that people will want to become self-aware and once they are, that they will act in their own interests. Thus, the implementation of Freire's "humanized world" requires another element, liberating the character structure of the individual so that self-awareness and a desire for self-determination become possible. Wilhelm Reich is of obvious importance for libertarians and has much to say to educators in general, regardless of ideological stance. The gist of Reich's argument (see *The Mass Psychology of Fascism, Character Structure, What is Class Consciousness?*) is that the family is a factory for producing character, and that in a capitalist society children learn to take orders from adults and thus "Authority" lodges itself in the psychic structures of the individual. "Authoritarian personalities" are produced in the family and in times of crisis (i.e. economic depression in Germany of the 1930's) many workers are emotionally incapable of departing from long established patterns of subservience, no matter how *aware* they are of the social forces shaping their lives. As a result, workers can "fear freedom" because they fear the new and the unknown (the socialist society). In Reich's view, the school would be one point on the assembly line of character production. "Character structure" would mediate between social conditions and response, between awareness and action, between activity and consciousness. What now becomes problematic is the precise identification of the mechanisms that release (or free) the character. Herbert Marcuse (*Eros and Civilization*) suggests that "sexual liberation *per se* becomes for Reich a panacea for individual and social ills".⁵

³Bertell Ollman, "Toward Class Consciousness Next Time: Marx and the Working Class," *Politics and Society*, vol. 3, no. 1 (Fall 1972), 7.

⁴Ollman, p. 8.

⁵Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), p. 218.

It follows, then, that Spring considers A. S. Neill important. Influenced to a certain degree by Reich (Neill, however, rejected Reich's emphasis on "sexual liberation"), Neill established Summerhill to put into practice some of his quasi-Freudian ideas. While granting Neill's significance for the "free school" movement (a symbol?), it is this reviewer's opinion that Neill's writings are characterized by a facile "romantic humanism" which concentrates on providing a small number of middle class youth with an atmosphere tolerant of their needs and idiosyncrasies, hoping to produce youth who would be "happy" in a world Neill secretly condemned. Alan Graubard sums up Neill's conception of education:

Neill's conception of the function of education emphasizes the effect of freedom on the child's personality. The hope (and claim) is that free children will be self-motivated, integrated, able to seek out the learning they need in order to pursue interests that are truly their own, and, when they become adults, capable of choosing a way of life and work on the basis on considerations flowing from inside, rather than being ruled by externally imposed standards and goals.⁶

Two observations: Neill, like most radical reformers, in practice concentrates on pedagogical questions and does not broaden the critique politically so as to confront directly the sociological function of making children loyal and well-functioning members of society. Further, Neill's Summerhill is based on the illusion that one's own interests can be pursued. Neill's emphasis on choice flowing from the inside is, without concomitant structural changes in the organization of work and community, a more insidious form of social control.

What are Spring's general conclusions? Although I can agree in principle that the "goal of social change is increased individual participation and control of the social system" (p. 130), his strategies strike me as utopian, as unrelated to any concrete historical possibility. Spring would eliminate compulsory education: deschool society, radicalize the faculties of education — place education at the heart of society. These recommendations are distressing. Spring simply does not grasp how crucial schools are to the reproduction of capitalist society. As Herbert Gintis has argued in a seminal paper, "Toward a Political Economy of Education: A Radical Critique of Ivan Illich's *Deschooling Society*," "a radical theory of education reform becomes viable only by envisioning liberating and equal education as serving and being served by a radically altered nexus of social relations in *production*. Schools may lead or lag in this process of social transformation, but structural changes in the educational process can be socially relevant only when they speak to potentials for liberation and equality in our day-to-day labors. In the final analysis, 'deschooling' is irrelevant because we cannot 'de-factory,' 'de-office,' or 'de-family,' save perhaps at the still unenvisioned end of a long process of social reconstruction".⁷

A Primer might have been useful if Spring had taken his libertarian commitment to its logical conclusion. If Reich has the last word, does it not follow that the concrete aims of libertarian activity would be to get teen-age and even younger members of the working class to loosen generalized habits of respect and obedience, to oppose whatever doesn't make sense in terms of their needs as individuals and as members of a group, to participate in successful protest actions no matter how small the immediate objective, and to create a sense of community and brotherhood of all those in revolt?⁸ Spring would not oppose these aims (in fact, his highlighting of them is one of the book's strengths): but nowhere in his primer does go beyond their simple postulation. Spring is a libertarian of sorts in rhetoric and a liberal in practice.

In the sixties possibly this little book might have contributed to a cultural conscientization. Today the book's ideas seem a little stale, lacking in energy and power. Stirner, Freire, Illich, Neill are not adequate for our historical period, the decade of the apocalypse, when even the stones cry out for concrete proposals rooted in historically imaginative, radical and precise analysis.

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Benjamin Fine. *The Stranglehold of the I.Q.* New York: Doubleday & Co., 1975.
Pp. 278. \$7.95.

The author of this book, which was published posthumously by his wife, was at one time Education Editor of the *New York Times* and it must have been the last product of a long, distinguished journalistic career. It is a journalist's book, fast-flowing, hard-hitting, written in a popular style, and it has to be evaluated at this level. It is certainly not a scholarly book and the 'facts' often have to be taken with several pinches of salt.

⁶Alan Graubard, *Free the Children* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 14.

⁷Herbert Gintis, "Towards a Political Economy of Education," pp. 31-32.

⁸Bertall Ollman, p. 22.