

Liberal Education and its Enemies

Geoffrey Partington

flinders university of south australia

Liberal Education is, in Gallie's sense, a contested concept. Among issues contested within the concept are the nature and substantiation of intrinsic educational value, the relationship between valued knowledge itself and the good life it is held to make possible, and the limits, if any, to which liberal knowledge might be extended.

Essential characteristics of Liberal Education include a central concern with the educationally valuable and with the development of mind as a whole, rather than in preparation for specific employment, and an acceptance of hierarchy within knowledge. These characteristics are illustrated first by reference to Plato and Aristotle and then to Hegel and Marx.

Criticism is directed at some contemporary groups who either reject outright the essential characteristics of Liberal Education or whose doctrines and practices severely restrict its possible extension. The first group includes primitivists, hard-line multiculturalists and reductionists, the second, indoctrinators, vocationalists and advocates of social relevance in education.

Selon Gallie, l'école libre est un concept très contesté en éducation. Parmi les points les plus débattus, on retrouve la nature et la justification de la valeur intrinsèque de l'enseignement, le rapport entre connaître pour connaître et la facilité que cela peut engendrer, et s'il y en a, les limites d'une pareille connaissance.

Ce qui caractérise l'école libre, c'est son souci des valeurs éducationnelles et son désir de développer la pensée et l'esprit plutôt que de viser la spécialisation et d'accepter la hiérarchie de la connaissance. Ces caractéristiques sont illustrées tout d'abord par des références à Platon et Aristote, et ensuite, Marx et Hegel.

La critique vise certains groupes contemporains qui, l'un comme l'autre, rejettent carrément les principes fondamentaux de l'école libre, ou encore, pour qui les doctrines et pratiques de cette école limiteraient leur propre extension. Le premier groupe comprend les tenants du "retour-en-arrière," les multiculturalistes stricts, et autres rétrogrades. Quant au second groupe, c'est celui des partisans d'une école engagée sur le plan politique, aussi bien que celui des adeptes de l'école confessionnelle ou d'une prise en charge de l'école par la société.

THE CONCEPT OF LIBERAL EDUCATION

"Liberal Education" is, in W. B. Gallie's (1968) sense, an "essentially contested concept," although not so extensively contested a concept as is "education" itself, unfortunately. It is unfortunate because the difference in the extent of the conflict arises not simply because "education" is a broader concept than "liberal education," so that there is necessarily a larger area of dispute, but because some who contest the concept of "education" have repudiated "liberal education" *tout court* as a reactionary or elitist notion. Before we examine some avowed enemies of liberal education, let us first investigate what its proclaimed adherents pick out as its defining characteristics.

Three features seem at first to be essential to the concept of liberal

education. The first is a central concern with intrinsically worthwhile activities which, it is held, persons ought to pursue if they are free of constraint and necessity or, in other words, when they possess leisure. The second is that liberal education cannot be closely linked to preparation for a particular trade or profession. A third is that some hierarchy can and should be established between the objects and modes of knowledge available to us.

An important point of dispute within the area demarcated by these formal characteristics of liberal education is the nature of what is intrinsically worthwhile, particularly whether it is liberal knowledge itself, which is deemed worthwhile or the good life which it may make possible. A further key dispute arises over how widely liberal education might, in principle, be extended in the most advantageous cultural and educational conditions to be envisaged, as well as in those operative in any context.

Gallie's five initial conditions for "essentially contested concepts" were: (1) They must be appraisive: they must signify valued achievement. (2) They must be internally complex. (3) Different parts of the concept must have the potential for description and evaluation. (4) That which is appraised must be modifiable over time in ways which cannot be pre-specified. (5) Each set of contestants must understand at least some of the rival criteria and be ready to repel them. Gallie added two further conditions of an historical character: (6) they must derive from original exemplars whose authority is acknowledged by all the contestants; and (7) the contestants must be able to claim that their usage is plausibly the optimum contemporary development of the original exemplar.

Of the two original exemplars of liberal education, Plato and Aristotle, only Aristotle will be considered here in any detail. Aristotle (1908) insisted that "the first principle of all human action is leisure" (p. 302) and "that there are branches of learning and education which must study with a view to the enjoyment of leisure and that these are to be enjoyed for their own sake" (p. 303). On the other hand he held that some activities were so destructive of the liberal mind, so banausic, to use his own apt adjective (which is struggling to remain within English dictionaries) that they should not be pursued at all: "we call those arts vulgar which tend to deform the body, and likewise all paid employment, for these absorb and degrade the mind" (p. 301). Aristotle urged that "occupations are divided into liberal and illiberal and to young children shall be imparted only such kinds of knowledge as will be useful to them without vulgarizing them" (p. 301).

Even non-banausic activities, Aristotle argued, should not be taken to extremes: "there are also some liberal arts quite proper for a free man to acquire, but only in certain degree, and if he attends to them too closely, in order to attain perfection in them, the same evil effects will follow" (as in illiberal pursuits) (p. 301). Aristotle admired a proper concern for the

body, but he criticized the harsh Spartan regime, since "education should not be exclusively directed to this or to any other single end" (p. 305). Aristotle also praised the cultivation of musical accomplishments, but he added that "the right measure will be attained if students of music stop short of the arts which are practised in professional contests, and do not seek to acquire those fantastic marvels of execution, which are now the fashion in such contests, and from these have passed into education" (p. 312).

What about those activities which Plato and Aristotle thought most important in the development of the mind? Although Aristotle held that "the care of the body ought to precede that of the soul, and the training of the appetitive part should follow" (p. 203), this anticipation of Piaget is followed by the conclusion that "nonetheless our care of it must be for the sake of reason, and our care of the body for that of the soul" (p. 203). Second, they perceived hierarchy within forms of knowledge: for Plato, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music were studies of high significance which constituted the optimum base on which to develop knowledge of Dialectic, the supreme form of knowledge.

Does the range of beliefs attributed here to Plato and Aristotle enable us to judge them the original exemplars of liberal education as now conceived by its advocates? There are some obvious stumbling blocks. What about Aristotle's claim that paid employment absorbs and degrades the mind? Even if this were true, it would not follow that a paid professional could not have been initiated successfully into liberal knowledge before the cares of employment absorbed and degraded the mind. Perhaps this is what Plato and Aristotle thought had happened in the case of their philosophic opponents, the Sophists. There was substance to Aristotle's contention that paid employment was then almost invariably illiberal in that it placed professionals under others' control and excluded them from political activity, from helping to form the policy of the *polis*, the activity deemed most significant by Plato and Aristotle. The Stoics, of course, were to develop a doctrine of inner freedom, whereby the slave, let alone the controlled professional, might transcend the constrictions of external conditions, but this position might well have been resisted by Aristotle. To the extent that as a matter of fact persons in contemporary paid employment are autonomous and able to enter into public life, Aristotle's strictures will be avoided. Yet all liberal educators must fear that the "knowledge explosion," in the humanities as well as in empirical sciences, has recently, by encouraging earlier concentration on professional expertise, undermined cultivation and inhibited the optimum development of the mind.

An even greater obstacle to contemporary acceptance of Aristotle as an original exemplar is his treatment of human differences. Aristotle considered leisure, not in the sense of unoccupied time used by ill-developed minds in arbitrary ways but as time and opportunity to

pursue the worthwhile, to be a necessary condition both for developing and exercising the liberal mind. Furthermore it was crystal clear in the conditions of Aristotle's own day that such leisure was available only to the few, and perhaps could not be available to them except for the lack of leisure of the many. Aristotle went on beyond this contingent relationship, however, to claim "that some men are by nature free, and others slaves, and that for these latter slavery is both expedient and right" (p. 203); or again, "wherefore the poets say, 'It is meet that Hellenes should rule over Barbarians,' as if they thought that the Barbarians and the slave were by nature one" (pp. 26–27). Some commentators such as Ralf Dahrendorf (1969) have interpreted Aristotle as denying the very possibility that slaves or Barbarians might live in the same way as the naturally free, but Antony Flew's (1976) cogent rejoinder was that, "if those approved superiorities and approved subordinations really were matters of natural necessity and of natural impossibility; then exhortations, or reproaches, or appeals to what is alleged to constitute natural justice, would be all equally otiose and inept (p. 51).¹

Aristotle's views about limited natural capacity for liberal knowledge must be part of what is contested in the concept of liberal education, and we have no reason prematurely to label it as necessarily elitist, confined *ex hypothesi* to the few. A concept of liberal education need not exclude from educational valuation non-liberal education. Paul Hirst has frequently but unavailingly made such a disclaimer. He wrote, for instance,

Perhaps I have been thought to be concerned almost exclusively with the intellectual aspects, because the first paper I wrote about curriculum issues was concerned with liberal education, and in it I defended a stipulative definition of liberal education in terms of the development of knowledge and understanding. But I did guard myself by saying that in these items liberal education is nothing like the whole of education. (Conversations with Paul Hirst, 1971, p. 112)

Nor does such a concept arbitrarily exclude any part of humanity, large or small, from possible successful engagement in it: some ultimate ceiling may limit the capacity of particular persons for liberal education, and contingent cultural deficiencies may restrict the response of some groups to it, but these considerations do not necessarily entail exclusiveness of initiation. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and sages and prophets emerge from unlikely places.

There is no space here to offer even a cursory summary of the chequered history of liberal education, but an attempt will be made to link its central feature, that of universality as against specificity, to some of the most characteristic doctrines of Marx and Engels, and, before them, of Hegel.

Marx and Engels wrote little directly about education, and in any case they generally abjured as mere utopianism speculation about the details of a desired future. One passage is well known enough, however, in their

account, fanciful or frivolous as it may have been, of a future communist society,

where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity, but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, production as a whole being regulated by society, thus making it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, in accordance with my inclination, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic. (Marx, 1947, p. 22)

Here humanity has evidently transcended Engels's "realm of necessity" and achieved freedom from earlier constraints, but the passage is notable in its echo, perhaps conscious, of Aristotle's concepts of liberal education and the good life. Even after the revolution, and in Marx's and Engels's opinions perhaps only after the revolution, we have the task before us of deciding what is most worthwhile to know and pursue.

The search for true universals is a central *motif* in the great German philosophers. Hegel (1956) held that earlier societies were cut off from universality of understanding by their internal divisions into estates, regions and classes, but that the modern state, particularly the German state, was the harbinger of:

the day of Universality, which breaks upon the world after the long, eventful, and terrible night of the Middle Ages; a day which is distinguished by science, art and inventive impulse; that is, by the noblest and highest, and which Humanity, rendered free by Christianity and emancipated through the instrumentality of the Church, exhibits as the external and veritable substance of its being. (p. 220)

Marx on the contrary rejected the Hegelian state as a false universal: "the executive of the Modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" (Marx & Engels, 1975, Vol. 6, p. 486). The true universal, in Marx's view, will be realized when all estates, or virtually all their members, merge into the proletariat. For Marx the real universal is "species-man" and the possibility of realised universality lies in the consciousness of human beings that they are members of the same species. Marx held that man duplicates himself in two parallel ways: in reality through labour, and in consciousness. The object of labour to Marx is "the objectification of man's species of life," but consciousness and labour are distorted by the contradictions between free activity, or leisure, and periods of enslavement or work.

Hegel and Marx concur then with Plato and Aristotle in holding that some activities are intrinsically more worthwhile than others and that the fullest human development requires initiation into the worthwhile; they differ, however, as to the content of the worthwhile and its contingent availability. They agree too on a hierarchy of knowledge, although of different shapes. Perhaps the greatest distinction between Marx and Aristotle is the former's belief that all would have access to universal truth

one day, after the revolution, but that none had it now, except perhaps Marx and Engels and a few others able to escape the Paradox of the Liar. Aristotle, however, held that some had access to it now, but that only a few would ever embrace it.

ENEMIES OF LIBERAL EDUCATION

Our concern here is not with those who contest what is worthwhile, a dispute which must be ongoing, but with those who reject outright the central core of liberal education. The basic mode of analysis adopted here follows that of Anthony O'Hear (1981), but he must not be held to blame for my categories or claims.

Primitivists

A frequent objection to liberal education throughout its history has been the charge that book learning is artificial, derivative, and even contrary to nature. From Tacitus's admiration for the unspoiled, natural qualities of the noble Germans or Britons compared to the decadent and effete Romans to the praise lavished on peasant life by Rousseau or Tolstoy, this has been a common theme. This note is struck today most frequently with respect to the beauties of aboriginal societies.

A dispiriting example is provided by Eve Fesl, Director of the Aboriginal Research Centre, Monash University, Victoria, Australia, who happily supports the research finding that, "the written word, though holding much of interest for Anglo-Australians, contains little of relevance to Aborigines and their life-styles" (1983, p. 14). Eve Fesl remarks sarcastically that, "it is surprising that at a time when Aborigines are indicating less need for, and interest in, literacy, educationalists persist in spending the scarce resources available to Aborigines on the imposition of English literacy and the pursuit of means to achieve it" (pp. 14–15). It is not that common in fact for Australian educationists to persist in trying to foster Aboriginal literacy. Many Australian educationists, like Eve Fesl, admire illiteracy. Indeed, the plentiful resources devoted to Aboriginal education have little relationship to any positive outcome, whether of a liberal or an instrumental character. We know too that the Eve Fesls of this world will still launch attacks, internationally as well as nationally, on the scandalously low number of Aborigines employed as airline pilots, company secretaries, surgeons, and other occupations not traditional to Aborigines.

Canada, of course, does not lag behind Australia either in primitivism or in special pleading. Vincent D'Oyley (1983) urges that education provided for Indians and Inuits should "promote their unique religious persuasion and spirituality, and their own expressive arts." He adds,

It must do so very soon to avert the imminent impact of southern imagery (television programming and delivery to native communities) and the potential for further erosion of their language and culture unless they soon acquire more autonomy over aspects of media development and implementation (p. 206).

It is as unlikely that native peoples would exercise autonomy by resisting southern television images as it is that D'Oyley would require that Canadian education should promote the traditional or current religious persuasion, spirituality and expressive arts, of native English-speaking Canadians. Indeed D'Oyley recommends to us Peter Jones's (1979) condemnation of "certain segments of main-line Christian churches," who have "so identified themselves with the cultural lifestyle of middle class Anglo society that joining them meant simultaneously to opt out of one's cultural past" (p. 207). That cultural lifestyle has on it not a preservation order but a search and destroy directive.

Michel Laferrière (1983), in the course of denouncing the pervasive racism he finds throughout Canada today, except in Quebec which has a "most progressive Human Rights Charter," concedes that low educational achievement within some groups in Canada may be linked to their "different cultural and social class backgrounds" (p. 159). Instead of suggesting how such groups might better seek liberal knowledge, he attacks as racist and discriminatory any tests which purport to show that what he himself believes to be the case is actually so: that average attainment in some groups is indeed lower than in others. Laferrière (1983) notes that "recent policies have been implemented in order to stress and boost the cultures of these groups" (p. 160), but he finds it difficult to support these policies, partly perhaps because it is Canadian politicians, well known as they are to be racist, who implement them. He wonders "if the acceptance of a *de facto* discrimination on the basis of religious or ethnic diversity may not lead in the long run to the estrangement of the different groups coexisting in society" (p. 167). Yet a common curriculum would also meet with his condemnation, unless it were based equally on all Canadian cultural traditions, an objective particularly difficult to achieve in science and mathematics.

Liberal education should seek to promote respect for intelligence and virtue in all their forms. The achievements of hunting, food-gathering and peasant societies, past or present, should never be belittled. It would be idle, however, to seek to develop literacy and numeracy, or historical and scientific understanding, unless we believed that all other things being equal their presence is preferable to their absence. Primitivism can be of no help to those whose low self-esteem it intends to enlarge, and it comes ill from those who have enjoyed some of the benefits of liberal education.

Child-centredness is another form of primitivism which is inimical to liberal education. If initiation into knowledge is essentially an enclosing of

the growing child with shades of the prison house, we will prefer to keep him in that Wordsworthian state of innocence so difficult to distinguish from ignorance. Modern doctrines of authenticity also assert, in David Martin's (1973) words, that "the noumenal self is born free and is already full of experiential potency" (p. 138). Liberal educators believe with Martin that "creativity begins with mould and models and gradually achieves originality by variation on the given." He adds, "There is no guarantee that the moulds and models are good ones, but the alternative is a vacuum or oscillation" (p. 144).

Indoctrinators

Indoctrination is yet another "essentially contested concept," although of a negative character. We try to stick "indoctrination" on to "them," just as we seek to secure "education" for "us." For present purposes the stipulative definition being employed is that indoctrination involves attempts to make others believe as certain or proven factual claims which are uncertain and not proven.

Sometimes indoctrination obviously conflicts with liberal education. The paradigm case here would be the claim attributed to Caliph Omar when he ordered the burning of the great library of Alexandria. "If all those volumes contain that which is written in the Koran, then they are superfluous; if anything contrary, then they are mischievous: burn them all."

Yet the Caliph only echoes St. Augustine's words that, "Whatever knowledge man has acquired outside Holy Writ, if it be harmful is there condemned; if it be wholesome it is there contained." For the most part, however, liberal education has made its way historically in uneasy co-existence with indoctrination. Plato's myths required the banning or at least the censoring of the poets for their success. Tertullian denied that the same lips could consistently chant the praise of God and mouth the sayings of pagans. Even the zenith of scholasticism, the combination of faith and reason, of theology and philosophy, perfected by Thomas Aquinas, rested on unreliable foundations; centrifugal forces ripped apart its constituent elements in the age of William of Ockham.

Liberal education only developed within institutions suffused with indoctrination and in many countries the best available liberal education is available only in indoctrinative institutions, yet its full realisation is always restricted and its very existence often imperiled by indoctrination. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same problematic relationship exists on the left in the uneasy relationships between liberal education and political indoctrination in the schools of the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe. It can hardly be said of the schools of China, Mozambique, Cuba, Nicaragua or other Marxist states that a significantly liberal dimension to school curricula has ever emerged.

The liberal educator is as likely as the indoctrinator to be well aware of the importance of custom and association in education. Richard Peters was surely right to insist that "the palace of reason has to be entered by the courtyard of habit." The progression from innocence to virtue or from ignorance to knowledge requires initiation into a moral or intellectual order. In David Martin's (1973) phrase, "authority precedes spontaneity" (p. 152). Whereas, however, the indoctrinator will seek to develop individuals whose judgments are his own, the liberal educator will seek to enable them to make decisions which are other than his own.

Vocationalists and Apostles of Social Relevance

A respectable case may always be made for some elements of vocational training as part of a defensible education, unless we assume a class division such as that of Aristotle's time or the achievement of those Marxist millenarian conditions of unlimited abundance which herald the approach of communism's final stage. The main objection to vocationalists in education is that they may see little point in education, other than as a preparation for a career. Nor does this propensity appear to vary much with conditions of employment. When I was a young teacher in London in the early 1950s some senior colleagues used to reflect that it did not matter too much what the pupils were taught, since they would get a job easily anyway. In recent months I have heard teachers in Australia, Canada and Britain remark that it does not matter too much what the students are taught, since they will not get jobs anyway. The main change was in the nomenclature applied to adolescents in school.

If anything, there is more emphasis in schools on job-training and professional preparation when there are fewer jobs or professional openings than when they are relatively abundant. Such arguments also flourish incongruously when rhetoric is spouted about rapidly changing employment conditions, future shock and the uniqueness of our times.

Vocationalist objections to liberal education usually expand very rapidly to allege its irrelevance not only to employment, but to the daily life of students and their communities. The conservative version, which has been best put in recent years by G.H. Bantock, is not an outright rejection of liberal education by any means. Far from it, indeed. Bantock (1952, 1963 and 1968) has, at one level, made a major constructive contribution to the debates about the best form which liberal education should take in modern industrial societies. Yet he has also been prominent in urging that high culture and a curriculum with wide cognitive demands has always been, is still and always will be rejected by the overwhelming majority of working-class children. Bantock has prepared what he believes a more relevant curriculum based on deepening the range of interests which most working-class families already possess and to which their children are most likely to respond.

Bantock, entering stage right, is effectively seconded in his advocacy of a limited and illiberal curriculum for the masses by Eric Midwinter (1972), entering stage left, but Midwinter would apparently bring all children under its sway, whereas Bantock supports a liberal education for the middle classes and, perhaps, for the small minority of the children of the "folk," to use Bantock's own homely term, capable at present of embracing high cultural values.

The curricular content which Midwinter (1972, p. 11) would discard as irrelevant or, indeed, as rubbish, includes: the culture of the Masai, the exports of Latin America, Masfield's "Cargoes," the symptoms of the Black Death, and stories of "dubious heroes of our island heritage" such as Drake, Shaftesbury, Wilberforce and Rhodes. Indeed, he's got a lengthy list and they'd none of them be missed. Midwinter argued that the disadvantaged child in tough inner-city areas can only "relate to what is relevant to him. His growth will depend on *his* conceptual development of *his* city, street, gang, environment" but instead, "he will be bombarded in school by new concepts which are foreign, remote, bizarre, irrelevant and unrealistic in terms of his background" (p. 19). Yet, as Harold Entwistle (1978, p. 71) observed, the inner city or deprived child is even more likely to have his life transformed by forces which are foreign, remote or bizarre, than the child in more comfortable circumstances.

Hard-line Multiculturalists

Multiculturalism is yet another contested concept, but one which has generally warm and empathetic undertones. Compare its common usages with, for instance, those of "multinationalist," which are almost invariably pejorative. In its soft or limited senses multiculturalism may appear to accord with liberal education, which seeks value in all places. Arnold's "best that has been said and thought" may be derived from many times and climes. Yet the dominant versions of multiculturalism are utterly incompatible with liberal education, because they deny *a priori* the possibilities of greater and lesser intrinsic value. An anthropological notion of culture is substituted by hard-line multiculturalists for an educational one, so that each human group not only has its own culture, but each culture must be equally valid and worthwhile. The very notion of the best done or said is obliterated.

At least this is one half of the process, that of knocking down any existing claims which may have been advanced for any specific cultural forms. Once we have been convinced that no structures or customs could be better than any others, we shall start to be instructed in the superiority of some political and social values emerging in the Second, Third or Fourth Worlds, or, for that matter, within the counter-cultures of the First World. The central feature of hard-line multiculturalism is a rejection of liberal education as cultural imperialism.

Hard-line multiculturalists of the right usually tend towards Apartheid in education; those of the left use a different rhetoric but often finish with a similar prescription. Whether conservative or radical they believe that *x* studies or an *x* curriculum is what *x* children most need, although, as with Black Studies, cultural separatists may well disagree as to what the content of the specially relevant program for *x* should be.

Hard-line feminism in this respect appears as a variant of multiculturalism in which the *x* stands for women. The Australian Dale Spender, now established in the London University Institute of Education, may be taken here as an example. Spender (1978) argues that boys and girls currently have totally different educational needs and interests, the differences being attributed by her, of course, to nurture rather than to nature. Spender's stereotyping includes a claim that men habitually talk through and over the woman and that this oppression is exerted by boys from a very early age. Only separate schools for girls, in which revolutionary consciences are raised by militant feminists, can bring about the liberation of girls from patriarchy backed by advanced capitalism. Spender now advocates a quite distinctive curriculum for girls based on her story rather than history, on the literature and arts created by women, and on the exposure of millenia of male destruction of female potentiality.

Reductionists and Revisionists

Reductionism here is used to describe the endeavour to reduce all educational evaluation to ascertaining class interest or positional advantage and to explanations of the historical and social genesis of ideas and institutions. The history and the sociology of education are both, of course, valuable and important pursuits, provided that they do not seek to eliminate altogether or to dismiss as epiphenomenal the educational character of what they investigate. No such sustained attempt to strip educational activity of all intrinsic meaning was made until two decades ago and it is a matter of great historical and cultural interest why the endeavour has been made in our own time. Is it perhaps that reductionist historians, sociologists, curriculum theorists and the like had themselves too thin and inadequate an initiation into thinking about educational value? Would it have helped if they had engaged more with Plato and Aristotle in disputes about the relative importance of different forms of knowledge, or of different modes of experience? Would greater acquaintance with Duns Scotus's analysis of *haecceitas* or the Thomists' grappling with quiddity have helped anchor them to the notion of "itness," that there might be something educational within the concepts of education, apart from considering context and contingency? Were they not educated though like the rest of us, no worse if no better?

Dwight Boyd (1976) picks out what he terms a condition of "sophomoritis," a tendency for thinkers at a Kohlberg stage four level ("the law and

order" orientation) to revert to stage two (instrumental relativism) on the shock of discovering that fine sentiments may disguise vested interests and selfish objects. Yet, why such a sweeping attack of the *cui bono* should have afflicted this generation so savagely still remains unclear.

Reductionism usually presents itself in the form of attributing ideology in one of two distinct, although related, senses to all educational ideas and practices. The first sense is that of unintentional error, partial and self-interested as the ruling class adherents of error might be; as Engels put it once, "Ideology is a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously, indeed, but with a false consciousness. The real motive impelling him remains unknown to him, otherwise it would not be an ideological process at all" (Marx & Engels, 1942, p. 511). Engels, together with Marx, especially when they were engaged in polemic, frequently attributed deliberate bad faith to their opponents and such intentional falsity in promoting ideas forms the second sense in which ideology is attributed by reductionists.

Marx and Engels, interested as they certainly were in the historical genesis and social context in which ideas and political institutions emerged and developed, were far from regarding these as merely epiphenomenal. Engels gave this warning against reductionism:

According to the materialist conception of history the determining element in history is ultimately the production of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I ever asserted. If therefore somebody twists this into the statement that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless abstract and absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure – political, legal, philosophical theories, religious ideas and their further development into systems of dogma – also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form ... Otherwise the application of the theory to any period of history one chose would be easier than the solution of the simple equation of the first degree ...

Marx and I are ourselves partly to blame for the fact that younger writers sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than is due to it. We had to emphasise this main principle in opposition to our adversaries who denied it ... and I cannot exempt many of the more recent "Marxists" from this reproach, for the most wonderful rubbish has been produced from this quarter too. (Marx & Engels, 1942, pp. 475–477)

Engels did not endure the "wonderful rubbish" of the kind poured out on us by contemporary reductionists, however. Some concentrate on the unconscious sense of ideology as the main reductive mechanism to translate educational ideas and policies into class interests; some emphasize changes of deliberate selfishness and class-aggrandisement. Pierre Bourdieu, who is both widely read and very readable, falls into the first, the "false consciousness" category, although so do Michael Apple and Michael F. D. Young, who are hardly readable at all. The "conscious malice" or "conspiracy" theme, struck conspicuously by Michael B. Katz,

at least interests itself in human purposes, even if it perverts them, whereas the first kind totally discounts them.

Both strands are ultimately self-destructive in that they dismiss as hollow any apparent successes by past reformers, and by implication any by present ones, even themselves. If the schools fail to exhibit equality of treatment or concern for individuals, that is because the capitalist system will not allow such goods to be achieved. If policies are introduced which appear to possess those qualities, we must be deceived, because capitalism simply would not permit it. We are either being bought off or the apparent reform is actually in the interests of capitalism itself. The raising of the school learning age to 16 in England and Wales in 1973, a policy urged most of all by teachers, especially by the National Union of Teachers, and by the Trade Unions and the Labour Party, but greeted with opposition or indifference by employer organizations, has within a decade been transformed into a cunning step by employers to defuse youth employment and force the taxpayer to meet the various capitalist educational needs. During the same years Michael B. Katz and his followers have demonstrated to their own satisfaction that every single legislative step in the U.S.A., Britain and the rest of the capitalist world towards free or compulsory schooling was part of a bourgeois plot. They allow no escape. If no schooling is provided, that is evidence of the contempt of the rich for the poor and of their determination to exploit them; if schooling is provided, the purpose is only to foist bourgeois, perhaps even WASP, ideas, on the freedom-loving children of the proletariat who were doing quite well, thank you, before compulsory education, learning as much that was relevant and useful as they would under agents of coercive state bureaucracies.

THE WAY FORWARD

No state has yet provided an adequate liberal education for its children, but we should not despair prematurely. In some ways the U.S.S.R. has extended a wider provision than elsewhere in the world. The highly indoctrinative blinkering to which Soviet education is subject is indeed obnoxious, and Soviet educators may not be as frank about their failures as about their successes, but we cannot refuse praise to the determined Soviet efforts to extend much of the content of liberal education to the mass of Soviet children. In the U.S.A. the Deweyite Life-Adjustment Movement and more recent modes of one-sided emphasis on enquiry and discovery have been punctuated by "back-to-basics" movements, which have not always appreciated that, valuable as "basics" indeed are, they are only the "basics" for something beyond themselves, that something being liberal education. The eclipse of effective schooling in several American cities has owed less to illiberality or cognitive narrowness than to a collapse of discipline which may itself, however, be related to forces inimical to liberal education. In Britain the ending of the "11 plus" and the achieve-

ment of the comprehensive system was seen by many as the indispensable condition for extending liberal education beyond the bounds of the existing grammar school population. In the event, the enemies of liberal education within the comprehensive school system have succeeded in reducing the amount and the quality of liberal education since comprehensive reorganisation.

For all our difficulties, liberal educators at least have available a huge formal apparatus of public education, which, despite recent economies in the advanced western states, is far more extensive than any envisaged by our predecessors. In North America, in particular, the number of students aged 16 and above in full-time instruction and the size of the available teaching forces ought to make us ashamed of gloom and pessimism. It is true that liberal education faces many unsolved problems, some of which are, in one sense but not a dismaying one, insoluble, because they are rightly contested. We will go on discussing the relationships between the arts and the sciences, the significance of particular arts and sciences, the place of aesthetic education, the treatment of moral education, the value of other languages and the criteria of choice between them, etc. These debates must go on and must proceed as between allies who share the same range of ultimate concerns.

As for those who are root-and-branch enemies of liberal education, however, we must organize and counter-attack. The enemy is not so much in business offices, mines and factories, cabinet rooms and chancelleries, although no doubt philistinism in the great world about us requires our frequent attention. The enemy is within. The potential blossoming of liberal education has not been frustrated by ignorant invaders but by yet a further treason of the clerks. And of all the forces which have weakened and which still threaten liberal education in any of its historical or essential senses the group of doctrines here labelled reductionism and revisionism are the most dire and deadly to be met and overcome.

With most primitivists, and with many hard-line multiculturalists, we may often engage in sensible debate about the relative value of different types of society. Indoctrinators quite commonly value many important elements within education, even though they are by definition determined to subordinate knowledge to the pursuit of a goal beyond knowledge; vocationalists, together with their allies whose attention is focussed on narrow and immediate instrumental goals, are often open to liberal arguments seeking to advance a wider concept of the relevance of knowledge; the most hidebound feminist seeks a "best" for girls which only makes sense in light of concepts of the good, which, though contestable, cannot be merely subjective or reductive. It is the dismissal of knowledge as epiphenomenal, the replacement of epistemology by a reductive sociology, which is most dangerous, because by rendering impossible any meaningful debate about which knowledge is of most worth or about the general good of persons, it utterly undermines the

pursuit of liberal education or, indeed, of education in any coherent sense at all.

NOTE

- ¹ Antony Flew's point would apply equally to claims that women are naturally subordinate to men, especially when this is part of an argument that women should "keep their place." The reference to Dahrendorf (1969) is taken from his essay in Andre Beteille's *Social Inequality*, but I have changed his quotation from Aristotle into the words of Jowett's translation for the sake of consistency in this article.

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Der Unterricht in den allgemeinbildenden Fächern, im Sinne Gallies, ist ein umstrittenes Konzept. Unter den Kernpunkten, die innerhalb des Konzepts angefochten werden, sind die Natur und die Verwirklichung des wesentlichen Erziehungswertes, das Verhältnis zwischen geschätztem Wissen als solchem und dem Lebensstandard, den es ermöglichen soll, und die möglichen Grenzen, auf die Allgemeinwissen ausgedehnt werden könnte.

In seinen Grundmerkmalen befaßt sich der Unterricht in den allgemeinbildenden Fächern hauptsächlich mit Fragen von erzieherischem Wert und mit der Entwicklung von Denkweise und Intellekt und nicht mit der Vorbereitung auf einen Spezialberuf. Er akzeptiert keine Hierarchie des Wissens. Diese Merkmale werden einmal durch Hinweise auf die Lehren von Plato und Aristoteles und dann auf die von Hegel und Marx veranschaulicht.

Die Kritik wendet sich an einige Gruppen, die heute entweder die Basis des Unterrichts in den allgemeinbildenden Fächern von vornherein ablehnen, oder die durch ihre Doktrinen und praktischen Tätigkeiten die Möglichkeiten der Ausdehnung dieses Unterrichts ernsthaft beschränken. Die erste Gruppe setzt sich aus Partisanen der Urzeit, unnachgiebigen Anhängern der Mahrkultur und des Abbaus, die zweite aus Propagandisten, Berufsberatern und Fürsprechern gesellschaftlicher Sachbezogenheit in der Erziehung zusammen.

La Educación Liberal es, en el sentido que le da Gallie, una idea debatida. Entre los temas debatidos dentro del concepto están la naturaleza y fundamentación del valor educativo intrínseco, la relación entre el conocimiento valorizado de por sí y el buen nivel de vida que se cree el mismo hace posible, y los límites, si los hay, a los que el conocimiento liberal puede extenderse.

Las características esenciales de la Educación Liberal incluyen un interés que se centra sobre lo que tiene valor dentro de la educación y sobre el desarrollo de la mente como un todo, más bien que la preparación para un empleo específico, y una aceptación de la jerarquía dentro del conocimiento. Estas características se ilustran primero con referencias a Plato y Aristóteles y luego a Hedel y Marx.

Se critica a algunos grupos contemporáneos que o bien rechazan de entrada las características esenciales de la Educación Liberal, o cuyas doctrinas y prácticas restringen seriamente su extensión. El primer grupo incluye a los primitivistas, multi-culturalistas ortodoxos y reduccionistas; el segundo grupo incluye a los indoctrinadores, vocacionalistas, y los que abogan la relevancia social en la educación.

Geoffrey Partington is a Senior Lecturer in Education at the Flinders University of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia.