

Education vs. Training in the Twenty First Century

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Abstract

The philosophy of schooling and the pedagogy of schooling over the past two to three centuries has been in a state of constant flux. As we enter the 21st century, the age old debate between religious education pundits and those who advocate humanistic education rages on. The debate, then, centers around those who will or should have the right to train the masses, and how the necessary funds to train them will be provided. Given that the power elite does not want the masses to engage freely in critical or creative thought, they must decide to what degree or level training should take place.

This paper will discuss what education is and what it can be.

Introduction

The philosophy of education and the pedagogy of schooling over the past three centuries have been in a state of constant flux. As we enter the 21st century, the age old debate between religious education pundits and those who advocate humanistic education rages on. The problem lies in the understanding of the word education itself. If education is stripped of its essential meaning, to be a practice of freedom, then whether the practice is either embedded in religious pedagogy or humanistic pedagogy does not matter. It is still an attempt by the power elite to maintain the status quo and to provide some manner of control over the masses.

The debate, then, centers around those who will or should have the right to train the masses, and how the necessary funds to train them will be provided. Given that the power elite does not want the masses to engage in substantial critical and creative thought and learn how to engage in critical and creative dialogue, the elite must decide to what degree or level training should take place. This is dependent upon the system of order, culture or cosmology that the elite adhere to and into which the masses must receive indoctrination. It really doesn't matter what system, be it religious, humanistic, or a combination of both, it is still a system to maintain the established order of things.

Before the debate continues over the right of training, a few philosophical issues must be addressed, such as the metaphysical issue of value. What is the value of the single solitary individual and where does that value come from? If individual value is determined by something or some external association, then that value can be taken away. If, on the other hand, value is innate, then external associations or the lack of associations cannot take it away. It also must be pointed out that natural rights cannot exist in a world driven by any form of determinism, be it religious or humanistic. If individual rights are determined by affiliation with things external, say a religion, culture or a power elite, the establishment of a true democracy is improbable, if not impossible. The idea of democracy is much more than a political venue. It must, in order to be philosophically sound, be based on notions of individual value, principals of equality based on the realization of the uniqueness of each individual, social responsibility and moral accountability. It fosters the development of a democratic personhood. If this is true, many of the nations of the world, whose system of government is based on a constitutional democracy, who deny individual value, and are content to advance the notion that a democracy is only a political system, are practicing nothing more than a form of government that is oligarchical in nature. In other words, while spouting democratic ideals, practicing a form of government in which political power rests in the hands of the few is anything but democratic.

Religious education pundits and those who advocate humanistic education are competing for funds to indoctrinate the young into a particular paradigm that ensures the survival of that particular ideology often at the exclusion of others. Private education, by its very nature, is non-democratic. Humanistic education is too concerned with maintaining a mythical separation of metaphysical concerns. It too, then, is non-democratic. Public funding should only be provided for schooling that introduces the young to principles of democracy and provides an environment

for each student to be able to discover and develop their own democratic personhood; discover and develop their innate potential, not just for their sake, but for the sake of the whole; develop democratic notions of social responsibility and moral accountability. Looking back at the twentieth century, most schooling has not provided this type of experience and the problems carried forward into the twenty first century are a direct result of schooling, what ever paradigm practiced, to introduce the young to principles of democracy that are inclusive in nature.

The type of training, or schooling the masses are subjected to, whether it is religious, humanistic, or a combination of the two doesn't matter. Training of the masses is used by those who constitute the power elite to maintain the static order, cosmology, or status quo and retain power. All too often change in the established order has occurred when the members of the power elite struggled for control of the masses. In other words, change in the established order has always started at the top and the struggle is to gain control of the masses and use the masses to secure power for a new elite. The effect of the revolution on the accepted order of things does not alter the real state of human existence for the masses. The only real thing is that has changed is the membership of the power elite and the process of indoctrinating the masses into the change of the established, static order begins.

The question then becomes how to train the masses to accept the change in the established order of things and accept and support those members of the new power elite. The process of training is based on the need that human beings, by their very nature, have. Humans possess an innate desire to order the world around them. By establishing a static order of the world, humans learn how to name the things that come into their immediate world/environment and how to name, categorize and catalogue the things that burst into that static order as their world expands into the cosmos. The static order of the immediate world allows humans to gain

some sort of control over the unknown, the unfamiliar, and the unexpected. Change is good, at times, but a static order allows humans to make some sense of the change and, hopefully, control the amount of change. It seems as if humans begin their cognitive journey by simply discovering the immediate world that surrounds them. Depending on how rich that environment proves to be, humans begin the process of naming things and establishing a point of reference. As the environment expands, the process of discovery and exploration introduces an ever increasing number of new and wonderful, and sometimes not so wonderful, things into the static order. This process often creates a sense of awe and wonder and that is what is wonderfully unique about humans. It is from this sense of awe that a teacher, be it a mother, father, sister, brother, aunt, uncle or who ever it may be, begins the process of helping the young organize the chaos and gain control of it within the paradigm provided by the accepted static order. This informal process is often followed by a formal process that still offers the same, or very similar, paradigm for the young. Static order fulfills that function and has done so, at times admirably and at other times not so admirably. The problem and it is a major problem, is that static order often becomes stagnant and resistant to change, and, at times calcifies to the point where change is impossible. This process of naming the world and learning to catalogue, categorize, and organize within an established paradigm is training and tends to become static.

On the other hand, human beings possess a dynamic quality which drives the need to know, to discover and to explore. This dynamic quality lies at the desire to be free from all restraints. It is this dynamic quality that, not only pushes people to discover and to explore, but to rename the world in which they live. The problem is that this dynamic quality of human kind oft lacks the restraint of structure to enable it to stand alone. It needs the ability of human kind to establish order. Left alone, this free, dynamic quality has the ability to not only call the

existing static order in question, but to destroy it. The destruction of the notion of the divine right of kings and the struggle to establish natural rights and democracy come to mind. Maybe the destruction of the static order is not always needed. But, on the other hand, the free spirit of human kind, the dynamic voice of the creature of the desert has always been part of the collective human experience. The voices of the free calling for change are the source of the winds of change. Their cry often becomes a wail that is only silenced when collective mankind strikes out against them.

Maybe Emerson (1841) was correct when he asserted that two souls dwell within a single breast. On the one hand, humans have a need to order the world. Mankind does this at the very age when the naming process begins in the immediate world. As the cognitive journey continues, so does the naming process. This is a purely subjective exercise. It is the means by which humans "get their bearing," to borrow a nautical term. By establishing the static order, it allows humankind to be able to return "home" after striking out in the process of exploration and discovery. Static order provides the paradigm by which mankind can feel free to explore and then return to the relative safety of the known world. While on the other hand, the dynamic need to be free from restraint, to explore and discover, to think outside of the box is just as much a part of human nature as the need to order the cosmos. The dynamic quality drives human kind to want to build something new, something that reflects the depth and beauty of what is visualized after gazing at the stars that fill the night sky. It drives human kind to want to experience that something, what ever it may be, that is hidden deep within the darkest recesses of being. It is from this dynamic quality that the great changes in static order have been born and it does not matter which endeavor that might be. Change in the static order is conceived and brought to life by a desire to be free; to experience a newness of life; a renewing or rebirth of oneself.

The power elite must be defined as those who gain control of the static order, what ever paradigm it is, and learn how to use the structure to manipulate and maintain that order. It is not a global conspiracy, but simply the human need for order in the cosmos that allows the development of social order, social class, and the manipulation of value. It does not have to be based on material wealth, but material wealth does produce its own power. It does not have to be based on intelligence or creativity. It does not have to be based on anything in particular. It is the result of the human need for order, maintaining the static order and controlling the amount of change that occurs when the cosmos expands. The rise to power of particular individuals or groups is based on the ability to know, understand and manipulate the structure or paradigm embraced by the static order. It is these individuals or groups that become the power elite.

What, then, is the purpose of schooling in the static order? Is it to perpetuate the structure of the static order and as change is encountered to provide a means of cataloging, classifying and organizing it in the accepted paradigm? Is it to help prepare humans, what ever age they may be, to recognize and deal with the perceived or actual change in the static order? Is it to control the limits of the arousal of social consciousness in order to protect the static order? Is it to perpetuate a cosmology that provides value, both individually and collectively, determines social class and social mobility? Is it used to establish the accepted boundaries of epistemology, placing limits on what can or cannot be true? Is it used to proscribe notions of accepted morality? Historically, the primary function of schooling has been to indoctrinate the young into the accepted order and introduce a paradigm or structure that will maintain the static order. Schooling, then, becomes the primary means of training the young of any society and ensuring the continuation of the static order. The level of training is dependent upon the power

elite as it decides who will receive what type of training and, if any, will be introduced to critical and creative thought. Needless to say, training is not education.

The root word from which education is derived is *educare*, which literally means to lead one's self out. Education is the process, then, of setting oneself free. Education is the means by which the dynamic quality of human nature seeks to call the static order into question. If this is true then religious education, humanistic education and any combination of the two cannot logically exist. What has been referred to as education is nothing more than training and indoctrination into a particular static order. When humans are engaged in education, education then becomes the means by which humans learn to call the existing order into question. By the application of their ability to reason and learning how to engage in substantial critical and creative thought, all of the aspects of the established order of things are called into question. By engaging in substantial critical and creative dialogue, the possibility of redefining or creating a new paradigm by which to establish order is created. By the application of the dialogue, revolution in all the areas of human endeavor is produced.

The battle, then, is between training and education. Maybe it is really between the static order and dynamic value: culture versus reason. It isn't too hard to imagine how different the world would be at the present moment if all of the cultural barriers, those artificial barriers created by the static order, those exclusive systems of order which are dehumanizing in nature, had been overcome by reason in the eighteenth century. If everyone, regardless of gender, race or ethnicity had been included in the educative process of substantial critical and creative dialogue the world as we know it today would be totally different. It isn't too hard to realize how much human kind has robbed itself, not to mention individuals, by clinging to exclusionary principles

inherent in the static order. Again, it really isn't too hard to imagine how much further human kind would have advanced if all had been included.

Racism, sexism, slavery, violence, terrorism and war are a product of the conflict between static orders. Partially, human history is the record of competing static orders trying to gain supremacy over other static orders. Nothing changed but the imposition of one static order over another. True change occurred when human reason, the dynamic value of human kind, demanded a restructuring or renaming of the static order. Education has often been the means of fostering the change as people are introduced to critical and creative dialogue. When the dialogue becomes substantial and is applied, change, usually positive change in the static order takes place.

The need to order the cosmos still exists and is needed. What is needed, especially as the twenty first century begins, is to move away from the practice of training that static orders require and begin becoming truly involved in education, teaching people how to engage in substantial critical and creative dialogue. What is required is an elastic paradigm that allows the dynamic value of human kind to explore, discover, redefine, and to rename the world and the cosmos. To realize that truth must be pursued at all costs and then have the freedom from the static order to apply the truth. In this process, an answer is only as good as the new questions it generates. An elastic paradigm, one that grows with humans rather than restricts them, is needed if the problems of the twenty first century, many of them created by competing static orders of the past, are going to be effectively addressed and solved. An elastic paradigm would allow order to coexist with the dynamic value of human kind. Yes, training is essential to establish order, but in preparation for the exploration created by substantial critical creative dialogue.

The question then becomes, why not engage in this practice? Why not call all that is dehumanizing in both religious and humanistic training into question? Why not call the deterministic models of order into question and seek to find the value within each single solitary human breast? Why not practice the art of teaching, engaging people in substantial critical and creative dialogue and experience the rewards of education? Yes, training is necessary, but not at the cost of education.

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