

BASIC PROBLEMS IN EDUCATIONAL THEORY:
A POLITICAL VIEW

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The theme of this thesis represents a special concern of mine--as a parent, as a member of the community and as a political scientist. I hope others, more capable than I, will take up this cause.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The heart of a democracy is its educational system, for this is the link between the rule of law and the citizens who govern and are governed by the law. The founding fathers of the United States were well aware of the importance of education. In fighting for public support of universal education, Jefferson warned, "the tax which will be paid for this purpose is not more than the thousandth part of what will be paid to kings, priests, and nobles who will rise up among us if we leave the people in ignorance."¹ Nor was Jefferson alone in this belief. James Madison, who opposed Jefferson on many political matters, agreed that public education was of vital importance in a democracy. "A popular Government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy, or perhaps both...And a people who mean to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives."² Over the years, however, although the importance of education to the national purpose has continued to be recognized, educational philosophy and educational goals have become the province of educational specialists rather than political leaders and political theorists. For example, texts used

in college-level political science courses mention education only as it relates to specific political goals or events such as the Brown v Board of Education Supreme Court ruling.

In this paper I shall argue that education should be not only a proper concern of political scientists but rather a primary concern. For educators examine the problems of education from within the narrow perspective of a single context--as one afflicted with tunnel vision. They do not see beyond the specific problems involved; and without a foundation in political theory, the relationship between politics and education, in the broadest sense, is not apparent. Educators cannot be faulted in this instance, for political scientists abdicated their responsibility to the field of education; it was not wrested away.

I believe education is a legitimate concern of the political scientist and that this concern can be justified on both the practical and philosophical levels. On the most basic practical level, if we accept that government is a political concern, then because government, at all levels, spends more money on education than any other service, (144 billion dollars in 1978³), education is logically a legitimate political issue. It is difficult to understand why those government officials responsible for budgeting very large dollar amounts for education should not be held accountable for the results of these expenditures. A second very practical reason for viewing education as a political

matter can be seen in the results of a recent Gallup Poll surveying national attitudes toward the public schools. The question asked reads as follows: "Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here--A, B, C, D, or FAIL." The survey shows that the quality of education, as perceived by adults in the United States, has declined during the past year and that there has been "a significant drop since 1974 when the present rating method was first employed."⁴ For example, only 11 per cent gave their schools an A rating; the same number also gave a D rating. Another indication of public dissatisfaction with local schools can be seen in the so-called taxpayers' revolts, as residents in some communities have refused to vote tax hikes to support ever-more-expensive school programs. In Ohio, alone, forty school districts, including Cleveland, face shutdown because of inadequate funding while residents adamantly refuse to approve additional tax dollars.⁵ Widespread public dissatisfaction with basic government services is a dangerous precedent, for a fundamental premise of our system of government is voluntary compliance with the law by a majority of the people. "Lack of support is most serious at the most basic level--the concept of a common political community. Lacking widespread support at this level, a political system can hardly exist."⁶ Examples

of lack of support in modern times include the urban riots of the late 1960's and the Viet Nam War protests. A taxpayers' revolt caused by dissatisfaction with such a fundamental government service as education would be even more serious than the above examples because of the saliency of the issue. Every American with a child attending school has an important stake in the quality of education. Thus far, outright rebellion against the school system has been limited, and the majority of people, who share a common concern for the schools but have not been galvanized into action, can be classified as a potential interest group.⁷ If, however, the intensity of the public's negative feelings toward local schools continues to mount, a genuine national emergency could be the result. Such an emergency took place in France, in the spring of 1968, when the breakdown of the educational system "came close to bringing about the collapse of the French Republic."⁸ Finally, on the practical level, we live in a competitive and close-knit world in which deficiencies in one nation's infrastructures can have international repercussions. In earlier times, the American school system, with its emphasis upon universal public education, was held up as a paradigm to other nations. During the late 1950's the complacent assumption that the American system is best was rocked by the Russian development of Sputnik. Since then, educators have scurried in different directions, reacting to each new example of educational deficiency with unproven new techniques.⁹ Each time it is promised that

the latest innovation will prove the solution to shore up the school system and restore American prestige in the field of education. As other nations improve their educational techniques and levels, an undereducated citizenry, incapable of competing in the arena of technological supremacy, becomes a threat to the very existence of our country.¹⁰

I believe the foregoing are sufficient justification for concluding that education is indeed a proper part of the political realm. However, at the philosophical or theoretical level, further proof can be found to bolster this position. The great, ancient philosophers believed education was not only a political concern but the foremost political concern. A more detailed outline of Greek educational philosophy follows in the next chapter. Suffice to say here that when Aristotle stated, "All would agree that the legislator should make the education of the young his chief concern,"¹¹ he was stating what he believed to be an incontrovertible fact. The Greeks viewed education as a community concern, and because all community matters were considered public or political in nature, education was, therefore, a political concern. Thus, the modern separation of education and politics is legitimately open to question as an accepted position. This is especially true because further examination reveals a closer relationship between education and politics than is generally acknowledged. Not only does education affect the political system by "inducting the youth into

the prevailing political culture...(but) schools will change as a direct consequence of a political decision which is made outside the education system."¹² An example of this at the national level is the federal aid-to-education programs which have had an important impact on schools across the nation. Finally, if we agree--as Jefferson, Madison and the other founding fathers did--that in a democracy an educated populace is a necessary condition for the continued existence of the system, and if we desire to see the system sustained, we must necessarily be concerned when this educated citizenry is threatened. Political theorists zealously guard other democratic safeguards such as a free press, an independent judiciary and the extension of civil liberties to all; education, however, rarely enters into discussions of political theory. The exception, in modern times, has been a political decision to use the nation's school systems to upgrade the economic level of disadvantaged subgroups. Unfortunately, in this instance, political concern centered narrowly on end results, viewing education as a means toward accomplishing the national goal of equalization. In order for political involvement in the field of education to have positive results, political leaders must understand the basic premises on which educational concepts are founded and realize the effects of tampering with educational priorities.

In examining the problems in education today, this paper will seek to find the very basic theoretical causes of

weakness rather than focus on specific issues of only passing interest. Many volumes have been written about these latter issues, attacking each as a separate, discrete element which could be alleviated by a very specific solution. The reaction of the educational community to the Russian launching of Sputnik is a case in point. A weakness was seen in the area of science and all attention was focused on upgrading this one field. The problem was not viewed as part of a general decline in excellence as a standard of education. Similarly, today, lowered national test scores have led educators to push for a "back to basics" approach to education without realizing that, until well into the twentieth century, basic education was grounded on moral values. To go back to basics without reuniting education with moral values is to rebuild the structure without the foundation.

This paper will examine three areas in education which I believe are crucial if any permanent solutions to educational problems are to be found. These three areas are basic to the very nature of education. The lack of understanding in the twentieth century of these concepts, and thus of the nature of education, has led to a lack of a coherent approach to problems occurring in the field of education. My contention is that until these concepts are understood there will be continued and worsening outbreaks of specific problems which will defy satisfactory solution. The three areas to be examined are:

1. the decline of excellence as a standard of education
2. the separation of education and moral virtue
3. the uncertain relationship between the government, education and the individual

Because these areas are so broad, there will, necessarily, be some overlapping among the three concepts.

This paper can examine only in the briefest way the very broad field of educational problems. I believe this approach is of value although it has received very little recognition. Our society has become so specialized and compartmentalized that the broad, interdisciplinary view is generally ignored. At the same time that the complexity of issues leads to specialization, technology and mass communications create an interrelated atmosphere within which each problem area causes spillovers into other phases of life. Unfortunately, specialization also breeds intimidation into the generalist--for the specialist is usually armed with a formidable array of facts and figures with which to confound those who dare to wander into his narrow field of expertise. Unable to respond with appropriate technical jargon, the generalist retreats in confusion, leaving the field to the specialist. Thus, education has become the exclusive domain of the educators, morality that of the churches, and politics that of the politicians. Each has his area of expertise within which he is expected to remain. Victor Ferkiss states, "In an era when academic specialization and ethical

abdication are the hallmarks of virtue, any kind of interdisciplinary study centered on normative concerns opens one to reproach from many quarters...But if one takes the task of the social scientist seriously, one must go where the problems are, and if one acts as a human being as well as a scientist, one must go where the relevant problems are."¹³ A similar sense of concern and responsibility was that which prompted this thesis.

CHAPTER II

GREEK EDUCATION

Education has been central to the development of Western civilization since the time of the early Greeks. The great American educational philosophers, such as John Dewey, developed their theories from educational concepts shaped centuries ago into a harmonious relationship which enabled Greek education to flourish. An understanding of the theoretical foundations of American educational philosophy thus begins with an examination of education in ancient Greece.

There are three concepts woven into the development of Greek education which are vital in understanding the basic nature of education or *paideia*. These are:

1. Arete or excellence
2. Moral virtue or the search for the good
3. The relationship between the state, education and the individual

These concepts are so integral to the educational process that, taken together, they form the basis or common end toward which Greek education aimed.

* * * * *

The first concept to be examined is arete or excellence. In the Homeric tradition, arete denoted valour, nobility and personal courage--particularly in combat. "This term... originally denoted the excellence of a brave or noble warrior; in Homer, arete is almost a synonym for courage."¹ Homer's

epics are filled with accounts of men in battle who are judged by their performance on the field of valour. Odysseus, in addressing Achilles, concludes, "you are the greatest man in our host, stronger than I am and better far in the field of battle."² The early Greek poets served an important place in education by teaching the concept of arete through the poetic device of example, extolling those who most closely attained the ideal.

With the development of the polis as a political community, the concept of arete changed its meaning to become an enobled love of country and patriotic duty. Athletic prowess and courage no longer sufficed as arete except in the context of the "common good of the polis."³ Within this framework, one's duty to the state was not only an obligation but a privilege and honour and the source of all ideal values. Force and violence were looked upon as "prepolitical ways to deal with people characteristic of life outside the polis... (while) to live in a polis meant that everything was decided through words and persuasion."⁴

Thus, arete came to embrace all the political and moral virtues of the perfect citizen of the state.⁵ In this context the art of rhetoric became very important, for it was the tool used by the citizen to persuade others to his way of thinking within the polis. Pericles, in speaking of the greatness of Athens, concludes that a vital difference between Athens and other states is that all her citizens are well informed on

general politics and enter into debates and discussions on policy decisions. Action is taken only after the consequences of that action have been "properly debated."⁶

The Greeks believed that immortality could be achieved only through the polis and man's service to the polis.⁷ In turn, service to the polis meant the individual development of all ideal perfections of the mind and body which together made up arete.⁸ The aim of education was, thus, training to serve the polis through attaining the civic virtue and moral qualities which distinguish the outstanding citizen. Formal training was in the hands of the sophists who started from the belief that man's nature is educable and capable of good.⁹ In a democratic system dependent upon law and justice, education of all the citizens was important, especially because all citizens were expected to take a direct part in governing the polis. The belief that man is educable was a crucial assumption of Greek democracy and the basis of the entire educational process.

The emphasis of sophist education was on political achievement and success rather than on ethical qualities. Because of this, grammar, rhetoric and dialectic were emphasized, as well as oratory. There was, however, no moral foundation to the education imparted by the sophists who generally conceived the law to be a universal expression of current moral standards.¹⁰ Thus, they taught their pupils to learn the laws of the state and to obey them. Many asserted

"that right and wrong, justice and injustice, truth and falsehood were merely artificial conventions, agreed on and upheld by human societies for their own convenience or forced on them by superior might...There were therefore no divine and unchangeable laws of right and wrong, that remained right and wrong always and everywhere."¹¹

As long as the state was considered to be the ultimate arbitrator of right and wrong, the state set the ideal standards of all education, and theoretical study held little value. For this reason the sophists felt little impetus to teach abstract concepts or ethical theories. Instead they concentrated their efforts on teaching their pupils to use rhetoric and oratory to their best advantage, regardless of any moral implications involved.

The sophists were educational innovators in that they were the first ones to apply a deliberate system of education of the mind.¹² They conceived a two-part method of education including (1)the imparting of facts in such courses as arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy; and (2)formal training of the mind through courses in dialectic, rhetoric and oratory. This systematic teaching of knowledge was an important educational advance.

With the decline and fall of Athenian democracy, arete again shifted its meaning. As great minds sought to understand changing political conditions, the highest arete became an excellence of the soul--and this excellence was attainable

only by a very few.¹³ Thus was born the philosopher king, that rare individual capable of knowing the good, who must therefore rule the state. This is not to say others were not capable of arete of a sort; rather the reverse. For in the context of the Republic, each man possessed his own inherent arete. The crucial difference was the inherent characteristic of arete. This arete was the quality that enabled each man to perform his own particular function well. One man, for example, might be suited by nature to be a farmer. Only by becoming a farmer could this man attain his arete, for if he went against his very nature and attempted to become that for which he was not naturally suited, he could never attain the excellence that was in him. "Each of the other citizens too must be brought to that which naturally suits him."¹⁴

Plato found two faults with the educational methods of the sophists which he believed vital. First, the sophists attempted to educate to political arete those who, by nature, were not fit for this position. Political arete was based on knowledge of the good, and only a few men were capable of making the ascent to what is. The sophists used force and imitation to teach unworthy men to become leaders.¹⁵ Plato equated these ill-equipped leaders to sailors "quarreling with one another about the piloting, each supposing he ought to pilot, although he has never learned the art."¹⁶ The sophists believed they could put knowledge into the soul "as though

they were putting sight into blind eyes."¹⁷ They did not realize that the capacity to know is inborn into the soul, and the job of the educator is to turn this inborn power around "until it is able to endure looking at that which is and the brightest part of that which is."¹⁸ True education "takes as given that sight is there, but not rightly turned nor looking at which it ought to look at, and accomplishes this object."¹⁹ Secondly, the sophists had no moral foundation for their educational methods but taught as ethical whatever was the prevailing will of the people. "Each of the private wage earners whom these men call sophists and believe to be their rivals in art, educates in nothing other than these convictions of the many, which they opine when they are gathered together, and he calls this wisdom."²⁰ By accepting the standards of the masses as wisdom, the sophists and those they taught could never rise to true arete and the knowledge of the good.

On the contrary, for those whose natures fit them to become true philosophers, Plato would exact the most rigorous training and highest standards. The training of the guardians, or future rulers of the city, was a demanding and lengthy process which included continual testing to eliminate those who were unworthy.²¹ Only those who qualified to become guardians were given the entire training. "And when they are fifty years old, those who have been preserved throughout and are in every way best at everything, both in deed and in

knowledge, must at last be led to the end."²² To educate others in the paths of the guardians would be to commit the same error as the sophists, that of trying to educate to greatness one who did not possess the inborn characteristics necessary to achieve greatness.

Thus, education for the Greeks was the process of leading each individual to arete so that he could become the best that he was capable of being. The emphasis was on individual development. A man who did not naturally possess the skills necessary for a certain type of work might, with difficulty, be taught that work; however, he would never excel at it for even with "a lot of learning and practice...(he would not be able to) preserve what he had learned."²³ Arete was the goal of all education; the arete of the state was based upon each man fulfilling most excellently that function for which he was naturally suited.

* * * * *

The second concept in Greek education to be examined is moral virtue which is an integral part of arete. In early Greece the only purpose of education was the teaching of moral virtues, such as courage and valour in battle, by means of the technique of example. Homer, himself, considered the purpose of poetry to be to "educate posterity"²⁴ and his poems were filled with the exploits of famous Greek warriors from whom future generations could learn. Hesiod, another early Greek poet, who devoted his art to the lives of the

peasants and common men, advised the people to follow the example of the man who knows right from wrong. "The best man knows for himself what is good and right; good, too, is he who obeys another man who says what is good."²⁵ In fact, until the development of formal education by the sophists, the main thrust of education consisted of the teaching of moral virtues necessary to instill loyalty, patriotism and courage in the people. For example, Solon, an early creator of Athenian political culture, stressed in his addresses to the people the need for a sense of mission to their country.²⁶ He believed that the life of every man was bound inextricably to that of the city and that each man best served himself by serving the city.²⁷ The sophists broke with the tradition of the teaching of morality, emphasizing political facility rather than virtue in their pupils. It was this which set Socrates and his followers so against the sophists, for they saw the dangers to the state if the leaders were goaded by desires for "money making and the possession of land, houses, gold and silver...(rather than leading) the souls toward virtue."²⁸

The notion of rule by the philosopher king was founded on the concept that only he who possessed the highest moral virtue would be fit to rule the city, the most important position to be had. The ruler of the city must always "do what on each occasion seems to be best for the city"²⁹ rather than putting his own interests first. This required a

philosophical nature uninterested in self-aggrandizement. The true philosopher must be "by nature a rememberer, a good learner, magnificent, charming, and a friend and kinsman of truth, justice, courage and moderation."³⁰ These four moral virtues were the necessary stepping stones which could lead the guardians to a knowledge of the good, the highest moral virtue. Virtue, itself, was equated with a "certain health, beauty and good condition of a soul."³¹

The education of the guardians started with training in music and gymnastic from an early age, progressed to the learning of numbers, calculation and, finally, dialectic. However, the guardians had to approach all their studies with virtue. It was necessary that they possess a love of wisdom and "be willing to taste every kind of learning with gusto."³² Moderation and a greater concern with pleasures of the soul rather than the body was also necessary. Justice of the soul related to a harmony between the three factions within the soul; the calculating or rational, the pleasure-seeking or irrational, and the spirited or courageous. The rational part of the soul acts with wisdom and forethought while the irrational seeks immediate, worldly pleasures, and the courageous is the obedient ally of the rational when action is necessary. When these three parts of the soul are in the proper harmonious relationship described above, each performing its own function, the soul possesses justice. "A just and fine action (is) one that preserves and helps to produce this

condition."³³ Also, "to produce justice (is) to establish the parts of the soul in a relation of mastering, and being mastered by, one another that is according to nature."³⁴ Courage, so highly praised by Homer and the early Greek poets, holds, in the Republic, a position subordinate to that of justice.

All of the guardians' knowledge of the virtues and traditional school subjects was merely training for their ascent toward the knowledge of the good, which is the greatest study, that which "provides the truth to the things known and gives the power to the one who knows," and that which is "the cause of all that is right and fair in everything."³⁵ Although Plato is unwilling to explain outright his convictions about the idea of the good because "it's out of the range of our present thrust to attain the opinions I now hold about it,"³⁶ he does explain indirectly by means of an allegory. Just as the sense of sight and the organ of sight, the eye, are insufficient for seeing without the sun to provide light, so "what provides the truth to the things known and gives the power to the one who knows, is the idea of the good."³⁷ Knowledge of the good, therefore, is the greatest knowledge of all, and the yardstick by which all the other moral virtues can be measured. The man who possesses other knowledge without going on to possess the knowledge of the good will "lose any profit there might have been in the rest."³⁸ Thus, in the Republic, moral virtue is at once both the foundation and

highest plateau of education.

Aristotle also clearly recognizes that education has a moral as well as a political aim for citizens must "do acts of goodness"³⁹ in order for the state to flourish. Only through early training and habituation will the citizens be capable of this goodness. Aristotle divides educational studies into two types. The first are those which are "pursued with a view to an occupation which should be regarded merely as means and matters of necessity."⁴⁰ These useful studies (such as reading and writing) are means in that they are learned in order to obtain some future goal, for example an occupation, which is necessary for man to exist. The end of occupation, however, is not existence but rather leisure. Leisure is of a higher order than occupation, and the power to use leisure rightly "is the basis of all our life."⁴¹ The second type of studies is that which teaches the proper use of leisure, and these studies are ends in themselves. By leisure Aristotle does not mean play which is a cessation of and relaxation from work and which has no meaning outside the context of work. Rather leisure is an intrinsic pleasure, sufficient unto itself. Although "different persons estimate its nature differently...the highest pleasure, derived from the noblest sources, will be that of the man of greatest goodness."⁴² Only by cultivating the mind in the proper use of leisure will man be able to reach the highest order of happiness. Those studies which enable man to attain this good

are the most important since a man whose education has not prepared him in the proper use of leisure cannot fulfill his nature and become all that he is capable of being.

Thus, morality served as the foundation of Greek education from the time of the early poets through the time of the great philosophers. The earlier Greeks saw moral virtue as consisting of the inculcation of loyalty and obedience into the people. The philosophers delved deeper into the nature of moral virtue, concluding that the justice and fairness of the perfectly ordered regime depended upon the practice of virtue by both the people and the leaders of the state.

* * * * *

The third area to be investigated is the relationship between the Greek state, education and the individual. Not only was this relationship a very close one but it was also very clearly delineated. Because the relationship between these sectors of society is so ambiguous today, the Greek model adds insight in understanding the causes of modernday problems.

Aristotle opens Book VIII of the Politics with the statement "All would agree that the legislator should make the education of the young his chief and foremost concern."⁴³ In the Republic, Plato makes a similarly definitive statement, calling the education and rearing of the guardians "the one great--or, rather than great, sufficient" duty of the state and that which will ensure that "the regime, once well started

will roll on like a circle in its growth. For sound rearing and education, when they are preserved, produce good natures."⁴⁴ Jaeger agrees that education for the Greeks was the aim of the state, necessary so that the citizens might learn to care for their souls and build the state.⁴⁵

The relationship between education and the state was, thus a two-way proposition. The state had as its primary obligation the education of the citizenry while the educational system had the obligation of training the citizens to serve the state. There was no doubt in the minds of the Greeks that this relationship was a necessary one which took precedence over other concerns, for without education the state would flounder. This was true both under the Athenian democratic model and the Platonic ideal city. In a democracy, "if men are capable of ruling themselves education is the fulcrum upon which the political world can be moved."⁴⁶ In the Republic, education is still most important, for only when "political power and philosophy coincide in the same place... will the regime we have now described in speech ever come forth from nature...For it is hard to see that in no other city would there be private or public happiness."⁴⁷ For this reason, the philosopher kings have the necessary obligation of returning to the cave (the city), choosing those among the city's young who have natures capable of making the ascent to the idea of the good. "And thus always educating other like men and leaving them behind in their place as guardians of

the city, they go off to the Isles of the Blessed and dwell."⁴⁸

The relationship between the individual and the state is also clearly defined in that the good of the polis, or community, takes precedence over the individual. This does not imply a servile or master/slave type of relationship. Rather, the individual, through his education, comes to realize that his own best interests are served under the protection of the state. The relationship implies a harmony between the individual and the state in which each recognizes his obligations and duties rather than a forced or coercive bond. Thus one's duty to the state "is not only an obligation but a privilege and honour."⁴⁹ Plato also speaks of the belief that the good of the city is of primary importance. When Adeimantus asks Socrates if the Spartan life proposed for the guardians will not make them less than happy, the answer is that, "In founding the city we are not looking to the exceptional happiness of any one group among us but, as far as possible, that of the city as a whole...with the entire city growing thus and being fairly founded, we must let nature assign to each of the groups its share of happiness."⁵⁰

Within the city, justice requires that "each one must practice one of the functions in the city, that one for which his nature made him naturally most fit."⁵¹ In this way, as a member of the polis, each man is able to achieve his own highest possible virtue and also help to achieve the purpose of society--to develop the soul of the individual by educating

him until his character is as perfect as possible.⁵²

The state, which can demand all from each individual, is therefore the only means by which man can attain his arete or highest good. The state thus takes no more than it gives, and in this way a balance or harmony is achieved. This balance can be disrupted either by harshness or too great leniency on the part of the state. In the case of rigid external control by the state, the citizens will rebel by demanding greater and greater individual liberty, and man's ability to control himself from within will be lost.⁵³ On the other hand, in the case of too great a leniency on the part of the state, the result is the same, with each man doing whatever pleases him without regard for the good of the city, desiring most of all freedom and equality "calling insolence good education; anarchy, freedom; wastefulness, magnificence; and shamelessness, courage."⁵⁴ Man's true nature, which can be fulfilled only through the freedom of inner discipline is neglected.

These three concepts, taken together, hold within them the key to an understanding of the Greek notion of education or paideia. Each interacts with the others to form the whole, and to discuss one is necessarily to touch upon the others. From the vantage point of this overview of Greek education, we can more easily understand some of the basic theoretical problems existant in contemporary American education. In doing so, this paper will focus upon the same three areas of

concern--excellence, moral virtue and the relationship between the state, education and the individual. Before examining these theoretical relationships, however, a brief look at some of the surface problems in education will be undertaken so that it will become more apparent in which way these relate to the underlying causes of educational difficulties.

CHAPTER III

THE SURFACE PROBLEMS

There are several very obvious problems in contemporary education which have come to concern the American public as well as those in the field of education. The first of these is lack of discipline and/or school violence. "Discipline continues to top the list of major problems facing the public schools of the nation as it has during eight of the last nine years" is the conclusion of a recent Gallup Poll survey.¹ Another Gallup Poll reveals that 18 per cent of American teenagers fear for their physical safety when they are at school, and 34 per cent have had money or property stolen at school or personal property damaged or destroyed.² Another facet of this problem is the violence directed at teachers, 63,000 of whom were attacked in 1975.³ In some school districts, teachers are being issued self-defense handbooks in order to help them learn to protect themselves; 66 per cent of our school systems have police on their payrolls.⁴ Finally, there is the violence focused on school property, estimated to have cost \$200 million in 1975, the last year for which totals are available.⁵ The solutions often proposed for the problem of school violence and lack of discipline are the hiring of still more security guards and police or forcing parents to be responsible for economic

losses attributed to violent acts committed by their children. Ray Warner, program coordinator for the HEW Bureau of School Systems, said recently that thirty states have passed legislation making parents liable for the damages caused by their children in school.⁶ Mr. Warner did not specify how parents are to prevent such violence--which is almost always committed without the knowledge, consent or participation of parents. Nor did Mr. Warner seem to believe that the schools had any responsibility in this case despite the fact that others have found a distressing acceptance on the part of those in the school systems of "behavior from youngsters that cannot be described as anything but delinquent."⁷

A second area of concern is the continued decline of SAT scores, which have fallen steadily for the past fourteen years.⁸ A number of rationalizations has been offered for this decline--none of which holds up under close examination. One such justification is that larger percentages of students (especially disadvantaged students) now take the SAT, and this has dragged down overall averages. In fact, as Frank Armbruster points out, test scores of the top students are falling faster than those of the lower achievers.⁹ Thus, in this instance, the mean is falling not only because of greater numbers of low scores but also because of lowered high scores. Others fault the SAT, saying it is poorly constructed or biased. However, the SAT format has remained consistent over the years. If there are flaws in the test

now, they have been there through the years. The decline in test scores cannot be explained on this basis. Finally, the National Education Association believes the solution lies in doing away with the SAT, calling it a waste of time. Thus, the nation's leading educational organization does not see lowered SAT scores as an indication of problems within the educational system which must be corrected; instead, they choose to eliminate the problem by abolishing the test.¹⁰

Another indication of basic problems within the educational system is the large number of students who fail to pass newly instituted functional literacy or competency exams. Last October, Florida's 120,000 high school juniors were ordered by the state legislature to take a functional literacy exam. The exam, held to a seventh or eighth grade level, focused on students' ability to cope with everyday tasks, such as filling out job applications and reading the labels on canned goods. Complete results are not yet in, but those compiled so far have been much worse than expected. In Duval County, which includes Jacksonville, 45 per cent of the juniors failed the math section and 14 per cent the reading and grammar part. Those who fail will be placed in special remedial classes and allowed two more chances to pass the tests. Some students, unwilling to take the chance, have instead transferred to high schools in Georgia.¹¹

Greenville County, Virginia, was one of the first

school systems in the country to inaugurate a minimal competency program (in 1974). This program covered all grade levels, and in the first year it was given, failure to promote rose 400 per cent. However, by June of 1977, the number of students held back had dropped to pre-test levels while the Greenville achievement average jumped from the thirtieth percentile to above the fiftieth percentile on national levels. This type of program, often considered discriminatory, has been endorsed by most of Greenville's blacks, including the four (out of seven) black principals. Garland Stith, a black school board member, argues that undeserved passing, rather than retention, damages students most. "They just move them on up as a way of getting rid of them."¹²

Other studies confirm that students are being passed out of high school although they are inadequately educated. The Census Bureau, in a research project called Social Indicators 1976, reveals that one out of five Americans failed a functional literacy test designed to measure ability to perform everyday tasks such as applying for a driver's license and following the directions on a bottle of medicine. Another two out of five people just barely managed to pass.¹³ Still another recent nation-wide exam done by the National Assessment of Educational Progress adds further confirmation that many graduating students are not able to handle simple living problems. The NAEP is an

information gathering project that surveys the educational attainments of students. Different learning areas are assessed every year to determine if American students are achieving at acceptable levels. The 1977 assessment was in the area of career and occupational development. Results were very poor in all areas tested. For instance, only 35 per cent of the 17 year olds had discussed their future plans with a school counselor, and only 16 per cent had taken an aptitude test and discussed the results with an advisor.¹⁴ Students were unrealistic about their choice of job and the skills necessary to perform that job. 44 per cent wanted to have professional jobs--although only 20 to 25 per cent of available positions are professional in nature. Only 49 per cent were able to name two skills or abilities necessary in the performance of their preferred job choice.¹⁵ Results were very poor in the area of basic skills, competency in which the U. S. Office of Education lists as the most important of its ten learner outcome goals.¹⁶ In the computation area, only 49 per cent of the 17 year olds correctly answered the following problem:

Suppose you purchased \$200.00 worth of merchandise from a store on an installment plan. You are to make 24 monthly payments of \$11.37 each. How much money in finance charges will you have paid at the end of two years?

In the written communications skills area, those tested were asked to write a job application letter. Only 36 per cent included some method by which the prospective employer

could contact the applicant.¹⁷

A final measure of educational problems is the continued high rate of teenage unemployment, especially black teenage unemployment which rose to 38.7 per cent in January of 1978.¹⁸ While causes of teenage unemployment may vary, the International Labor Organization lays the blame directly on the schools, concluding that "most youngsters leaving school find themselves confronted with a strange world of labor requiring skills, knowledge and behavior they have not acquired. More and more youngsters fail to meet the standards required for training in modern industry and unprepared for the work game, feel they face a stacked deck. This leads to apathy, stress, drifting and other social problems."¹⁹ Frank Armbruster concurs with this assessment, believing that, "many schools have tended to educate children for a nonexistent world...outside the school environment one normally has to produce to be promoted; work must satisfy the needs of the economy to be profitable to the worker; many trades and professions require work that gives no credit for good intentions or being nearly accurate--much work, and advanced study, must be explicit, meticulous, and correct every time; it is important to be well-informed and logical, not just spontaneous and talkative."²⁰ Thus, for the school system to demand less of the child than will be demanded of him later is to instill in him false expectations; when these expectations are quickly dashed, the young person

becomes bewildered and bitter.

These facts make it clear that there are very real weaknesses in the educational system. The problem, however, is not so much to identify specific weaknesses but to determine the underlying reasons for these weaknesses. For only if these causes are determined and attacked, will satisfactory solutions to educational problems be effected. With this thought in mind, the next three chapters will deal with the three areas in education stressed in the examination of Greek education. I believe this approach will help to make clear the failure of the educational system to cope with the recurring problems which have beset it.

CHAPTER IV

EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

One basic problem in education today is the decline of excellence as a standard of education. With this decline have come pass/fail grading systems and rubber stamp diplomas awarded more on the basis of attendance than the achievement of even minimal competency. The notion of educational excellence remained constant over the course of thousands of years, from the time of Plato to that of John Dewey, and, consensually, has meant the striving for individual growth in order for the individual to become, in all aspects, the best that he is capable of being. The move away from this concept of excellence has several causes.

One basic cause is the widespread and long-held notion in America that education could be the means of eliminating poverty. Thus, Horace Mann, often called the father of American education, declared "Education is the great equalizer of men--the balance wheel of the social machinery...It does better than to disarm the poor of their hostility toward the rich, it prevents being poor." This position was accepted with little disagreement through the 1960's in the United States. Demographic data appeared, on the surface, to corroborate the theory for it could be

statistically shown that higher education meant higher lifetime earnings.

It is interesting to note here that not only was it assumed that education could alleviate poverty, but also that the alleviation of poverty was a proper and important function of education. A comparison of the educational philosophies of John Dewey with that of other nineteenth century educational reformers--or progressives as they were called--helps to explain this point. Dewey, as well as the other reformers, realized that, in a democratic republic, education was important in order to sustain democratic ideals and to ensure stability through economic opportunity. However, for Dewey, these were by-products of an educational theory which viewed education as "a continuous process of growth in the present--not preparation for future life or duties."¹ This growth process was the end of education rather than the means toward some other end. Carried to its logical conclusion, Dewey believed, "no study is educative unless it is worthwhile in its immediate having."² Dewey also believed that only in a "democratic society where there is a free exchange of ideas and the ability to reconstruct social habits and institutions by means of wide stimulation arising from equitably distributed interests"³ could the educational goal of continued capacity for growth be realized. Thus, education could be conceived as having social as well as intrinsic value.

Dewey saw three dangers arising from formal education.

The first was the danger of class rather than individual education which would narrow educational opportunity through acceptance of economic status quo, unfair privilege and class authority. For this reason, he rejected Platonic education, believing a basic responsibility of education is to "construct a course of studies which makes thought a guide of free practice for all."⁴ A second danger was that formal education might become only the means of passing on received customs and institutions. Organized education must "foster whatever revisions in its established ways are required in order to make its enjoyed goods and opportunities more numerous and more equally shared."⁵ Thus, flexibility and the capacity to change were important to Dewey, for growth cannot be accomplished without change. The third danger of formal education was a possible split between life experience and the information acquired at school. Dewey was an advocate of philosophical empiricism and believed direct experience and personal participation were the most valuable methods of learning. For this reason, he believed it was important that schools not rely solely on indirect learning through books.⁶

Although Dewey was aware that, in a democracy, education must accept social responsibility, he understood that the primary end of education was the intellectual growth of the individual. The progressives, who were part of the larger social reform movement in America, placed

primary emphasis on social improvement rather than the improvement of man per se. This was a crucial turning point in the thrust of American education, and one which is still in ascendancy today.

The progressives saw the educational system as one of several institutions which could be used to improve the worldly conditions of mankind in the aggregate. Besides the rapid expansion of traditional education, the school "was a center for the antihookworm effort of the General Education Board in the South; it was a center for the vocational guidance program in the cities of the Northeast; and it was a center for the agricultural extension program in the hamlets and towns of the Midwest."⁷ One effect of the progressive movement was a de-emphasis on traditional academic subjects as more non-academic courses were added to the curriculum. These courses were seen to fill the need of educating the "whole child" in ways never before attempted. "The schools fulfilled the progressives' demand that they take on the problem of 'the whole child' by enlisting an army of psychologists and social workers...Life adjustment programs, with work experience as an integral part of them, were promoted nationally at local and state school administration levels."⁸ The result was a limiting of time and money spent on academic education at the same time that the field of education was broadened to include social services previously handled by other agencies if at all.

A recently completed study done on behalf of the National Association of Secondary School Principals concludes that "electives substituted for conventional English and mathematics courses are at the root of the problem (of declining SAT scores.)"⁹ Of 34 schools studied which had successfully resisted the national trend toward lowered test scores, the common denominator found was "a certain agreement about priorities for the college-bound student... most evident in the area of course offerings and course content and less prominent for other school factors such as test orientation programs or special teaching strategies."¹⁰ The clear implication of the study is that experimentation and innovation in curriculum, which are done at the expense of the traditional emphasis on basic subjects, deprive students of a firm academic foundation and lead to lowered test scores.

Another effect of the progressive movement was a shift in the basic goal of education from one of individual growth to one of social responsibility. Mass minimum achievement rather than individual excellence was the new criterion. So sure were the new educators of the righteousness of their cause that very little critical examination of their position took place. A desire to improve humanity is, after all, a very worthy goal. The ends of social reform and social improvement have continued to dominate educational doctrine in the twentieth century. With the rising national consciousness about the problems of the poor and the minorities

during the 1960's, traditional education came under more pressure. Local efforts to stream students or channel them into vocational courses were seen as designs to keep minorities "in their place." For instance, Sidney Wilhelm, in a study called "Who Needs the Negro," charges that the public schools were doing what they had been designed to do--"furnish white America with a black, inexpensive, helpless labor pool that could be drawn upon in times of expansion and contracted in periods of recession and depression... Under the guise of tailoring education to the needs of the child the public schools have provided the poor and the black with the education they need to remain in their positions as exploited laborers. This system of public education which permits a few gifted poor and black to succeed allows the public to harbor delusions of progress while the schools mask their true 'programmed stagnation' of the masses."¹¹

John Holt, in his evaluation of education, charges similarly that, "schools and schooling, by their very nature, purposes, structure and ways of working are, and are meant to be, an obstacle to poor kids, designed and built not to move them up in the world but to keep them at the bottom of it and to make them think it is their own fault."¹² These are not isolated examples of radical thinking, but rather represent the general view of liberal educators in the 1960's. The result was pressure for standardized academic education for all--stressing again mass education rather than individual

growth. If educational excellence fell before the demand for equalization, this was believed to be an acceptable exchange.

Tracing the history of vocational education in the United States helps in understanding the implications of a monolithic approach to education. Prior to the progressive era most vocational training took place in the home, farm or shop on an apprenticeship basis. With the rise of industrialism, this became both exploitive and inefficient. It was exploitive in that many young people brought into the work world were not being trained to move into skilled positions, but rather brought into factories where they performed boring, repetitive and even dangerous tasks which had no possibility for advancement. It was inefficient in that industry did not possess the capabilities to train people for technological work. Thus, reformers and business leaders both began to demand that schools take over the task of vocational education. The Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, which inaugurated a federally sponsored vocational training program, was one result. Another was school credentialing, a system by which school systems agreed to certify competence. Businessmen even began to look upon vocational training as a return paid on school taxes.¹³

This relationship endured until the second half of the twentieth century when vocational education came into disfavor. This was caused only partially by the demands of

the poor and the social reformers. It was also a result of such diverse happenings as the post-World War II G. I. Bill, rising economic expectations caused by the mass media and a generation of depression-bred parents who viewed education as a means of achieving the good life they, themselves, had not experienced. The impact on education was overwhelming. For example, while 68 per cent of the job openings in Texas between 1976 and 1985 will be related to vocational education programs, only 7 per cent of the \$6.5 billion appropriated by the 64th Texas Legislature to support public education during the 1976-77 biennium was earmarked for vocational education.¹⁴ Throughout the country as a whole, close to 80 per cent of students are enrolled in college preparatory courses although only about 25 per cent of them will go on to college.¹⁵ This leaves a large percentage of young people who complete twelve years of schooling but are neither college bound nor trained for a skilled job. To look at the problem from another angle, according to Bureau of Labor statistics, 80 per cent of the nation's jobs through 1985 will require special vocational training. In an effort to standardize education, reformers have hurt most those they were specifically trying to help. For it is the children of poverty who will not be able to afford the post-secondary school vocational training necessary for a skilled technological position in industry.

The emphasis on mass education has had further

ramifications. One is the artificial raising of job standards and qualifications. As Charles Silberman explains, "the growing tendency to reject anyone lacking a high school diploma, and in some cases, education beyond high school, bears little relationship to the technical requirements of the present occupational structure; if existing jobs required that much education, half the present labor force would be unemployable."¹⁶ More pressure is brought to bear upon educators who are accused of dooming a young person to a life of unemployment (and taxpayers to higher welfare costs) by withholding a diploma. Once again, educational excellence is sacrificed in the name of expediency.

It might be noted here that upping job qualifications also hurts those who are more highly educated. As more people graduate from college, employers are able to demand degrees for job placement which does not require such a high level of education. The Bureau of Labor Statistics figures that about 27 per cent of those who graduate from college today take jobs for which they are technically overqualified, and that by 1985 there will be 140,000 bachelor-level graduates for whom no suitable jobs will be available.¹⁷

Higher educational levels have also led to unrealistic expectations on the part of young people. They have been told so often and so fervently that education is the key to economic success that they have come to accept the correlation.

Again, the emphasis is on the degree rather than the quality of education involved.

Finally, the twin features of centralization and standardization, spawned by the growth of technology, have also effected educational excellence. The development of tests such as the Stanford-Binet Test of Intelligence and the Iowa Basal Skills Test promoted educational standardization as did the nationwide distribution of textbooks such as the MacMillan series. An increasingly mobile population added to the trend; a family transferred from one city to another wanted assurances of educational continuity for their children. The important point is that educational standardization focused on mass, minimal levels of achievement and was designed to upgrade poor schools to an acceptable level. Little attention was given to the danger that minimal standards might degenerate into maximum goals.

Standardization was also seen as a way to apply scientific methods to education at a time when science was viewed as the solution to all problems. An educator writing in the 1950's concluded, "The work of the schools has been standardized and the pupils have been regimented to accomplish certain designated results with the least expenditure of effort. Statistical and other scientific procedures are being utilized in the study of education...the study of education as a whole, is fast developing into a science."¹⁸ The application of scientific methods to education meant a

focusing on those elements in the field which could be quantitatively measured. "Quantity deals with numbers of students, numbers of teachers, teacher-training needs, locations of schools, sizes of buildings, use of facilities, fees, dollars and cents, and construction norms, and it means testing and test measurements. It necessarily avoids the nature of the relations between teachers and pupils, since it is not practical to deal with feelings and attitudes."¹⁹

Other immeasurable qualitative factors, such as intellectual curiosity and critical analysis, were also avoided not only by planners but also by teachers who knew that they, themselves, were being quantitatively measured on the basis of the quantitative abilities of their students.

Standardization was believed to be a uniquely American way of offering equal educational opportunities to all in contrast to the dual systems of Europe. Educators agreed that "this ideal of a single-tract system of public education, open free to everyone to climb as far as his talents will take him" was the culmination of American democracy.²⁰

Therefore, although educators realized that high school was a terminal experience rather than college preparation for most students, since those who were going on to college needed an academic education, the decision was made that all should be similarly educated. The Committee of Ten, in 1883, formalized this thinking in a report which recommended that the student who was going immediately into a vocation

be given the same instruction as the one who expected to enter college. "This report stands as the first of a series of notable committee reports which have determined the trends of secondary education in recent times."²¹

The inevitable result of standardized academic education for all was a lowering of educational standards, for there was no way to maintain rigorous standards and achieve the goal of universal monolithic secondary education. It is interesting that educators, rather than face this dilemma, justified curricula changes on grounds of obsolescence or impracticality. Thus, Stuart Noble concludes, "Formal grammar has been losing prestige for many years. Recent research overwhelmingly demonstrates its ineffectiveness either in improving the use of the native tongue or in promoting facility in the learning of a foreign language."²² Those who criticized the trend were branded as "old-timers, the vanishing gentry of scholars who seek to train the intellect and to safeguard the cultural legacy...in practical America the older view is doomed to become an oddity, and any strong support of it, hence, may become somewhat indecorous, and even suspect."²³ This same author believes that although "the current high school is no longer the intellectual place it used to be, then on the other hand it gives a very hearty encouragement to its pupils' social and recreational advancement...the so called 'extra-curricular activities' have become a major educational enterprise."²⁴

Again, this is not an isolated view but rather a generally endorsed statement of educational policy in the post-progressive era reflective of a time of boundless faith and enthusiasm; faith that the new social educational theories would produce a system beneficial to all, and enthusiasm for the scientific innovations designed to turn out well-rounded, wholly educated children.

Centralization, as deliberately applied policy, has also had an impact upon the school system. One facet of centralization focused on the closing of small, rural schools, and the consolidation of these schools into one central district school. It was believed that such a policy would provide higher quality education at a lowered cost. Centralization has been "the most successfully implemented educational policy of the past fifty years" according to a study done by Jonathan P. Sher and Rachael B. Tompkins for the National Institute of Education.²⁵ In 1930 there were 149,000 single teacher elementary schools in the United States while by 1972, there were only 1,475 such schools left. However, school consolidation has failed to produce the expected financial savings or quality education. Higher transportation costs and greater numbers of highly-paid specialized teachers and administrators have offset anticipated savings of consolidation. As for quality of education, "educators have been unable to point to any demonstrable improvements, independent of I.Q. and social class, which record a

consistent positive correlation between size and achievement."²⁶

Further, as centrally located school administrators demanded more and more data from local schools within their jurisdiction, additional pressure to standardize methods and reporting procedures was applied. Thus, the centralization and bureaucratization "of the research and evaluation components of systems of education is propelling research in education toward greater use of quantitative analysis."²⁷ As high level, influential educational planning offices demand accountability from local school systems, this accountability has centered on quantitative data. Christopher Jencks justifies using this approach as follows: "We take a very dim view of test scores, both as measures of schools' effectiveness and as measures of individual talent. But while cognitive tests have many obvious defects, most measures of attitudes, values and character structure are even worse."²⁸ Thus central bureaucracies demand more quantitative data despite the fact that the value of these data is questionable and often self-serving.

Standardization and centralization have led to specialization and a dependence on technicians who possess superior knowledge within their narrow field of expertise. As Guy Benveniste states, these experts are dependent upon factual data, for "measurements and quantitative analysis are the basis of the knowledge which differentiates them

and, therefore, a basis of their social power."²⁹ Benveniste's book, written for the expert, outlines ways in which the expert can gain and consolidate power over the generalist using techniques such as manipulating or withholding relevant data, using facts and figures to exert pressure, leaking favorable facts to the public and creating complex, time-consuming procedures which provide a shield against external intervention or external demands for information exchanges.³⁰ Benveniste offers no apology for the use of these and other similar tactics for he believes that in a technological world the expert has an obligation not only to provide hard data but also to use that data to influence public policy. Benveniste, as well as many other advocates of specialization, does not realize that "many of our most serious problems have arisen because narrowly conceived technological improvements have failed to take account of side effects, deleterious or otherwise, which inevitably accompany a widespread technological change in society."³¹ David Penick concludes that in solving problems a multidisciplinary approach is necessary although scientists "can bring to the problem some important knowledge or evidence."³² The crucial difference is that Penick, unlike Benveniste, realizes that a narrow, technical viewpoint, based upon quantitative data, is not sufficient to solve normative problems.

All of the above may fairly be considered to be causal factors in the decline of educational excellence.

Some, such as the impact of the mass media, I have touched upon only briefly. Although these have received much attention in other reports of recent American educational trends, I see them as secondary rather than primary causes of the decline of excellence. I believe the fundamental cause is the movement away from an emphasis on individual growth and achievement toward an aggregate, mass approach to education. Reason tells us that excellence can never be found in the aggregate, for aggregate, by definition, implies an averaging, a movement toward the mean. Arete must be an individual achievement; national arete is accomplished when each individual strives for his own excellence.

CHAPTER V

THE SEPARATION OF MORALITY AND EDUCATION

A second problem area in American education has been the separation of morality from the educational sphere. Not only has morality been severed from education but its very meaning in educational circles has been perverted. Thus, one author who believes there has been a re-emergence of morality in education sees the teaching of sex education as "the most striking innovation in this general area."¹ Most theorists, however, agree with Theodore Brameld, who concludes "Moral education in the United States is practically nonexistent in any direct sense except within our parochial schools... (where it is) almost exclusively taught as indoctrination to the absolutist theologies."²

The problem of morality is interrelated to that of educational excellence for arete refers not only to intellectual achievement but also to moral virtue. Without the latter, the former is only an empty shell. As pointed out in Chapter II, one of the chief objections of Socrates and his followers to the sophists was their indifference to the question of morality. For the Greeks, learning and virtue were inseparable for knowledge of true values was the foundation of all education.³

Early American political leaders were also aware of the importance of virtue to education and to the furtherance of a republican form of government. For instance, Moses Mather, in 1775, said, "The strength and spring of every free government is the virtue of the people; virtue grows on knowledge, and knowledge on education."⁴ Similarly, the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780 stated, "Wisdom and knowledge, as well as virtue, diffused generally among the body of people (is) necessary for the preservation of their rights and liberties."⁵ Thus, the founding fathers believed public virtue to be the foundation of a free government, and education to be the means of attaining this virtue.

In order to understand to what extent morality once influenced and permeated education, an examination of McGuffey's Reader is helpful. This series, in continual useage from 1836 through the 1920's, "held and shaped the minds of most American youth."⁶ The Readers are considered by many to be some of the world's most influential books.⁷ The following are two very short and representative stories from the First Reader:

Lesson XI Boys at Play

Can you fly a kite? See how the boy flies his kite. He holds the string fast, and the wind blows it up.

Now it is high in the air, and looks like a bird. When the wind blows hard, you must hold fast, or your kite will get away.

Boys love to run and play.

But they must not be rude. Good boys do not play in a rude way, but take care not to hurt anyone.

You must not lie. Bad boys lie, and swear, and steal.

When boys are at play they must be kind, and not feel cross. If you are cross, good boys will not like to play with you.

Some boys use bad words when they are at play. The Bible says that you must not use bad words; and you must mind what the Bible says, for it is God's book. You must not play with boys that speak bad words or tell lies.

Lesson IV

"Come here, Rose. Look down into this bush."

"O Willie! a bird's nest! What cunning little eggs! May we take it, and show it to mother?"

"What would the old bird do, Rose, if she should come back and not find her nest?"

"How does the bird make the nest so strong, Willie?"

"The mother bird has her bill and her claws to work with, but she would not know how to make the nest if God did not teach her."

"Shall we take the nest, Rose?"

"Oh, no, Willie! We must not take it; but we will come and look at it again, some time."

Every lesson in McGuffey's was heavy with moral emphasis, sometimes even stressing the dire consequences which would befall the child who disregarded its words of wisdom. The early editions were particularly vivid. One pre-1884 lesson closed with, "It is by stealing small things that children become robbers, and have to be put in prison." Later editions were softened to, "Let no little boy or girl ever take things without leave, for it is stealing; and they who steal are thieves."⁸

McGuffey's has been roundly criticized for its "artlessly moralistic, heavily didactic, and fulsomely

repetitious approach."⁹ For example, Jack R. Frankel, in How to Teach About Values: An Analytic Approach, warns, "There is one type of behavior in particular, however, that teachers would be well advised to avoid. This is the practice of telling other people what sorts of things they should value--particularly through the use of such techniques as arousing fear about the consequences of certain acts, appeals to conscience or the citing of 'good examples' from history and literature."¹⁰ He goes on to cite the McGuffey's Readers as prime examples of such an approach. However, as Stanley Lindberg concludes, "The moral values most heavily inculcated by the Readers--honesty, industry, courage, kindness, courtesy and obedience--are among those values whose absence in contemporary society is so eloquently lamented by social critics and serious commentators."¹¹ In passing, it is also instructive to compare the McGuffey's texts with modern texts in difficulty of material and interest level. If the Readers are repetitive, present day texts are ten times more so.

Post progressive readers, in contrast to McGuffey's, presented bland, middle-class family life in which pupils "were exposed to a sprinkling of factual or informational selections."¹² The stories were antiseptically neutral in the area of morality. No controversial events or words were introduced. In fact, it seemed to matter little whether the content of the material made any sense or was

of interest to the students as long as key words were introduced often enough. Contrast the following, for both moral content and skill level, to McGuffey's. The first is from the Merrill Linguistic Reader: Reader Two:¹³

Nat and his Pan

Nat's pan had a bad bit of tin on the rim.
 Jim said, "It's bad for him. He cannot lap at his pan."
 Jim took the pan to Dan.
 Dan said, "I cannot fix it."
 Jim hid the pan.
 Nat looks for it.
 He is sad.

This next selection is from a very popular reader called Up and Away:¹⁴

"Here is Willie," said Tommy.
 "And here are Jack and Dick.
 There is Dot, and here I am.
 We are all here."
 Willie began to count,
 "One, two, three, four, five.
 Here are four boys and one girl.
 That makes five of us."
 "No violet cap," cried Mrs. Toosey, and she went into the water again.
 "No violet cap," cried Mrs. Toosey.
 "I cannot find the violet cap."
 She began to look around again.
 "It is on your head," cried Dick.
 Mrs. Toosey came back.
 "So it is," she said.
 "What do you know about that!
 What a funny thing that is!"
 And she laughed and laughed.

It is very interesting that the same Paul McKee who edited the Up and Away reader also has written a book on reading instruction for elementary teachers in which he states, "Unfortunately, many selections in some preprimers are so barren in interest-pull that no sane person would choose

one of them to read to a young child who asks for a story, they cannot provide the satisfaction which the pupil has been hoping he would get when he begins to read...and the content contributes little if anything to the pupil's acquisition of an abiding interest in reading."¹⁵ Innumerable selections could be added here to show the morally neutral tone of modern texts. In the interests of brevity, no more will be presented; anyone who doubts the representativeness of these excerpts can satisfy himself in the first grade classroom of the nearest public school.

As is often the case, the causes of the decline of morality in education are several and interrelated. In our society, morality has been equated with religious values and the religious sphere. Because of the separation of church and state, there has been a concomitant separation of morality and state-related activities. It has been suggested that "the break which set the Cities of the World apart (from morality) may have occurred in the writing of the first amendment of the United States Constitution."¹⁶ If the seed were planted with the writing of the Constitution, it lay dormant and did not bear fruit until fairly recently in our history. The place of morality in education remained constant until well into the twentieth century. As recently as 1950, the Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association of the United States affirmed, "The development of moral and spiritual values is

basic to all other educational objectives. Education uninspired by moral and spiritual values is directionless. Values unapplied in human behavior are empty."¹⁷ However, by the time this was written, the moral base of education was already shaky. In the interests of protecting individual civil rights, the Supreme Court, again and again, held unconstitutional the use of subjectively religious material. Because of the close ties between religion and morality, by implication, morality also became suspect. This was not so much because educators rejected morality, but rather because, in a period of flux and controversy, morality had become one of the most controversial of issues. Thus, educators played it safe and skirted the problem of values, rationalizing that, "it is far better to strive for such unity as we can achieve about our schools than to risk a divisive dialogue about value development."¹⁸ Statements of purpose regarding public education continued to include a belief in moral education, but only in the most general and theoretical sense. At the practical level, the emphasis was on avoidance or neutrality.

The rise of moral relativism and the attending rejection of moral absolutes added to a reluctance on the part of educators to enter into the teaching of moral values. Max Lerner, in a very perceptive book called Values in Education, concludes that, "the values debate--along with the concept of alternative life styles and alternative ways of

perceiving reality--may have done even more to shake up the educational system and philosophy than all the political and ethnic activisms."¹⁹ The counter-culturists of the 1960's not only rejected traditional values (such as money, power and success) which had been overplayed, but rejected all other "establishment" values as well. In a final triumph of relativism, the moral code became "anything goes," and no value was admitted as having more intrinsic value than any other value. Long-cherished institutions such as marriage, church and education were examined, found wanting and rejected. The examination per se was not harmful; the rejection, without meaningful alternatives, caused havoc. In the educational sphere the result was the neutrality approach to morality in which the teacher plays the role of unbiased arbitrator. Moral issues were to be presented to students but only as objective situations in which each person could make his own decisions. The Humanities Curriculum Project (1967 - 1972), chaired by Lawrence Stenhouse, concluded that controversial issues should be presented to students, the teacher should assume a position of neutrality, the mode of inquiry should be discussional rather than instructional and the discussion should protect divergence of view rather than attempt to achieve consensus.²⁰ This approach can be criticized on several grounds. First, a stance of neutrality is almost impossible to maintain. Even if a teacher remains carefully noncommittal

during a specific values discussion, he "can't help but provide moral education as teachers constantly evaluate students' behavior. Although teachers are not always aware of this, students usually are."²¹ Secondly, neutrality negates the moral worth of the teacher. Not to speak up in a situation in which students clearly need moral guidance, may cause students to lose respect for the teacher or cause them to believe that moral standards will not be enforced in the classroom.²² And finally, as Sheralyn Goldbecker points out, "teaching values is tantamount to teaching survival skills, for if people do not learn to live cooperatively, i.e., governed by moral beliefs, then they will ultimately destroy themselves."²³ Thus, moral neutrality may threaten the very existence of society.

Another result of moral relativism has been the loss of abstract concepts in education. Now a story or issue which deals with justice, courage, perseverance or other moral concepts is presented only as a specific, discrete problem rather than as a part of a larger moral sphere. John Stoops sees this as a crucial problem because, "there are two ways in which the ideal can excite human feelings; one is in its realization, and the other is in its corruption."²⁴ The appreciation of the ideal is that which inspires man to strive to achieve. On the other hand, he who has not been educated to appreciate abstract ideals finds them absurd and unnatural; his recourse is to corrupt or degrade

these ideals. Stoops points to the modern vulgarizing of the human body as an example of this.

The separation of morality from education was not seen as a serious problem partly because of the assumption that the church and home would fulfill the function of teaching values. However, the same factors which had weakened the moral foundations of education had also weakened these foundations in the church and home. Even more crucially, the fact that morality is an integral part of education and the fact that the inculcation of moral values has served as one of the most important functions of American education from its inception, was ignored. Because America is a nation of immigrants, "the public school has been for millions the chief pathway into American life (so) they might be prepared to take full part in the life of their new homeland."²⁵ With the separation of education and morality, the teaching of common values has been neglected. Although political leaders and sociologists point to many reasons for the difficulty twentieth century immigrants have had in adjusting to life in America, few suggest the teaching of consensual values in schools as a possible solution. Instead, diverse population groups are encouraged to cling to the mores of their forefathers. Mandatory bi-lingual education is an example of this. Cases have been documented in which children in supposedly bi-lingual classes were, in reality, being taught by teachers unable to

communicate in English.²⁶ Is it really in the best interests of these children to allow them to grow up in an English-speaking country without teaching them fluency in the language? And is it in the best interests of the nation to encourage non-English speaking population groups to remain segregated behind the language barrier? Anthropologists have noted "the dangers to society of subcultures which cut themselves off from the main body on the basis of some minority pattern, which they then defend with violent aggression."²⁷ These splinter groups tend to develop hostility toward the mainstream which, in turn, reinforces their isolation and hinders social enculturation. Geoffrey Wagner believes an entire generation of minority students has been maimed by this kind of self-isolation. Minority leaders who disparage middle-class values and encourage separatism may be doing a real disservice to their followers. The notion that America is the great "melting pot" has been disproved as various ethnic groups have chosen to isolate themselves in ethnic neighborhoods. Over the years, however, ethnic ties are usually weakened as children forsake the "old-fashioned ways" of their parents and become Americanized, in part, because of the influence of the schools. As Frank Armbruster puts it, the same schools "which over the decades had used teachers from earlier immigrant groups of vastly different ethnic and racial backgrounds to teach the newer ones, now were said to be incapable of teaching

the new immigrants without teachers of the same race and ethnicity.²⁸

In a classical chicken-and-egg situation, it is difficult to know whether the decline of morality in education has led to a general decline in societal morality or whether an overall decline in societal morality has led to a de-emphasis in morality in the schools. Probably the relationship is circular--each feeding upon and fostering the other. The American notion of freedom is an example of shifting moral values. At one time, Americans spoke of freedom for work, freedom for worship and freedom for opportunity. Now the emphasis is on negative freedoms, and "we speak of freedom from fear, freedom from hunger and freedom from want."²⁹ Attitudes toward schooling have undergone a similar metamorphosis. Earlier generations looked upon education as a privilege and opportunity. Gradually, with the advent of mandatory universal schooling, education came to be looked upon as a right guaranteed to all. And as a right, the obligation to learn shifted from the individual to the educational system so that the individual became an uninvolved spectator which the system had the obligation of teaching. Work and effort were believed to be a part of the educator's responsibility; the student's only obligation was attendance. The final shift came recently with a group of students who demanded to be paid for remaining in school, reasoning that they were giving up

their valuable time (which they would have preferred to spend in other pursuits) in order to get an education.³⁰ Thus, education, once the shining goal of so many, has become necessary drudgery for which students expect to be paid.

American pragmatism is also a factor which has led to a de-emphasis in the humanities in general and morality in particular. Pragmatism and the rise of technology spurred the demand for schools to teach "useful" subjects. The danger of this type of education, according to O. B. Hardison, Jr., is that it is ideologically neutral and trains students to become servants of a system--any system--rather than responsible, thinking citizens.³¹ Thus, students are taught to become productive members of society but are not taught the moral foundations necessary in order for them to become a part of the polis. Leaving to the home the teaching of the moral virtues, necessary for achievement in a technological society, is most damaging to the poor, the minorities and the recent immigrants who are taught in schools to become productive drones but often do not have the necessary home environment in which to learn moral and civic virtues. The concept of delayed gratification, for example, is more strongly imbued in middle class youths than in lower class children. Bruno Bettelheim calls delayed gratification the middle class morality which alone makes learning possible for it teaches

that "to postpone immediate pleasure in order to gain more lasting satisfaction in the future is the most effective way to reach one's goals."³² Those who do not learn to share this morality "remain essentially uneducable and uneducated, though they may acquire bits of knowledge and skills."³³ If neither the home, through inability, nor the school, through unwillingness, teaches these values to certain groups within the population, they are being deprived of an essential tool necessary for their betterment.

Finally, the rise of psychology and psychologically oriented educators helped to ring the death-knell of moral education. Psychology, which could have been the ideal discipline in promoting the theory and art of character formation, instead "separated itself from moral philosophy... Narcissus-like, it fell in love with its own reflection in the mirror of science and forgot that its obligations were not to some concept of science but to the theory and arts of the growth of personality and the shaping of mind and character."³⁴ There are two points to be made here. First, psychology, in its rush to be accepted as a hard science, concentrated on the amassing of reportable facts and verifiable data. Values were ascertained, but only as neutral facts; moral judgments were held to be scientifically unacceptable. Secondly, psychological emphasis veered toward the acceptance of each individual "as is," rather

than toward the need for each individual to grow and reach his potential. Thus, educators were taught to reassure each child that he is a worthwhile person rather than that he could become a worthwhile person through work and effort. The theory was, intrinsically, bound to fail because the non-achiever is well able to look around him and assess his own progress. Therefore, although the educator is telling him "you're okay," his common sense is telling him "you're not okay," and the result is that he rejects the dissonant message from the teacher. The non-achiever knows he is not achieving; he does not need reassuring messages which reinforce his unsatisfactory performance but rather encouragement and concrete help in getting out of his rut.

Although all the above factors have led to the elimination of values teaching, the unwillingness of educators to face the issue is, I believe, most crucial. The grounds given for begging the question are many--the controversial nature of morality, a general lack of consensus on moral issues, the fear of religious impingement and others. None of these objections, either singly or in combination, is sufficient for the elimination of that which is, philosophically, the foundation of the educational structure. Ironically, educators agree at the abstract level about the importance of values in education. At the praxis level, however, they do not follow through but instead rationalize

away their inaction. The moral base of education will not be rebuilt until educators, and others interested in education, have the moral courage to carry out their own convictions. The philosopher king returned to the cave because he was the only one who possessed the true knowledge, and thus was the only one able to pass on this knowledge to the guardians. As long as modern-day educators default in their obligation to teach moral virtue to their students, education will never achieve its true purpose--the nurturing of individual capabilities to the fullest potential.

CHAPTER VI
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
THE GOVERNMENT, EDUCATION AND THE INDIVIDUAL

The third basic problem area in education is the relationship between the government, education and the individual. This relationship has never been formally delineated in this country--probably because there are conflicting theories within the area. From colonial days, education was held to be the province of the localities, although the role of education in a participatory democracy was understood to be crucial. Representing the general American sentiment, the writers of the Constitution included not one word about education; a status which has not changed over the years.¹ This, then, is the first paradox; in a nation which necessarily relies on an enlightened populace, the national government has no specific role in the educational process.

Early battles over control of education were often between local or state officials and various religious and ethnic groups. These groups believed public education was a threat to the ties which bound young people to their traditions. Publicly supported education was also attacked

on the ground that it was unjust to tax one man to educate the son of another man. These battles raged throughout the nineteenth century, first at the elementary level and then at the secondary level. The time and energies of many early educators, such as Horace Mann, were devoted to gaining public acceptance for the principle of universal public education. These leaders, working through professional and literary organizations, the press and the various state legislatures were eventually able to win public acceptance of their ideal. The battle was far from over, however, for concomitant with the notion of public support for education was the notion of public control of education. Localities which were willing to accept state funds to support education balked at the idea of state control. In reality, the issue was moot, for support implies control, if only by the threat of support withdrawal. The development of the state superintendent of education and the state board of education also helped consolidate state control. Finally, the principle of separation of church and state strengthened the notion of U. S. public education in contrast to the European model under which public funds were divided among various religious groups proportionately according to the number of children they educated.

Ultimately, the state school conflict was more than a battle for control of the educational system, for deeply imbedded in the American consciousness was an almost

instinctive distrust of politics and political institutions. Thus, there was a fear that political control of education would somehow taint the school system and lead to graft, corruption and partisanship. This type of thinking spearheaded the progressive reform movement of the late 1800's when the watchwords of reform became "centralization, expertise, professionalism, nonpolitical control and efficiency."² The goal of professional, scientific management of education could be attained only if education was "purged of all connections with political parties and general government officials, such as mayors and councilmen."³ The result was that the "public school heralded by its champions as the cornerstone of democracy, rejected the political world in which democratic institutions operate... (paying) lip service to general citizen activity attended by mortal fear of general politics, the logical and legitimate companion of citizen action."⁴ Political leaders feared to challenge the myth of the righteousness of separation of education and government at all levels; the safest attitude was to ignore the field of education except for issuing a few bland platitudes about its accomplishments. By default, professional educators came to control the governance of the school system. The relationship between education and government became one of parallel coexistence in which the schools operated "as quite independent of the political processes by which specific national policies

were formulated and implemented."⁵

Without national planning and policy making, American schools remained, by common consent, under the domain of theoretically apolitical local and state authorities. The U. S. Office of Education and various presidential commissions on education may make suggestions and recommendations for educational reform, but they have no formal power to implement them. For example, the 1973 Report of the National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education devoted much attention to alternatives to the "monolithic, unitary system of schooling...(believing) that the near-monopoly of secondary education by that institution, with its relatively standardized formats and restricted options, must now give way to a more diversified system of alternative schools and programs."⁶ As pointed out earlier, the universal academically-oriented approach to secondary education continues to dominate most school systems. Daniel Selakovich concludes that, "there is, in nearly every state, a rather small and loosely organized group of educators...which may call most of the shots in education...This informal power structure may tend to resist change, keep a tight rein on the power structure, be dedicated to a tried and true routine, and will at times attack critics with the viciousness of a mother defending her young."⁷ By accepting the notion that schools should be apolitical, the formal political community has turned

over the educational system to various groups of behind-the-scenes power brokers virtually unknown to the public and accountable only to those within their very limited spheres.

One of the consequences of local control of education has been great disparities in the amount of money spent on education both intrastate and interstate. The various states provide a minimum level of support which is locally supplemented according to ability and desire. A recent Ford Foundation survey found that "statewide per pupil expenditures ranged from a low of \$838 in Mississippi to a high of \$2,005 in New York. Divergencies within states are even more pronounced. Among districts in Massachusetts, they range from \$454 to \$2,243; in New York, the range is from \$936 to \$4,215."⁸ Under pressure, intrastate inequalities are being reformed; it is estimated that by 1980 75 per cent of public school students will have been involved in some type of equalization program.⁹ However, the power of the federal government to intervene in financial inequalities in education was specifically struck down in the case of San Antonio Independent School District v Rodriguez in 1973. The court held that, "the reliance of the Texas school finance system on local wealth was rationally related to a legitimate state objective, that is, the enhancement of local control and decision-making over both finance and program, and that the Texas system of school

financing did not discriminate against any definable group of people."¹⁰

Because of Constitutional strictures on the federal government in the field of education, a "back-door" approach has been used by the national government in order to use the school system to foster other national goals. Thus, federal intervention in the field of education has centered not on quality education but rather on the furtherance of national priorities outside the field of education. This intervention has increased dramatically since the 1960's, and the parallel coexistence theory has become invalid. The goals promoted by the government have been in the area of statistical equality of results and the raising of economic levels of disadvantaged subgroups. One tool used by the government has been the categorical grant--money given to local school districts to be used for certain delineated purposes. Wirt and Kirst conclude that, although federal policy makers support the value of local control, they "prefer to provide categorical grants to push national priorities that may transcend the priorities of particular states or localities. With federal funds come policy controls through the requirements for eligibility and accountability."¹¹ Federal grants for other educational purposes, such as the free-lunch program and science materials, are also tied into the concept of acceptance of federal policies in the social area. Thus,

"it is idle to pretend that Federal funding policies do not play a very large role in what happens and, equally important, what does not happen in the field of education."¹²

The largest federal aid-to-education program is Title I of the Elementary & Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA, T-1) which provides over \$1.5 billion each year to "provide financial assistance to local districts to upgrade the educational opportunities of educationally deprived children residing in low-income areas."¹³ Other federal programs include Head Start, a pre-school program specifically designed to overcome sociological disadvantages of poor children; Follow Through, a program designed to carry Head Start benefits into the public schools; and the Job Corps, a program aimed at youths between the ages of 16 and 21 who are out of school, unemployed and disadvantaged, which is designed to give these young people the education and job skills necessary for employment.

The monies for all these programs are funneled through local school districts and used to supplement--not supplant--local programs. The belief of the Great Society proponents was that, given large enough amounts of money, weaknesses and injustices in the school system and in society itself could be overcome. Rather quickly it became apparent that federal money was not achieving the desired end. Compensatory education has failed for several reasons.

First of all, federally sponsored programs have not been successful in closing the educational gap between poor children and the more affluent. Children in Head Start programs regressed to the levels of non-Head Start control group children after entering public school. A study done by Westinghouse showed that "even children who attended full-year Head Start programs in the deep South and inner city schools were not much ahead of their peers by the end of first grade."¹⁴ A General Electric Company study of the Title I programs in eleven "promising" school districts during 1965 - 67 showed achievement scores in one district improved, two districts declined and the other eight didn't change.¹⁵ A study of the effects of education upon poverty by Thomas Ribick, published by the Brookings Institute, also examined the role of the federal educational programs and came to similar conclusions. One program Ribick studied was the Higher Horizons project in New York City-- a project highly touted as a model for compensatory education programs. Higher Horizons included remedial reading, extra counseling of students and parents, cultural enrichment activities, specially tailored curriculum changes and the addition of extra teachers. At its peak, 64,075 students were involved in various New York City schools participating in the Higher Horizons project at a cost of \$61 per child per month above non-Higher Horizon schools. Despite this, Ribick found that Higher Horizon students

did not (1) stay in school longer; (2) increase their learning capacity; or (3) actually learn more.¹⁶

Federal programs were also faulted on the ground that the money involved often did not go to benefit poor children. In spite of safeguards written into Title I to prevent abuses, the Rand Corporation study of 1974 reported that "most local agencies simply wanted general aid for their schools, and many were either unwilling or unable to rush into compensatory programs. The local agencies came to view their evaluation duties as an irritating annual ritual, and ended up writing what amounted to self-serving press releases, describing the dawn of a new education era. On paper, compensatory education was working beyond anyone's wildest dreams. But to the Office of Education, which had not insisted on rigorous and comprehensive data, the reports were a joke."¹⁷

The intended recipients of federal monies spoke out bitterly, at times, charging that those who run the programs are the real beneficiaries of them. For example, 254 companies have each received more than \$100 million in O.E.O. contracts, including 44 separate evaluations of Head Start.¹⁸ Also, the relationship between anti-poverty personnel and the companies involved in administering the programs is tainted in a manner similar to that of federal regulatory agencies and the industries to be regulated.

Either anti-poverty personnel go to work for companies eligible for federal contracts (and often the dollar amounts these companies receive goes up substantially after such employment) or anti-poverty personnel start their own companies and get the contracts themselves. Thus, VISTA official, Leo Kramer, resigned and started his own company which then collected \$1,972,912 in anti-poverty contracts; another VISTA employee, Gary Price, resigned to become president of Policy Management Systems, Inc. which reaped a benefit of \$3,307,913 in poverty contracts.¹⁹ Such abuses have made many people skeptical of all federal programs.

The federal government's participation in compensatory education has also been attacked on the ground that money is not the answer to solve the problem of educational deficiencies. Critics of this approach to educational reform point to statistics such as the Project Talent data in the Ribick book. Project Talent is a statistical survey of the National Data Bank for Research in Education and the Behavioral Sciences of the University of Pittsburgh. In this survey school district expenditures per pupil were compared for low status and high status pupils--with status referring to socio-economic factors. The low status pupils who received the highest per pupil expenditures (over \$500) were still about a year and a half below the high status pupils who received the lowest per pupil expenditures (less than \$200.) In fact, "regardless of the amount of

money spent, the mean scores for low status boys in the twelfth grade is consistently less than eleven--the mean score for all eleventh grade boys taking the test."²⁰

John Holt, writing in 1972, argues that, "poverty on a large as opposed to a small scale is not an educational problem; it cannot be cured with doses of more schooling; more schooling for all those in the poverty zone will not lift more than a few out of it, and then largely at the expense of those just above it; and billions of dollars spent to provide more school services for the poor will, like the Poverty Programs in general, enrich the middle class people providing the services much more than it will enrich the poor."²¹ Christopher Jencks agrees that compensatory education will neither raise achievement levels nor eliminate poverty. In his study of education, he concludes that academic achievement is crucially dependent upon cultural background rather than the type of education or the amount of money spent on education.²² In fact, all available evidence shows that the underlying assumption on the part of those in the federal government, that money poured into compensatory education programs could bring the poor and the minorities into midstream America, is invalid. Despite this, the role of the national government continues to rely heavily on these methods; over the past twelve years "more than \$23 billion in federal funds have been spent for such purposes."²³

The second tool used by the federal government to foster national policies through education is the court system. The affirmative action programs implemented under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 were designed to provide equal access to educational opportunities (among other goals.) Overzealous federal judges, however, "took it to be a means of guaranteeing statistical equality of result."²⁴ In order to comply with court mandates, school administrators had to focus on the race and sex of teacher applicants rather than on their record or ability. Rigid quota systems for students and teachers were instituted using race and sex as the only applicable criteria. Geoffrey Wagner calls this governmental program of favored treatment for certain groups "excellence with exceptions." Under this approach, the standards which are demanded of the majority are waived if one is a member of a select minority. Not just any minority group will do, however. For instance, despite a long history of discrimination and enforced quotas to keep their number in academia limited, Jews are not classified as a minority for purposes of preferential hiring. Wagner, who recounts the decline of C.C.N.Y., caused by forced governmental regulations regarding minorities, believes such policies are nothing more than "racial prejudice, naked and unashamed, in practice, and given the sanction of the U. S. Government."²⁵ He contends we are regressing to a more primitive form of society in which

ascribed rather than achieved status is the criterion for advancement. Performance is no longer the only measure by which those in the academic world are judged; in fact, performance takes a back seat to sex and ethnicity. One HEW directive, with which C.C.N.Y. had to comply, states, "neither minority nor female employees should be required to possess higher qualifications than those of the lowest qualified incumbent."²⁶ Under this regulation, if there is one incompetent or poorly qualified member of the faculty, he must be the sole standard by which to judge all minority and female applicants. As more and more minimally qualified persons are forced to be hired, educational standards can do nothing but go down.

In 1954, George F. Zook called upon educators and social scientists to examine the role of the federal government in education, warning that, "Otherwise we may someday wake up to find, at the end of our generation, as a result of patchwork and piecemeal legislation, a distorted and disjointed national policy in education which represents neither the considered judgment of education leaders nor the needs of our country."²⁷ The generation has passed, and Zook's warning has come to be. Education, as the means by which individual growth is fostered, has given way to the concept of education as a means by which to assure social equality. The role of the federal government in this policy shift cannot be overemphasized. It is

disheartening that the government which could have done so much to raise the quality of education, has instead contributed so much to its decline. Federal intervention in education, to ensure that equal opportunity as provided in the Fourteenth Amendment is not abridged, is right and proper and acceptable to most in the field; on the other hand, federal intervention to ensure an artificial statistical equality or to foster social goals which are detrimental to educational excellence is unacceptable. Again, those hurt the most by this type of intervention are those whose home background cannot compensate for poor quality of education or lack of moral training within the school system. The child of middle (or upper) class America will get by, for his parents will see that enrichment opportunities are available to him.

Jesse Jackson, a civil rights activist and organizer of Push for Excellence, is one black leader who believes lowering educational standards does his people no favor. Taking his cause to the local schools, he insists that "it's the responsibility of the principal to compensate by invention or innovation or substitution or, if nothing else, by raising hell with the people."²⁸ Jackson views as an insult the contention that black students cannot be expected to perform at a high level and that educational standards must, therefore, be lowered in order to achieve numerical equality. "We must demand educational excellence

from our youngsters and break the 'dependency syndrome' that is destroying so many of their minds."²⁹ In Jackson's view, the local schools, the community, parents and students, themselves, must bear the responsibility for educational progress, and no amount of federal aid can compensate if this responsibility is lacking.

I believe the most crucial problem in the area of the relationship between the government, education and the individual is the mutual failure to recognize the interacting obligations, each to the other. Those in the government give only cursory attention to the role of education in maintaining the democracy. Rather, the thrust of governmental policy has been in the arena of quantitative equality. The traditional emphasis upon individual growth has been lost in the effort to effect mass, minimal levels of competence imposed on all, regardless of individual capabilities or desires. Because the true aim of education, that of fostering the continued capacity for growth in the individual, runs counter to the policy of enforced quantitative educational equality, the former is shunted aside, and the government's obligation in this area is unacknowledged. The result is inferior education for all.

On the other hand, education's obligation to "maintain the life and advance the welfare of society"³⁰ (again by means of fostering individual growth) has also been

downgraded as educators have come to view their function as one of social adjustment. James Coleman, in a landmark study of American education, concludes that "most high schools create mediocre learning environments and actively reinforce teachers and adolescents for being part of the social milieu."³¹ Thus, academic classes are dismissed so that students can attend pep rallies for football games; the student who is a loner or who questions commonly held beliefs is considered a misfit; and student leaders are chosen on the basis of popularity contests. The notion that the school has an obligation to help create a better society by leading each individual to become the most that he is capable of being has been discarded by most educators.

Finally, the obligation of the individual to strive for his own particular excellence, and thus to serve the community, is lost as students expect, passively, to be taught rather than, actively, to learn. This is partly a result of the compulsory nature of education which fosters the attitude that the obligation of the student ends with physical attendance; more basically it is part of an overall attitudinal change which views the system as holding obligations toward the individual without concomitant obligations on the part of the individual. Some educators concur in this belief, feeling that failure on the part of a student is wholly the fault of the school system and absolving the student of any responsibility for

his own progress.³² This position is, in reality, untenable if education is viewed as an active process in which input from the student is as necessary as that from the educator.

The interrelated obligations of the government, the educational system and the individual inextricably bond the three together. When these obligations are mutually accepted, understood and worked upon, a harmony exists between the three in which the relationships are profitable to all. When, as in the case of contemporary America, the obligations are ignored or misconstrued, a tension develops, the result of which is a malfunctioning of all three elements of society.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

My examination of basic issues in contemporary education leads me to believe that there are, indeed, problem areas which need to be addressed if we wish to make permanent improvements in the field of education. Billions of dollars have been spent in a vain attempt to provide quality education for all by means of the shotgun approach; that is, by attempting to solve individual problems here and there as they occur, rather than recognizing that these problems are but symptoms of other, more fundamental, weaknesses inherent within the system. My contention, on which I have focused this paper, is that contemporary America has misunderstood the basic nature of education; that this nature revolves around the concepts of educational excellence, moral virtue and the relationship between the government, education and the individual; and that because of this lack of understanding, problems within the sphere of education are not being, and cannot be, solved. Only when education is viewed in an overall context which encompasses these three concepts, will educational difficulties be fully understood and thus be properly handled. For, to attempt to solve that which is

not understood, almost guarantees that the solution will be inappropriate. Certainly, recent attempts to upgrade education have been failures by every measure which can be applied.

An overall approach to educational problems is necessary because, as pointed out earlier, these problems are interrelated. To attempt to examine educational excellence, for instance, without taking into account the impact of morality or the national government on excellence, is an impossible task. For this reason, it is important that social scientists take an active part in the overall field of education, becoming aware that educational specialists are competent only within their limited field and that interdisciplinary problems require an interdisciplinary approach. An automobile mechanic is capable of solving mechanical problems within the automobile, but his area of expertise does not make him competent to design the automobile, understand the impact of automobile emissions on air pollution or comprehend the complexities of mass transportation. Similarly, the educator, alone, cannot solve educational problems which necessarily involve many other areas of society. The breadth of the field of education was well understood by the Greeks as well as by early American political leaders and educational philosophers. The contractions and limitations placed on education are relatively modern phenomena, albeit they are taken as given today.

My conclusion is that the education system rests

upon a foundation comprised of the three concepts examined in this paper. Just as a triangle is incomplete without the three sides, so the foundation of education is incomplete without a solid grounding in the three concepts. Each strengthens and adds to the others; each is diminished when one is weakened. To remove one completely is to undermine the entire structure.

Arete or educational excellence is generally agreed upon as important--as long as the discussion remains theoretical. At the practical level, the concepts spoken of are equal education for all, standardization of results and the achievement of minimum competency. The understanding of excellence as an individual process of growth and development is lost in a welter of social goals which detract from excellence in an attempt to force all within the educational system into a single mold. This averaging prevents those who possess the ability to excel intellectually from fulfilling their potential; they remain at the top of their classes but are never given the rigorous scholastic grounding of earlier scholars. The lowering of top SAT scores attests to the fact that those who have the ability to excel intellectually are not being challenged. In an attempt to equalize education, the higher end of the spectrum has been lowered rather than the lower end brought up. Intellectual excellence, however, is the purview of the few--the majority can never achieve this end. Traditionally, education never

attempted this impossibility. Thus, education today not only cheats the intellectually gifted but also the majority who are never given the chance to attain their excellence because they are forced, in the name of equality, to compete in an educational game which is stacked against them. Many are labeled failures because they are given no viable alternatives to a monolithic, academic education. Vocational education concentrates on a few woodshop and homemaking courses too limited and too few in number to allow even the most talented to develop real skill. As with academic classes, these electives are open to all, regardless of ability, in an effort to produce well-rounded students. Just as the intellectually gifted child is frustrated when academic classes creep along at a pace designed to accommodate the slow learner, so the mechanically gifted child is stifled when an entire semester is devoted to the turning out of a pair of unimaginative bookends. The question is not who is cheated, for all are cheated; rather, the question is how are we going to open our educational system so that all are given an opportunity to reach individual excellence? Only when a variety of equally attractive options, open to all, are offered, will the educational system steer the course of educational excellence. This is an attainable goal as long as the same kind of excellence is not demanded of each one.

Technical expertise, in whatever realm, will never suffice for excellence if moral virtue is not an integral

part of the learning process. Virtue is not necessarily a religious concept, although it is a part of religious training. To limit virtue to the sphere of formal religion is to misunderstand the very nature of virtue and is to produce the "Sunday Christian" type of thinking. Many of the idealistic reformers of the 1960's understood the hypocrisy of an abstract adherence to the name of virtue while the daily practice of goodness fell by the wayside. Just as in our technological society everyone must have a basic foundation in educational fundamentals if he is to survive, so everyone must also have a basic foundation in moral virtue if the nation is to survive. Internal decay rather than external force has, historically, caused the downfall of most great nations and empires. Thucycides points to the moral decline of Athens as the turning point in the Poloponnesian War; Gibbon traces the fall of the Roman Empire to the same cause. Moral virtue is a national concern and cannot be left, haphazardly, to be taught in the home or church. Only one institution has the breadth and capacity to reach everyone--and that is the educational system. This, alone, would suffice as reason for teaching morality in the schools; however, because virtue is an inseparable part of education, it would have to be taught (if education is to be complete) regardless of national imperatives. That national purpose and educational aims mesh in this instance is not coincidental for education,

in the final analysis, is the search for virtue. For this reason, when virtue is divorced from education, those within the educational system are deprived of a basic and necessary part of their education. They learn, instead, a mass of facts and figures, but do not have the cement of moral virtue to form these together into a rational whole. Many students today speak of their education as irrelevant without realizing that it is the absence of virtue which causes the irrelevance. Only if moral virtue is returned to the schoolhouse, where it belongs, will today's students receive the full education to which they are entitled, and will our nation have the ability to survive to fulfill the bright promise of its beginnings.

Finally, the relationship between the government, education and the individual must be clarified. Ideally, these are three elements within a whole which support and strengthen each other in the attempt to achieve a common goal--the development of individual growth which will, in turn, create a national excellence. Lesser goals of statistical equality have been allowed to take precedence over the common end, and, in the process, have so distorted the harmonious relationship between the three elements that no goals are being reached. Statistical equality is an unattainable myth. Even if it were attainable, the results would be disastrous--a nation of identical, inferior robots. There are methods of reaching the national goal of minimal

economic standards of well-being (such as a negative income tax) which can be implemented without, at the same time, destroying the educational system on which the nation depends. Every research study done shows that using the educational system for this purpose has been a failure from all standpoints. Disadvantaged children have not improved their educational levels, and overall educational standards have fallen continuously. At the national level, leaders must understand that the foremost goal of education is individual excellence rather than equality of results. Educational opportunities must be widened so that each person has a chance to find his own area of arete, rather than narrowed in a vain attempt to produce equal arete. The goal of equal opportunity is a commendable one--no one should be prevented from entering a particular field because of race or sex; equal opportunity, however, must not be limited to one field, that of intellectual arete, but widened so that the majority who can never reach intellectual arete have other attractive options open to them in which they, too, can find excellence. With the national government supporting a multi-faceted educational program of educational excellence, the harmonious balance between the government, education and the individual will once again be restored.

To turn around our educational system so that it once again rests firmly on the foundation of the three concepts of excellence, morality and a harmonious relationship between the government, education and the individual

is a large--but not impossible--task which must involve all concerned citizens. Unless the existence and importance of this foundation is understood, the job will remain undone. Nor can it be left to a few specialists, each interested primarily in his area of expertise and willing to sacrifice greater goals for narrow, temporary victories. Educational problems will never be solved until they are viewed in the context of education as a whole resting on a foundation of excellence, morality and a relationship of harmony between the government, education and the individual. Byron Massialas concludes his book examining the relationship between the political order and education with the "hope that it will provide the basis for a dialogue between educators and political scientists and that this field of scholarly endeavor will find its rightful place in the academic curriculum."¹ In writing this thesis, I can do no more than to hold onto this same hope.

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