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PROFESSIONAL TEACHER OR PROFESSIONAL INDOCTRINATOR?

The main weapon of the authorities in the maintenance of society is to deny the validity of experience and thoughts/beliefs when they are in contradiction to the status quo. We see this process going on all day and presumably night as well in Colleges, especially Colleges of Education. It is an interesting thought that before any of us are allowed back into schools as it were by choice, though why any of us should choose to go back I find difficult to understand, we need to go through a process in a higher status establishment to be turned into professionals. Why is it that teachers are always going on about being professionals? Doesn't another government department advertise for personnel with the words 'Join the Professionals?'

I suggest that this process of professionalisation is a rather affected way of describing what is a means of ensuring that only the 'right type' of people get into the schools and come in contact with the children.

One of the major requirements for entry into the establishment at all is to have been reasonably successful at school in terms of collecting pieces of paper, though not too successful, and to have conformed with the school pattern while there. To put it crudely we, in the main, have a vested interest in keeping the schools more or less as they are. We believe in education (which we correlate with the process which goes on in school). We must look where it got us. We are encouraged to be fairly liberal, help other children to have the opportunity we have got, bring the curriculum up to date, do away with corporal punishment. Fundamentally we believe or are expected to believe that what we got was good, it could have been a bit better so aim in life to get into the schools and help to make the system work.

The college basically ignores the experience of the students who come into it, it does not consider our understanding of our own needs. Tutors have told me in tutorial and together with others in group meetings that we students do not know what is good for us, that they the staff are the experts, who are trained and experienced in being able to see what students need. This whole mentality suggests an arrogance of vast magnitude. Do any of us know what is best for another; can we determine what experiences are of the greatest value?

Constantly I am reminded by the behaviour of the tutors that we are in college to be 'trained as teachers'. The tutors of course are allowed to define both training and teacher; the student is not. We are not concerned with 'education' primarily, and when we are, again it is the tutors and institutions which define 'education' which all too often seems to be confused with being trained to be teachers and the act of teaching.

True there are compartmentalised areas defined by the college such as Philosophy of education or Sociology of education etc. but constantly they have been separated and regulated by timetables divorced in the main from our own experience and dissociated from real life activity.

Most time-tabling is prescribed as being the department' and tutors interpretation of the students' needs, there is not an open situation where students and staff can identify an area of concern or interest common to a group and through a thought and action process working together get to grips with a task.

An example of this would be for those of us who are out of sympathy with the existing school structure to be able to come into contact with young people and children who are demonstrating their dissatisfaction through truancy and together with these young people develop our own educational experiences.

For those of us who are not in total sympathy with the present college structure, attendance in that over-heated word incubator becomes intolerable. We become the producers of documents which are meaningless to our experiences of life. Our feelings and ideas are neutralised into an idealistic verbalism until we suffer from cynicism and apathy. Our college life fails to become the natural and integral part of living.

We are encouraged by the institution to view college life in much the same way we were taught to view school, as a period of preparation for living, in this case for living as a teacher. The institution is not concerned with persons but only personnel. One senior tutor of education constantly refers to students being at risk or in danger of being at risk, this does not only refer to activities such as smoking pot or drinking heavily while on T.P. but to things like students having sexual relationships with each other, non-attendance of classes so as to be doing things which we may consider to be more relevant and purposeful. On one occasion while discussing an assignment with me I made a statement concerning an aspect of education and I was informed by him that I may be considered at risk if I continued that line of thought. He was of course requesting me

indirectly to retract the statement, it was quite irrelevant to him that this may be an expression of my true feelings.

In this preparation, the college does the very same thing as most schools, it withdraws us from the world, so that our only occupation for three years is playing with words, listened to, spoken, read and written. It is in no way permitted for these words to be the generators of action outside prescribed limits, we may not use them to change our environment.

Politically, we the students are vital to the state. We are the future personnel for the state machine, each one of us is expected to play our role as indoctrinators of countless hundreds of children in our working lives. We will be the caretakers of time, the police of the classroom, the transmitters of values, the judges of futures, the expression of authority. Our job will be to prepare children to fit into the existing society, not questioning it and challenging it but accepting it and their role in it as competitors, producers and consumers. Much care is taken to ensure that we will fulfil that role, we are carefully selected, not for our imagination, critical powers and creative potential, but for our conformity to existing values, for our faith in the schooling system and our recognition of authority structures. Our most radical statements concerning change are based on the 'we'll change it from within' variety which for most of us means when we get into the schools as fully fledged professionals. This is acceptable because the statement infers a belief in the structures of our institutions and society and the belief in apparent procedures for change.

More fundamentally we need to realise our own sense of humanity, to confront the self alienation and acts of self denial which we in our role as students tend to accept and even on occasions embrace. We need to extract ourselves from our function of consumers and regurgitators of shallow and too often meaningless material.

The philosophy of individualism tends to be the philosophy of 'I'm all right, Jack', a way of ruthlessly carving out as much as possible for ourselves. Whether we do this legitimately (i.e. whether we conform to college status quo or bend the rules to suit ourselves) as individuals we are still playing the competitive game. It is not surprising that we as students are a disjointed bunch of self seekers as the whole college and its policies are geared to keep us as such.

We need to cast out individualism and all the illusions surrounding it and learn a new language. That of Brother, Sister, unity. We need to turn from our search for approval from those 'superiors' and halt our competitive struggle which separates us from each other and ourselves. We must be

wary of instituting our own superiors and infallible leaders but replace the whole concept of subservience with unity and co-operation in a creative struggle.

Our role of student is defined for us by the role of tutor, our whole background and education reinforces these roles but they are not inevitable. We have the power to change our role, we can stop looking to them for our identity, we can find our new identity (ourselves) with and through each other. We can stop our participation in useless word games and pseudo-scientific studies, we can break out of the vacuum in which our 'education' seems to be implanted. Together with our new-found brothers and sisters we can engage in meaningful action and in reflecting upon that action in a creative cooperative fashion (having destroyed our need for verbal one-upmanship) we can raise our consciousness. Not as now, in an illusionary manner, but so that we do implement real change in our environment.

The whole structure of the college is geared against the free development of our human potential. Its process is one of mystification and bewilderment so that we are unable to recognise easily the destructiveness of our role within the institution. Our aim must therefore be to break down the compartmental barriers, to shed our worship of individualism and its promises of hollow rewards of personal advancement. We must drop out of the competitive action which is always regulated through concepts of superiority and inferiority, recognising that it can only offer action within narrow boundaries and restricted options. Recognising the truly creative opportunities of a co-operative unity of equals we can hope to liberate ourselves through our struggle for meaningful education and life.

Let us stop pretending that we are only in a state of preparation to live, that somehow our mystical certificate which is awarded at the end of this race track gives us permission to know how. We are living now. We have ideas, feelings and the ability to judge for ourselves now. Let us act out this reality. Certainly one way would be to build a strong peer group structure among our brothers and sisters and start the struggle to change the system, after all we are in it!

Growth potentialities, when free from blockage, release energies and pressures which resemble the attributes of the original growth forces. The energies released are expansive as well as formative and these are the essential characteristics of the growth force which developed the fertilised ovum through the various stages of its development up to the adult organism.

The Puzzled Body Dr. Caron Kent (Vision)