

A Needed Paradigm Shift in Education  
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This paper is about making better sense of what is going on in American schools. It is directed at those in policy-making positions in the government, professional educators, and the lay public.

Two Buddhism-derived commitments will be helpful in this exploration. The first is a commitment to *right awareness*: being fully awake, present, alert, here, now, in this moment. The second is a commitment to *right understanding*: seeing and perceiving things as they really are, rather than what you assume they are, or have been told they are, or wish they were, or think they ought to be; or in the way you believe you are obligated to perceive them; or in the way that makes you think more highly of yourself; or in the way that serves your own needs, wants, and interests.

Right awareness and understanding are about freedom of the mind. They are about setting aside doctrine and formula and conventional wisdom. They are about going beyond theories and slogans and numbers and other abstractions to concrete reality. They are about examining the world carefully, with new eyes, scrutinizing it, testing every idea and contention, and knowing rather than assuming and believing and hoping. They are about seeing, really seeing. They are about becoming fully alive. With schools--with many things in American life--we have not been fully alive.<sup>1</sup>

This writing is about looking at schooling in America in a different way. My thesis is that a paradigm shift with reference to schooling would be helpful in doing that. By paradigm I mean, various ways to get at the same concept, a basic pattern of thought; a fundamental way to perceive reality; a prevailing perspective; a lens through which to understand reality; a conceptual, theoretical, explanatory model or structure that provides a frame of reference for discerning what is happening in the outside world or the inner, subjective world within the person. Even though we are not always articulately aware of our paradigms--we don't have words to

describe them and give them explicit meaning--they exist as organic, physically felt, tacit, personal truths and outlooks that strongly influence, even determine, what we see, think, prefer, and do. By paradigm shift, I mean moving from one paradigm to another and seeing what difference that makes. That's what I'll do here.

A supply/aggregate paradigm predominates in American schooling. I propose that it would profit us if we shifted to a demand/individual paradigm and see where that takes us. This writing will be an explanation of what I mean by this.

I want to make it clear at the outset that a paradigm shift does not mean replacing one paradigm with another; in this case discarding what I am calling a supply/aggregate paradigm. To the contrary, the ideal is being able to bring multiple paradigms, or basic perspectives, to the consideration of any issue, and then using the one or ones that best empower us to discern what is going on and where to go and how to get there.

What is the prevailing supply/aggregate paradigm in education? It's a perspective we all know well. There is problem with American schools and teachers, particularly with regard to poor and minority students. Schools aren't doing the job nearly well enough. The school product we are offering the customer, the consumers--students, parents, the general public--isn't up to par. That is to say, the supply isn't good.

And how do we know the supply isn't good? Because the statistics are bad. SAT scores are down; Nation Assessment of Educational Progress numbers aren't what they should be (NAEP is a nationally representative assessment of what America's students know in mathematics, reading, science, writing, the arts, civics, economics, geography, and U.S. history); American students come off bad in tests of math and science compared to students in other countries; girls aren't enrolling in math and science courses in the same numbers as boys; performance on standardized tests is lower among low income students; and/or black and Hispanic performance lags behind that of white students. These statistics are summary data--means (averages), medians (the middle score in an ordered list of all the scores), standard deviations (how loosely or tightly data are bunched together), and correlations (how one phenomenon, say race, is associated with another phenomenon, say achievement)--generalizations about groups of people, inferences. They are not descriptions of actual, flesh-and-blood, individual

students: this one, and that one, and that one over there, see these people. Rather, they are conclusions about collections or groups of students, or *aggregates*.

What to do about a supply problem as evidenced by aggregate data is obvious: *improve the supply*. Make schools and teachers better, and improve the aggregate data. And, for a half century, that is what we have been doing, or trying to do.

One way to improve the supply is to get all schools--and increasingly "all" means every school in America--on the same page with their curriculum (what they are teaching, the content, the learning goals). This week at this writing (March, 2010), a *New York Times* article ("Panel Releases Proposal to Set U.S. Standards for Education," March 10) reports that a panel of educators has just released a proposed set of common academic standards for the nation's schools. The standards lay out what American public school students should learn in math and English, year by year, from kindergarten to high school graduation. They replace the "motley current checkerboard of locally written standards."

So too will getting rid of bad teachers improve the supply of education. *Newsweek* magazine's cover story this week (the March 6, 2010 issue) is entitled "Why We Must Fire Bad Teachers."

The relative decline of American education at the elementary and high school levels has long been a national embarrassment as well as a threat to the nation's future. Once upon a time, American students tested better than any other students in the world. Now, ranked against European schoolchildren, America does about as well as Lithuania, behind at least 10 other nations. Within the United States, the achievement gap between white students and poor and minority students stubbornly persists--and as the population of disadvantaged students grows, overall scores continue to sag.

And who is a bad teacher? It's one whose students don't score well on the average (in the aggregate) in tests. The assumption is that the quality of supply equals the quality of results, i.e., student achievement; and therefore teachers, the suppliers, must be held accountable for the performance of their students. Jettison the ones whose students don't perform and that will improve education.

Note the national focus on these two examples--national academic standards, and looking at teaching from a national, American, perspective. Over time, a supply/aggregate paradigm tends to move things to higher, broader, more inclusive, farther reaching, less personal and intimate levels and strategies and practices. A national analysis and agenda will eventually characterize, or at least be a central element, in school reform efforts--or perhaps a state focus, or collection of states, or, less frequently, a local or community one, but not an individual one: this student, that student, and that other student over there. In order to get the best leverage on the supply problem, this paradigm seems to imply, go the "big picture" route, and the bigger the picture, the better.

And this is what has happened since the 1960s. Examples: Academic standards identification efforts at both the state and national levels. School choice programs, either through vouchers or charter schools (charter schools are public schools that operate with relative independence). Schools-for-profit. The 2001 No Child Left Behind federal legislation requiring states to develop assessments in basic skills for all students in certain grades if those states are to receive federal funding. At this writing there is the Race to the Top fund, a federal program that provides grants to state programs of school innovation and reform.

The basic approach in all these undertakings is for experts to set the goals or standards of success that schools, teachers, and students are to meet, with success in these regards defined in terms of standardized measures of group accomplishment and improvement, particularly that of black and Hispanic students relative to white students, and to a lesser extent, low income students relative to affluent students. Schools and teachers--not students, not their parents--are held accountable for bringing about academic success, and again, as measured by standardized tests. A major assumption giving impetus to this overall approach is that competition among schools will be a strong incentive for lackluster schools to get off the mark, that is, to improve their product, their supply: test results in the various schools will be made public for comparison; the possibility of students leaving an underperforming school for another; and, worst case scenario, schools that don't produce results will be shut down.

The approach just outlined would seem to make a lot of sense, particularly if you assume the problem with education is that schools--and the referent is public, or government, schools--are offering their clients a bad product (as evidenced by the fact that x percentage of high school graduates can't do basic math, and the like). The problem, however, is that when you move from rhetoric and good intentions to reality, things fall apart. For instance, Diane Ravitch, a highly respected figure in American education, in a recent *Los Angeles Times* op-ed piece ("The Big Idea--It's Bad Educational Policy," March 14, 2010), asserts:

Today, there is empirical evidence, and it shows clearly that choice, competition and accountability as educational reform levers are not working. But with a confidence bordering on recklessness, the Obama administration is plunging ahead, pushing an aggressive program of school reform--codified in its signature Race to the Top program--that relies on the power of incentives and competition. This approach may well make schools worse, not better. . . . On federal tests, known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress, from 2003 to 2009, charters [charter schools] have never outperformed public schools. Nor have black and Latino students in charter schools performed better than their counterparts in public schools.

While Ravitch focuses on school choice in her remarks, her conclusion squares with my own regarding school reform across the board. Whatever the strategy, when you get beyond talk to actual results, it comes up short.

And that includes teaching approaches: I'm a professor of education, and time after time, year after year, decade after decade, in my work I have gotten the word that this latest get-it-done instructional strategy will save the day, turn disinterested, lackluster students into go-getters: there's been constructivism, developmental responsiveness, multiple intelligence-based instruction, projects, portfolios, rubric-based learning, and so on, and so on, and so on. But beyond making teachers and teacher educators feel good about themselves, you couldn't prove it by me that any of them has made a positive difference in what students get done in their schoolwork.

There is the class size explanation of what's wrong (a supply answer). Classes are simply too big, that's the problem. Students

can't learn in these big classes. We have to get the teacher-student ratios down. That argument has a lot of surface appeal, and how great it would be if it were in fact valid; we could just get the class sizes down and the problem would be solved, or a big part of it. Here again, though, reality rears its ugly head. I've not seen any empirical research that links class size and academic achievement when you are dealing with realistic numbers. Yes, two students is better than forty, but you have a very tough time demonstrating that it makes a difference whether there is fifteen or twenty-five in a class. The only thing I'm sure about with the class-size take on the school (supply) problem is that it results in more jobs for teachers and lower savings account balances for taxpayers; so at least that is good for some adults (the jobs part).

And then there's the knowing look I get all the time in my work accompanied by the pronouncement, "It's all about money." The schools are underfunded, that's the (supply) problem. Support the kids; give us your money. Americans, good souls that they are, have gotten that message--and really, that pitch--and have been willing to give more and more of their earnings to the schools. According to the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2009), in inflation-adjusted dollars, since 1960 American elementary and secondary per-student cost has quadrupled. One would be hard-pressed to make the case that schools now are four times better, or two times, or even as good as before.

A variant of the generally-underfunded-schools argument is that it's urban areas serving large numbers of poor and minority students that are underfunded (because we don't care about these kids, whites have taken flight from their obligations in the cities, we're all selfish capitalists, or whites are out-and-out racists). Johathan Kozel, a best-selling author and regular on the lecture circuit has milked this scold for years, depicting himself as a saint among sinners in the process.<sup>2</sup>

If you get beyond the finger-pointing and self-puffery, however, you will notice that Kozel and others of his ilk depend on anecdotes and the very shifty use of statistics to support their sermons.

Some actual numbers: In 2007, the average per pupil cost in the United States was around \$10,000 a year. New York City was reported at \$13,755. Utah, in contrast, was \$5,275. ("The Highest

Per Pupil Spending in the U.S.," New York Times, May 24, 2007.) Trust me, by every measure, Utah students outperform New York City students.

In this last paragraph I noted that New York City was "reported to be" \$13,755, because the question of whether big cities have been on the up-and-up in their reporting has come to light recently. The Washington, D.C. schools, for example, whose students perform at the bottom of standardized measures, reports \$17,500 per-student expenditure. About six months ago, I divided the budget of the D.C. schools by the number of students and came up with, I can't remember the exact figure, somewhere in the mid-20 thousands. I assumed I had to be off in my calculations, or missing the point somehow, and let it go. But perhaps I was on to something. Writing this, I came upon a *Washington Post* article that says there has been some slippery bookkeeping going on and that the real per-pupil expenditure in the D.C. schools is a whopping \$24,600. ("The Real Cost of Public Schools," April 6, 2008). A March, 2010 report of Cato Institute, a policy analysis center, declared that the average per-pupil spending in the nation's five largest metropolitan areas and the District of Columbia is 44 percent higher than reported.<sup>3</sup> New York City is actually nearly \$27,000 (Phoenix is around \$12,000). Los Angeles is \$25,208 (compared to \$20,751 in nearby high-income Beverly Hills). The big-city expenditures are 93% (!) greater than the estimated median for private schools.

I remember some years ago, a court order directed that a vastly greater amount of money be given over to the largely-minority Kansas City schools. Money was poured into the Kansas City schools--new textbooks, lab facilities, swimming pools, and so on. The academic results: no improvement in academic achievement. Nobody spends more than New York City and Washington D.C and Kansas City and nobody spends less than South Dakota and Utah, and guess whose students do better on the tests. Speaking of Buddhist awareness and right understanding, start to think about why that is, really.

I think about a 500 million dollar grant--a half billion dollars--from the Annenberg Foundation during the Clinton years to improve teachers (supply), especially in urban areas. So well intended, so convincingly argued, but the last I heard, nothing much if anything has come out of it in terms of student learning.

Over and over the pattern: no significant improvement in student achievement; Ravitch's assertions about charter schools writ large.

Which is not to say that nobody gets anything out of these sorts of efforts. While it doesn't serve schoolchildren and their parents very well, particularly those who have it tough in America, the supply/aggregate paradigm serves some people very well: politicians and government bureaucrats; certain interest groups; the public school establishment; journalists; and, to a good extent, the general public.

- The politicians and bureaucrats come out ahead because it puts them center stage where they like to be, and feel the need to be. All this action underscores the importance of what they do for a living. Politicians, and the government bureaucrats that do their day-to-day business, take the money they extract from people (taxes) and give it to other people to spend; and they devise and enforce rules and regulations that tell other people what they have to do. An improve-the-supply orientation props all that up. It wouldn't look good if these people were just standing on the side while people went about their lives without them. Plus that would be ego deflating. Where does that leave me?--me, me, *me*. Coming at things this way, the politicians and their backstage helpers don't have to spend much if any time in classrooms beyond photo-ops, or even know much at all about education other than basically what's in the wind, and they can pick that up on the fly and still take long weekends off. They can play expert by glancing quickly at data that lumps students together and pontificating conventional wisdom ("Our schools are failing," "Everybody must learn basic reading and math," "All students must master the traditional academic subjects," and so on).

- The black and Hispanic interest groups and their leadership come out ahead. Their incomes and status depend on getting people to view their kind in collective terms and as victims and dependent on others' largess, and on attracting attention and resources to themselves. You can't understand the school improvement thrusts in recent decades--including vouchers, charter schools, No Child Left Behind, and Race to the Top without factoring in the interest groups. No Child Left Behind isn't really about the kids in Richford, Vermont, the state where I live. It is about the Hispanic kids in Houston and placating the Hispanic lobby and

attracting Hispanic votes in upcoming elections. That is not to say that is all it is, but don't miss this part of it.

- The public school establishment--unions, teachers, school administrators, teacher training professionals, publishers of educational materials, state departments of education--like a supply/aggregate paradigm because they are the suppliers and they tally the aggregate numbers, and it underscores that they are the frontline action and need still more attention and money. Even when they are criticized--when schools and teachers are depicted as not being up to it--they don't get offended, because it's not them that it is being criticized. The bad schools and teachers are those people over there, not them. They have foolproof new ideas, and as soon as they get the necessary resources they'll fix the problems with those other guys. Schools may be criticized, but never the process of schooling itself, so their livelihoods aren't threatened. In fact, most supply-paradigm proposals call for them to do even more of what they do--longer school days and academic years, more programs, etc. Somebody else in their industry, the school business, might lose a job, though probably not, but in any case it won't be them.

- Journalists of the sort that wrote the "fire the bad teachers" cover story for *Newsweek* come out ahead too. They get to be on the side of the angels--in favor of good schools, on the side of poor and minority kids, against bad teachers (that's pretty safe)--and they get to articulate conventional wisdom (it's those bad teachers!), which takes very little heavy lifting, and pass it off as cutting edge insight, and they stay clear of grief (bad teachers aren't organized, and if they show up to the dinner parties you attend they aren't going to be vocal about you calling for their heads). Mainstream television and print journalists make a living being safe to their audience, and so you if you know what will be a safe play at any point time, about schooling or anything else, you can expect *Newsweek* and *NBC* to do just that in a big way.

- The general public comes out ahead because it gets to hear that the problem isn't them, and it isn't kids, bless them, it's those bad schools (which probably does not include the one down the street from them, so it's not as if they have to leap out of their easy chairs and spring into action). They feel good hearing that they are already onto the problem--schools are messed up--and they don't have to shift gears and think about things in different ways. The

increased taxes they are hit with isn't all that big a price to pay to be in the know about education and to be on the team doing something about it without it tying up their day.

So the supply/aggregate paradigm gets some people ahead--at least as they experience it on the surface; at a deeper, fundamental, long-term level it may actually cost them, but then again, most people aren't thoughtful enough to ground themselves in deep, fundamental, and long-term realities. In fact, if it didn't get some people ahead (as they perceive it, anyway), it wouldn't persist. People are self-interested creatures. They do whatever scratches their back even if they tell you what they are doing is scratching someone else's back.

The problem is that this paradigm, this orientation, when it predominates, does not result in children and their parents coming out ahead, or at least not enough of them, and particularly not those that occupy the lower tiers in American life. So without discarding this paradigm--that isn't the argument here--I'll turn the coin over, as it were, and look at things from the opposite angle. Instead of supply, I'll focus on demand. And instead of aggregates, statistics, I'll focus on flesh-and-blood human beings. I'm calling this take on things a demand/individual paradigm.

To do that will take some time. Schools are embedded in the total fabric of American life, and to understand them you have to take the whole of our society and culture, including our political underpinnings and heritage and history, into account. To get a handle on what American schooling is about now involves looking at what it was about in previous times and how we got from there to where we are now. I'll be as selective and succinct as I'm able, but I'll start from the beginning in America, at our founding as a nation, and take it to the present. Bear with me.

I begin with the Thomas Jefferson's famous words of the *Declaration of Independence*, 1776: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Of note in this context:

- Equal referred to equal rights as human beings. It did not assume equality of capability, character, aspiration, achievement, or station in society.

- The unalienable rights--they should not be abridged by anybody for any reason--are, first, to *life itself*. And second, there is the right to *liberty, freedom*. And third, there is the right to the *pursuit* of happiness. You don't have a right to happiness per se; you, I, have the right to pursue it, to seek it. And you and I are the ones that do the pursuing. Other people aren't obligated to pursue our happiness while we stand around and see how well they do at it. And others too have the unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. You and I don't have the right to restrict others' freedom and compel them to put their energies and resources into making us happy.

- These are *individual* rights, not group rights. Jefferson's biographer Joseph Ellis puts it this way:

The explicit claim is that the individual is the sovereign unit in society; his natural state is freedom from and equality with all other individuals; this is the natural order of things. The implicit claim is that all restrictions on this natural order are immoral transgressions, violations of what God intended; individuals liberated from such restrictions will interact with their fellows in a harmonious scheme requiring no external discipline and producing maximum human happiness.<sup>4</sup>

At its core, the American political system is an experiment in personal freedom and responsibility. To the extent it is possible to provide, it is the opportunity and the challenge to individual human beings to make something worthwhile out of their lives, in both the private and public spheres. Freedom depends on individuals not involuntarily being ordered about by others. The Federal Constitution--as did state constitutions--put limits on external, collective domination: government can do only thus and so and no more. The first ten amendments of the Federal Constitution, known as the Bill of Rights, spell out protections of individuals from the totality as represented by the government. In a letter to Francis Hopkinson, Jefferson wrote that the trouble with the Europeans of his day was that they had been bred to prefer "a government which can be felt; a government of energy." Jefferson continued, "God send that our country may never have a government which it can feel."<sup>5</sup> If government is anything in our time, it is felt, and proud of it, and bent on being more felt, and still more, and more, and more, and more.

An essay on education by a signer of the Declaration of Independence, a physician named Benjamin Rush, entitled "Thoughts Upon a Mode of Education Proper in a Republic," reflects the prevailing thought in those early times.<sup>6</sup> Rush refers to liberty as "the object and life of all republican governments." Note the reference to *republican* governments here. To the Founders, this was a republic and not a democracy; that distinction was important to them, and in it is in this discussion as well, and I'll say more about that up the line. In his essay, Rush refers to individual freedom time and again, along with the worry that government would rob people of it. There was no mention in his writing--you can see where I'm going with this--on equality of possessions or status, or to the legitimacy of taking what you want or need from other individuals against their will, or about group privileges and entitlements.

Of importance here, Rush wrote about the link between individual virtue and the preservation of freedom in both the private and public domains and the ability to take advantage of the possibilities freedom provides. His writing typifies the strong emphasis on virtue in those times. George Washington in his farewell address upon leaving office as president, declared virtue to be "a necessary spring of popular government."<sup>7</sup> Virtue in those times involved such personal characteristics as honesty, diligence, orderliness, self-discipline, willingness to work hard, frugality, moderation, temperance, kindness, fairness, independent-mindedness, dutifulness to family, and civic responsibility. To put that list in context, it helps to distinguish these "stern" virtues with the "soft" virtues currently in vogue in education such as care, compassion, and self-esteem.

As for schooling in those early years, it was a private and local affair, and parents were responsible for it. There was nothing in the Federal Constitution about education (and there still isn't). Parents hired tutors, sent their children to privately operated "dame schools," enrolled them in mission or charity schools operated by churches, or pooled their resources with other parents and hired a teacher. Sometimes town meetings voted to augment the costs to parents on a year-to-year basis.<sup>8</sup> The teacher worked for the parents, did the their bidding. The teacher wasn't free to do anything he or she (usually she) liked with the children. They were the parents' children, not the teacher's, and certainly not the

government's. Jefferson tried to persuade the Virginia legislature to approve a program that would guarantee three years of schooling for all children at public expense, along with advanced schooling for a talented few, but his plan was rejected.<sup>9</sup> Just as there was the belief in a "wall of separation between church and state" (Jefferson's phrase), so too was it believed that there ought to be separation of school and state.

Horace Mann is known as the father of the public school. Following tenure in the Massachusetts state legislature, Mann was the secretary of education in that state for a decade beginning in 1837. In 1848 he was elected to the U. S. House of Representatives. Inspired by the state-run schools in Prussia (now part of Germany), during his term as secretary of education, Mann worked diligently to establish "common schools" (all children attend and are exposed to the same, or common, curriculum), or public schools.

Mann represents the government getting into the school business in a major way. A public school is a government school, funded and operated by the government. People are taxed to pay for it; that is to say, other people are compelled to pay for your children's education, as many as you have. Schooling is no longer your private concern, as is, say, housing and food and clothing. You must send your children to the government school; attendance is compulsory. And you don't decide what your child learns in school; the government and its agents, the teachers and administrators it employs, do. The schooling of your child is their business, and your job is to support their efforts, not direct them. This arrangement established a pattern, a practice, that has lasted until today.<sup>10</sup>

Government-run, compulsory schools did not go unchallenged in those times. Journalist Orestes Brownson:

To entrust . . . the government with the power of determining the education which our children will receive is entrusting our servant with the power to be our master. . . . Government is not in this country, and cannot be, the educator of the people. Government here . . . has no right of control over our opinions: literary, moral, philosophical, or religious. Its province is to reflect, not to lead, nor to create the general will. . . . The real educators of the young are the grownup generation.<sup>11</sup>

Brownson thought that the government should "provide ample funds for the support of as many schools as are needed for the best education possible of all the children of the community, and there let it stop." Schools should be under the control of the families having children in them.<sup>12</sup> Of course, Brownson's wishes didn't win the day. Public schools are under the control of the government and its employees.

In the mid-1800s there was a large wave of immigration to America from Ireland. The Irish, Catholic, were uncomfortable with the non-sectarian Protestantism that characterized the schools their children were required to attend. Historian Richard Shaw: "Irish Catholic children were being expected to attend schools where the King James Bible was read, where Protestant hymns were being sung, where prayers were being recited, but most importantly where textbooks and the entire slant of the teaching was very much anti-Irish and very much anti-Catholic."<sup>13</sup> Catholic Bishop John Hughes: "We are unwilling to pay taxes for the purpose of destroying our religion in the minds of our children. That such books should be put in their hands is unjust, unnatural, and intolerable."<sup>14</sup> Irish Catholic parents and children, Bishop Hughes declared, "refused to be part of a system biased against themselves."<sup>15</sup> He said Catholic children deserved their own education: "We will not send our children where they will be trained up without religion, lose respect for their parents and the faith of their fathers, and come out turning up their noses at the name of Catholic. . . . In a word, give us our just proportion of the common school fund."<sup>16</sup>

In our time, conservative Christian parents are saying the exact same thing about the secularist, anti-Christian public schools and teachers they must give their children over to year after year. As it did with the Catholics in 1850 and 1860, their complaints fall on deaf ears, as they are written off as backward and unenlightened. The Irish finally established their own parochial schools, and today's Christian parents put their children in private schools or school them at home. They both had/have to pay double to do it: keep giving money to the government schools they don't attend along with paying private school tuition, or, with today's homeschooling Christian parents, endure the loss of income they must incur when quitting their jobs to be at home to teach their children.

Beginning in the late 1880s and extending into the early 1920s, there was a large tide of immigration from southern and eastern Europe. Twenty-two million new Americans came to our shores during this time. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the majority of students in urban centers were either immigrants or children of immigrants. Characteristically, these newcomers placed a high value on education, seeing it as the route to improving their lives in their new country. They considered a traditional, academically challenging curriculum to be the most empowering for them. They didn't want what they considered an education for a lesser people, one focused on minimal competencies in basic skills and vocational training. Educational historian Diane Ravitch: "Most of the immigrants were from Eastern Europe, many them were Jewish, and they wanted their children to get the best possible academic education."<sup>17</sup> A New York City mayoral candidate in 1917: "I say to you, Mr. Mayor, hands off our public schools. Our boys and girls shall have an opportunity to become lawyers, clergymen, musicians, poets, or men of letters."<sup>18</sup> An immigrant mother: "We want our kinder to learn mit der book, der paper, und der pencil . . . Dey are unserer kinder, not theirs."<sup>19</sup>

And the schools heeded these demands. While privately the children were Polish or Italian or Jewish, the schools educated them as individuals and helped bring them into the central fabric of American life, and in many instances, and within a single generation, to prominent and productive places in their new land. Arguably, this period in the early 1900s was American public education's finest hour.

Some of the most influential figures in American history have been intellectuals that the average person has never heard of. A prime example is Franz Boas (1858-1942).<sup>20</sup> Boas, a long-time professor at Columbia University, has been called the "Father of American Anthropology"--and really, he could be called the father of all of social science. Five ideas, or themes, Boas popularized have influenced the whole of American life, including schooling practice:

- *Cultural relativism.* You can't say one culture, one way of life, is better than another. It all a matter of values, and what you like somebody else doesn't like, and their outlook is as good as yours. They live their way in their situation coming out of their

history and you live your way coming out of yours, and you and they are on a par. You and your people and your heritage are no better than anybody else. So don't look down your nose at anybody.

- *Human equality.* Human beings are alike in capability and merit. Apparent differences--among races, ethnicities, individuals--do not reflect real differences.

- *Environmental determinism.* Contexts make us what we are. To understand what individuals and groups are like and accomplish is to understand that that is a function of their historical experience and current circumstance.

- *A focus on race, gender, and class.* These are the concerns that really matter.

- *Intellectual as activist.* To improve human beings, especially those who have it tough, their basic conditions of life must be altered for the better. People in a fix can't make it on their own; their circumstances preclude that, or at least make it very unlikely. The intellectually enlightened elite see this reality the most clearly, as well as understand best the specific directions in which the contexts of the mass of people, or groups within the larger whole, including the ways they think and the way others think about them, must be transformed in order to create a more just and equitable world--in terms of governing ideology and arrangements, power disparities, interpersonal and intergroup attitudes and relationships, distribution of wealth and economic opportunities and rewards, schooling policies and strategies, religious beliefs and practices, parenting approaches, and the management of the public discourse to ensure good outcomes. The informed vanguard have a moral obligation to employ their insights in re-configuring social, political, and economic circumstances and thereby allowing the manifestation of the inherent human equality of capability and achievement all human beings share.

John Dewey (1859-1952) is the most influential and revered figure in the history of American education bar none, nobody close.<sup>21</sup> Dewey was a philosopher and educational theorist at the University of Chicago and Columbia Universities, and is the patron saint of progressive education, since the 1920s the predominantly favored orientation in the education profession. It wouldn't be a stretch to

label the current establishment in the field of education neo-Deweyians.

While many movers and shakers in education get what Dewey was really up to, the thrust of his educational agenda is misunderstood by most. Typically, Dewey is thought of as the leading light in freeing up and humanizing stifling traditional classrooms. Educational historian David Tyack: "The standard method of teaching in most urban schools was quite literally to 'toe the line.' That is, the children were expected to come up front and recite to the teacher and stand with their toes lined up to the board and their hands in a particular place as they recited their lesson."<sup>22</sup> Educational historian Larry Cuban: "John Dewey believed that if schools were anchored in the social, intellectual, emotional, and physical development of the child, teaching would be different--and learning would be different and schools would be very different, hospitable places for children."<sup>23</sup>

It would take a cold heart to be on the side of children standing with their toes to the blackboard and inhospitable places for children, and the appeal of this more humane, gentler, kinder, more child-centered approach has been a powerful recruiting tool for educational progressives--if you are for being nice to kids, you're with us. The problem with all of that is that there is a kind of bait and switch going on. While I'm sure Dewey didn't want to browbeat little children, his real agenda was political and societal, and to understand Dewey, and Deweyianism in our time, is to understand this.

Dewey was left of center politically, a socialist. He was enamored of the way schools were being employed in the Soviet Union, where he had visited, to institute the collectivist, state-management aims of the Stalinist government. Dewey saw classrooms as vehicles, laboratories, for transforming American life, no less than that. He wanted a collectivist, democratic, egalitarian, and just America, and he wanted schools, and particularly teachers, to lead the way in those directions. In short, Dewey wanted a socialist America in alignment with his ideology and politics, and his sophisticated contemporary followers, left-of-center politically themselves, know this.

Let's break down Dewey's interconnected fundamental aims. He wanted classrooms to be more:

- *Egalitarian.* Rather than perceiving individuals and groups as hierarchically ordered, better and worse, higher and lower, people need to see themselves on a par with other people and groups. We are all the same; nobody is superior to anyone else. Don't be showing off, trying to distinguish yourself, setting yourself apart. Quit pushing to be exemplary and making other people look and feel bad in the process, no need to be excessive about things. In schools, we need to stay away from anything that sorts people and sets them apart--special classes, tests, grades, class ranks, a press for exemplary achievement, awards, anything like that.

- *Collectivist.* Dewey wanted schools to move America from, as he saw it, an individualistic, private (families, voluntary associations), selfish, and competitive country to a group-focused, communal, inclusive, altruistic, and cooperative one. Dewey's wanted to use the classroom, with its captive audience of children, to instill a group consciousness and deference to the whole that would play out in both the personal and public realms of life. The child's primary identity is with the group. Work with the group. Serve the group. Bring others into the group. Group needs and interests are on a higher moral plane than those of the individual. Don't go off on your own and do your personal number and leave the group behind; that is irresponsible, it's wrong, it's selfish. Concern for group welfare and serving the wants and needs of others replaces personal ambitions and actions. Group goals and projects replace individual initiatives. If the group wants it, in any area--what to study, where to go on the class trip, anything--that's the way it goes, and that is the way it ought to go. Cooperation replaces competition. We are all in this together. Get along, go along.

Schools were to indoctrinate students in what Dewey called "conjoint living," a group-centered, group-controlled approach to private life. Dewey advocated the creation of a "community in the classroom." This community and its collectivist values, ideals, virtues, ways, would become the primary reference point for students, rather than their parents (who had to be kept at a distance), families, churches, and neighborhoods, reactionary influences all. The hope was that these lessons in shared living would be transferred into politics and society--the larger world would come to mirror the classroom.

- *Democratic.* Dewey's seminal book is entitled *Democracy in Education*. In it, Dewey argued for using the classroom as a laboratory to train people up in democracy. And he wasn't just talking about political democracy. He also wanted democracy to prevail in social, private, realms. Dewey wanted power in the hands of the collective, the group, not the individual, and that is what democracy does *par excellence*. Democracy collectivizes virtually everything. It moves power from the individual to the group. It is a way of controlling minorities and individuals, a way to force them to do things the way the majority--or better, those that control the majority, politicians, interest groups, media figures--dictates. Democracy is sold as a way for people to control their own lives, but in fact, more than anything, it is a method of coercion. Whenever it is imposed, it takes the power to make a decision out of the hands of individuals and gives it over to the group. Democracy ends up with everybody, regardless of their desires or convictions, being compelled to conform to what the group dictates.

America is a constitutional republic, with prescribed governmental prerogatives--the government can only do such and so, it can't willy-nilly run people's lives. While there are democratic elements in our political system, there are also protections against majorities running roughshod over minorities--including checks and balances among the branches of government, the electoral college method of choosing a president, a judiciary free from the whims of elective politics, the presidential veto power, and states being having equal representation in the Senate even though they have markedly different populations.

From the beginning, there has been a strong emphasis in America on the freedom of individuals from the dictates of the whole. The Bill of Rights codifies that value, and there are--or were, anyway--the widely held beliefs in the integrity of the individual, personal liberty, individual freedom, including freedom of association, self-ownership, and self-determination. All that has to go, believed Dewey, if the better world he imagined, and witnessed being brought about in the Soviet Union, is going to be realized. These misplaced notions led to people being pitted against each other, to disharmony, exploitation, inequality, injustice.

The Founders saw the need for collective determination, but they sought to set up a political system where it was only used when absolutely necessary. Individual freedom counted greatly to them,

and they believed a republic was better at protecting individual liberty and integrity than a democracy. (Read Dewey and the other progressives and note how often, as in never, the words "freedom" and "liberty" appear.) We pledge allegiance to the flag "and to the *republic* [emphasis added] for which it stands." When is the last time you heard this country referred to as a republic? It is a democracy, isn't that so? and a democracy is the best of all worlds, no need to even talk about it, isn't that certain? That change in perception of what this country is, that faith in a particular system of collective decision-making and control, is the result of many years of very effective advocacy and action in schools, especially the universities, and elsewhere by the political left, including John Dewey and his followers.

With a democratic ethos, whatever the issue, whatever the choice, with virtually anything fair game for collective determination, no restraints, put whatever it is up to a vote, and force the minority to go along with the outcome. Want a new baseball stadium? (This comes to mind because I'm from the Twin Cities and the Minnesota Twins just got a largely-publicly-financed stadium in which to put on their for-profit baseball exhibitions.) You could leave it up to the owners of the sport-show companies--the Twins in the case I'm thinking of--to pay for their own place of business. And you could leave it up to individuals to decide whether or not to give their money to provide a venue for baseball performances--or movie showings or stripteases, whatever it is. But that won't do; you want to force even people who think baseball is cheapjack entertainment to do things your way and cough over part of their earnings for your profit and pleasure.

And democracy is your ticket to ride. People are conditioned to think that anything can be subject to a vote--absolutely anything --and whatever gets voted in has a binding claim on their time, energy, and money, and that once things get decided by the vote, they should keep their mouths shut and cooperate with the program. So get your baseball-stadium-financing scheme on the ballot. Lobby hard and get a majority of those who turn out for the election to vote for it, and you win the day. The elderly woman down the street who has never been a baseball game in her life loses her freedom to do what she wants with part of her Social Security money (increased sales taxes in the case of the Twins). Of course, if she had been savvy, and younger with more energy, and had had

the resources you have at your disposal, she could have forced you to pay for her bingo parlor in the same way, but she wasn't and she didn't, and perhaps she is of a time that thinks that would be a wrong thing to do, so there you go.

The same thing with schools. No mention of a federal role in education in the U.S. Constitution? No problem. Just vote on and pass No Child Left Behind or Race to the Top, national standards, whatever it is, and every teacher and parent and child in America loses the power to direct their own educational lives. Which from your perspective is the actually good, because elites (Boas and so on), among which you are a charter member, know better how to educate than parents do, and, for sure, children and adolescents don't know anything about it. Plus it feels good to you to be doing what you are doing. You get all kinds of attention. Being in the spotlight feels super good. And the power to run other people's lives feels super good too. You couldn't get a date in high school and here you are telling everybody how they have to educate children, my goodness. And there's an esthetic pleasure in getting everybody on exactly the same page: every school, every child, from Maine to Texas to Oregon, doing the exact same thing, your thing, in beautiful lockstep. A utopian ideal from your perspective: absolute conformity to your superior vision. And you get your personal needs met to boot. And all of it made possible by the slickest con of all: the illusion that democracy gives individuals control of their own destiny.

- *Social transformist.* (Still on Dewey.) America has been, and is, characterized by injustice, exploitation, inequity--politically, economically, racially. School is the place to learn what the problems are, and it is the place to make the commitment to cleanse the society of them. And how is that going to get done? Enlightened, selfless, dedicated cadres of social transformers who have been taught how to think and act as one in the schools are going to bring it about.

And who is going to make all these good things happen in schools? To Dewey, to progressivism, it was the classroom teacher. How to move in that direction:

- *Promote professionalization of teaching.* Professionals are autonomous. As professionals, teachers call the shots in the classroom, not parents. The parents' job is to support what the teacher does, not direct it, including going along with the night and

weekend work the teacher assigns--it's called homework. Dewey thought a key challenge was to separate children from the influence of their parents and to bring them into the realm of the school, teachers and peers, where they could be socialized into progressive thought and conduct.

- *Teacher training.* Insist on future teachers going through college of education programs leading to professional certification. It is there that they will learn the ideological, philosophical, political, personal and social transformation dimension of their role. And it is there that they will learn to be center stage and in control of students without ruffling too many feathers.

- *Emphasize the teacher-student relationship.* This rather than the relationship between a student and the subject, say math or science. Mediate students' contact with the content of their learning by interjecting the teacher between the students and what they are studying. The image of the caring, concerned, up-close teacher plays well, sounds laudable, and it gets teachers in the middle of the action and able to control students' directions and the outcomes of their learning activities.

- *A child-centered approach.* A focus on the inner experience and interests of students sounds humane and forward-looking, but what it really does is broaden the mandate of teachers. If the class were subject-centered, that would imply that it could be just about math, science, literature, geography, and history. But that is too narrow for Deweyians. They want to get into their personal and public agenda: a secular, rational approach to living; an egalitarian mindset; social transformation; and a belief in a government-managed public life enabled by democratization. A child-centered approach paves the way to get at all of that because by definition anything that relates to a child is fair game for the teacher to get into--and try to think of anything that in some way can't be related to the student. Sex education, beliefs about race, gender, homosexuality, religion, the environment, politics, you name it, can be justified with a child-centered approach.

- *Instructional planning strategies.* Future teachers are taught ways to tightly manage what goes on in the classroom. They learn to devise units--typically a month or six weeks of what is going to happen in the class--that spell out the learning goals and activities for students. Daily lesson plans set out what students are to be doing every minute. Even when students seem to be working on

their own, they are actually doing the bidding of the teacher--the objectives they are trying to accomplish and the ways they are going at it have been determined by the teacher.

- *Learn to use rhetoric to cover for reality.* The progressives have learned well that if you use language with positive connotations to describe what you are doing, and you repeat and repeat and repeat it, people will credit you with doing for what you say you are doing rather than what you are actually doing. For example, over and over progressives say that, unlike in those bad traditional classrooms, their students are in charge of their own learning. But if you look at what is actually going on in the classroom, teachers are directing the action.<sup>24</sup>

- *Be on the side of constructivism.* Constructivism is a simple idea: rather than passively taking in information and ideas, students actively engage the world and create knowledge, construct it, and that's better. The profession acts as if this is a subtle, revealed truth that is hidden from the rest of us. Unlike them, we want to pour knowledge into students' heads with our mind-numbing lectures, worksheets, and recitations. In this day and age, there is just about a consensus on the idea that meaningful, internalized, useful knowledge and skills are appropriated and not received, that is to say, they are constructed. True learning--in contrast to merely knowing this and that well enough to spit it back on a test--is something students do rather than something that is done to them. The real issue isn't simply constructivism versus information lay-on, which side are you on; that is a false, rhetorical statement of the concern.

A real issue is, *What is the student constructing knowledge and insight about?* Mathematics? Biology? The American political system? Or racism and sexism in America? Is it great literature, or *To Kill a Mockingbird* (a third rank polemic used to inculcate proper beliefs and attitudes about race)? Is it the key concepts and theories of physics, or the idea of sustainability? Constructivism emphasizes process over content, to the point that there is the notion that it doesn't matter what the student is studying as long as they are learning the skill of constructing knowledge. So any "hot topic" study is just fine; who needs *The Federalist Papers*?

Another real issue: *Who chose what the student is constructing knowledge about?* The school curriculum? Parents and children? Or the teacher acting alone? Constructivism is used in the same way

the idea of a student-centered approach, to play down the worth of academics subjects and clear the way for the teachers to get into any topic that strikes their fancy.

And a last issue, *What is the value of objective knowledge, external reality?* Constructivism is a way to promote the Deweyian idea of the subjectivity, relativity, of truth. Truth comes to be equated with whatever the student constructs. Subjective truth is truth. It's all a matter of opinion and one opinion is as good as another. What Thomas Jefferson and James Madison thought, what you think, all the same, and since it is all the same, why bother with paying any attention to what Jefferson and Madison thought?

Deweyian education in our time is at its heart about opinions, or more precisely, correct opinions. It is more important to hold the proper understandings about race than objectively accurate understandings about race if the accurate understandings do not support the progressive agenda. Progressive classrooms are characterized by students pronouncing their thoughts and opinions even though they haven't studied the matter hard for themselves. Truth is subjective truth, whatever happens to be inside students at the moment, and since the teachers have put it there by managing what students read and hear and do, they are fine with students going on about what they think and in the process reinforcing in themselves, and in the others who take in what they say, what they have been conditioned to believe.

Much more to be said, but the point should be clear: the predominant thrust in the field of education for the last half century and more, progressive education, with John Dewey as its leading figure, is at heart a left-of-center, political/ideological movement. Depending on your own worldview, you are going to think that is a good thing or a bad thing. Obviously, I think what is going on is antithetical to what America is about and should be about and more suitable to China under Mao or Eastern Europe before the breakup of the Soviet Union. But I can understand that you might see things otherwise. There is no definitive right way to educate. It comes down to what you want life to be like, for yourself, your children, and the society as a whole. I'll give the progressives credit on this count--they know what kind of people and society they want to create and what their mission in life is, and they have worked diligently, and very effectively, in accordance with that conception.

To understand what is going on in education at all levels, particularly in the universities, it is helpful to survey the writings of a group of Marxists collectively known as the Frankfurt School of Intellectuals. They were called that because many of them were at the University of Frankfurt in Germany, where they has established The Institute for Social Research, and fled the National Socialists in the 1930s and came to America. How this all ties together, several of them became affiliated with Columbia University under the sponsorship of John Dewey, who was on the faculty there. Among the prominent Frankfort School members are Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse. Their perspective is known as *critical theory*. The key term is critical: these thinkers articulated a negative critique of European peoples and their heritage and contemporary European and American life.

These men were prominent from the 1940s to 1960s and have been dead for decades, and their prose is dry as dust, and just about nobody these days has heard of them, but their writings are incredibly important as the underpinnings of the current orthodoxy in American universities popularly known as political correctness. The basic idea behind the Frankfurt School is that the Marxist utopia can best be realized not through armed uprisings of the working classes as was once thought but rather through the efforts of the middle classes whose outlooks and predilections have been shaped in schools, especially universities.

The leadership of the New Left, as it was called, in the 1960s and '70s knew these writers and this perspective well, and many of them and their followers embarked on academic careers and, over time, established a foothold in universities, and then, through control of hiring and promotion processes, professional organizations, and professional publication outlets (where they were the editors that passed on submissions), expanded it. They found natural allies in social movements that also viewed the university and its students as an arena for furthering their interests and that shared their leftist outlook--prominently among them, the black civil rights movement, the modern women's movement, gay organizations, environmentalists, and, more recently, Hispanic activists.

Jewish, the Frankfort School drew a lesson of what happened in Germany when white gentiles become self-conscious and cohesive,

and they sought to prevent that from occurring in their new homeland and in the Europe of their birth. They depicted white gentiles as authoritarian, oppressive, racist, sexist, and anti-Semitic. Today's political correctness reflects this perspective, and can be understood as a campaign to diminish the power of white gentiles and keep them self-distaining, deferring, atomized (isolated, alone), unorganized, discredited, and disempowered; and to do so with their own cooperation (which has been remarkably well achieved).

This writing is grounded in the idea of looking at matters from the opposite angle, and this idea can be applied to political correctness. Instead of looking at political correctness' elements from the perspective of their impact on minorities as we are encouraged to do, assess them from the perspective of their effect on white gentiles; in every instance it is negative. White racism, for instance, is really about white *gentile* racism--Jewish racism isn't the referent here. White gentile religion, Christianity is defamed. Racial integration and non-white immigration dilute European (gentile) power and solidarity. Feminism drives a wedge between white gentile women and their men and discourages childbearing (no white gentile population in the world is reproducing itself--literally, white gentiles are on the way to extinction). Multiculturalism de-Europeanizes, "de-WASPs," America. Diversity justifies discrimination against white gentiles in hiring, school admissions, and grants and contracts. And so on down the line. This thrust discourages, demonizes, and suppresses positive white gentile consciousness, interests, leadership, organization, and collective action, political and otherwise. In schools, white gentile children were taught the sins of their people, slavery, imperialism, the slaughter of the native peoples in America, the Holocaust, and to all but obsessively attend to and serve the interests of other peoples while having no concern for the status and fate of their own. An image that comes to mind: white gentiles cheering on the slaughter of their own in the film "Inglorious Basterds." Imagine a Jewish audience glorying in the depiction of the humiliation and murder of "bad Jews."

Read some Marcuse—perhaps start with his *An Essay on Liberation*<sup>25</sup>--to get a scholarly justification for university faculty using their courses to propagate a progressive or social justice perspective among their students and for harassing, silencing, and expelling colleagues who try to get in their way.

In 1954 the Supreme Court in *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka* ruled against the legal segregation of blacks and whites in schools, declaring that separate educational facilities were inherently unequal to the detriment of blacks. In the context of this writing, this landmark decision focused on the lesser educational status of blacks as a group, and asserted that the way blacks were treated by schools was the cause of that inferior status--that is to say, it was a contextual, circumstantial problem--and that the issue is legitimately dealt with on a national, in contrast to a state or local, front. The assumption was that desegregated schools would result in higher educational achievement among blacks. In addition, the Brown case reinforced the idea of using schools to promote non-academic, social and cultural ends, namely the melding of blacks and whites as peoples and discouraging notions of freedom of association and cultural and racial integrity, at least among whites.

The black civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s reinforced these themes. Blacks should be considered as a group, and their status should be assessed as a group, with the standard being equal accomplishment with whites as a group. Educational disparities between whites and blacks should be remedied by improved policies and practices with reference to races as a whole, with particular emphasis at that time on school integration. The assumption was that blacks were equal to whites in every way related to academic achievement, and that if blacks were treated differently, better, they would manifest that equality intellectually and scholastically. In our terms all of this reflected and reinforced the supply/aggregate paradigm: blacks will be fine if they are given a better context.

Unfortunately, black academic underachievement relative to whites and Asians did not dissipate following Brown and persists to this day. Much of the reform effort in modern times--vouchers, charter schools, No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, among them --have been directed at elevating the collective performance of blacks and, in more recent years, Hispanics, who have also lagged behind other groups in overall academic achievement.

The Lyndon Johnson years in the 1960s brought increased federal involvement in education to boost the school performance and general wellbeing of poor and minority children. A prime example

was the Head Start pre-school program. Here again, however, the theme of this writing, research has failed to show lasting positive academic results among the children who participate in Head Start.

The 1965 federal Elementary and Secondary Education provided an, at that time, unprecedented four billion dollars (No Child Left Behind's initial federal budget is 25 billion) to aid disadvantaged students. President Johnson upon signing the bill noted, "It represents a major new commitment of the federal government to quality and equality in the schooling that we offer our young people."

Again the predominant themes: improve the supply, look at things collectively rather than individually ("our young people"), and do it on a grand scale, the national government. This pattern has continued and escalated: more and more, Washington D.C. tells communities and parents in Vermont and Missouri and Colorado how to educate their children. Educational historian Joel Spring: "[W]hen money got involved in it, the federal government had the power then to police local school systems."<sup>26</sup>

One major problem with a supply/aggregate paradigm is the failure too often to get close enough to people to discern the unintended negative outcomes of policies. An example, the Great Society welfare measures of the Lyndon Johnson years unintentionally contributed to the breakup of the black family and rise of black illegitimacy (from a 20% illegitimacy rate to the current 70%) and welfare dependency. Our example here, making government schools accountable for student achievement rather than the students themselves teaches that, really, you aren't responsible for your own success, someone else is, that you can't make it on your own, and that you can achieve something you don't go after hard. Those are bad lessons to carry with you in life.

In 1979, President Jimmy Carter, spurred on by the National Education Association, the largest teacher union and a major supporter, created the federal cabinet-level Department of Education. In his remarks at the ceremony announcing the Department's establishment, President Carter declared: "The time has passed when the federal government can afford to give second-level, part-time attention to its responsibilities in American education."<sup>27</sup> If Horace Mann represented the state government getting into the school business in a big way, the formation of the

Department of Education represented the federal government getting in the school business in a big way.

The 1983 report of President Ronald Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education entitled "A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform" received front-page attention and contributed to the sense that American schools were a major problem.<sup>28</sup> Its most famous phrase captured the essence of the report: "The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people." We--and increasing "we" meant the nation as a whole--have a school problem and a political problem (not a student or parent or cultural problem). American schools aren't up to it (the supply is bad), and particularly they aren't up to it with poor and minority children (perceived in aggregate terms).

A few voices in the public discourse in those years didn't align with this perspective, this paradigm. A prime example is the "Coleman Report," as it was known, published in 1966.<sup>29</sup> James S. Coleman was a sociologist who co-led a research team instructed by the U.S. Congress to "conduct a survey and make a report . . . concerning the lack of availability of educational opportunities for individuals by reason of race, color, religion, or national origin." It was the largest social science study ever conducted up to that time. Contrary to expectation, the study concluded that school inputs--funding, curriculum, teaching methods, and the rest--have little bearing on student achievement. School achievement is much more a function of race, social class, income, family background, and the peer group.

The Coleman Report was not discounted so much as it was ignored, and the concept of cognitive dissonance helps explain why. People have great trouble dealing with ideas and realities that don't square with their preconceptions--their paradigms--that don't fit with what they assume to be true and thereby what they are doing at any time. They make them uncomfortable, call their activities, and them, into question, pull the rug out from under their sense of certainty and self-satisfaction. So what to do with this cognitive (mental) dissonance (incongruity, contradiction)? Blot it out; look the other way; don't think about it. Don't discuss it, don't dialogue about it, don't debate it, don't explore it. Don't bother to refute it;

rather, go on with your business as if it doesn't exist. Despite the wide notoriety the Coleman Report received at the time, people went about their lives as if it never happened, and this served to maintain their inner harmony.

And on it went through the decades up to the present time, one strategy after another to improve American schools and hold them responsible for student accomplishment.

- In the early 1980s there was "effective schools" research: if a school was this way versus that way students would learn.

- In 1989, the first President Bush and state governors declared that by the year 2000 "every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so that they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy."<sup>30</sup> Note the "every" and "all" language. Not just some students will achieve, but circumstances are so determining in what people become, and we will be so good at setting up those circumstances, that no matter who students are and what their parents' and their culture are like or how they come at school all of them will achieve. Schools are not just going to provide the possibility of success (a chance to "pursue happiness"), they will *guarantee* it. Just show up and "happiness" will happen. Success is no longer an individual's business and responsibility; it is the state's, the collective's, business and responsibility. A fundamental change in the meaning of life in America from what it was in this country's formative years.

- A Carnegie Foundation-backed report in 1989 entitled "Turning Points: Preparing Youth for the 21st Century" gave a boost to the idea of middle schools geared to responding to the developmental needs of early adolescents. The key to getting better results with students of this age, so it went, is for curricular content, instruction, and classroom activities to resonate with what is going on personally in students' lives during this turbulent time in their development.

- There were the Improving America's Schools statutes during the Clinton years.

- There was the Carnegie and Rockefeller Foundation report, "What Matters Most: Teaching and America's Future." Without substantiation, it declared, "What teachers know and can do is the most important influence on what students learn." (Coleman died

the next year, and perhaps this pronouncement contributed to his demise.)

- A couple of researchers named Chubb and Moe said school choice was the key to school success.

- There was the Coalition of Essential Schools and the Core Knowledge schools.

. . . and I'll stop there. You get the picture: schooling is something done to groups of students, and things aren't going to improve until schools do it better.

If any of this has had a positive effect other than giving politicians, bureaucrats, and professional educators something to do and make them feel better about themselves, you couldn't prove it by me. As far as I can tell, despite the high-sounding talk, billions of dollars expropriated from people to pay for it, and untold amounts of time and effort, in terms of improved student achievement we've come up with zilch, or next to it, going at things from that perspective. Over and over, when I've looked into the claims of this program or that one working, the data supporting that assertion has fallen apart. Either the standard of success has been lowered to such an extent that the so-called success amounted to nothing, or the results were jimmed so that they seemed to be saying something they didn't say (I'll assume that when there is jimmying it is unintentional--that cognitive dissonance point, the human tendency to fit the world to one's preconceptions and hopes).<sup>31</sup>

What do we have to lose: let's look at things from a different angle, through a different lens, a different paradigm, and see where that takes us. My experience and study in education has led me to believe that a perspective, paradigm, one that turns the coin over, looks at education from a supply rather than demand, and individual rather than aggregate, angle, has heuristic value (is conducive to obtaining better insights, a guide to better results). So for the remainder of this writing I will use this lens to understand what is going on in education and what to do about improving it. Basically, it will involve turning the spotlight on the *users* of schools, the students, and their world--families, peers, culture, community--rather than the *providers* of schools. Most often, not always, the focus will be on these users--consumers, clients, whatever the best term for them--one by one: this one and that one and this other one; flesh and blood human beings, not composite statistics, averages and means and standard deviations.

My brother's two sons attended public schools in a largely Jewish area of Minneapolis. During a recent visit to my family in Minnesota, he noted how committed to education the Jewish families were in this community (a "demand paradigm" reference--about users, not providers; demand, not supply.) I responded with the bold guess that the schools his sons attended were good. He said, yes, they were.

Of course they were. They were good schools, because an obvious truth about schools you might miss if you only look at what the schools are doing--at supply--is that *schools mirror their clientele*. Tell me about the people who attend that school and nothing else, and I'll tell you about the school.

I'm reminded of how after World War II the question was asked whether the veterans who were now getting government assistance to go to college--it was known as the GI Bill--were going to be able to be successful academically. Of course they were going to be successful, because--and I'm not contending that the school people would be fully aware of this--the universities would alter their operations and standards to accommodate them. That's what schools do: they keep their clientele happy, and they do what they can to get the mass of them through the program.

So if you want to know why, for instance, there is the big press on using competence--not excellence, competence--in basic reading and math as the measure of success in America's schools, go beyond looking at the politicians and educators for the answer. Look at who is attending the schools. That is to say, look at things from the demand side. With anything--teaching methods, organized sports, whatever it is--your ability to predict what will go on in education will be greatly enhanced if you take stock of the clientele, the consumers of the educational product and their community and culture, and then deduce. Schools, and the politicians and bureaucrats too, reflect the demand.

A corollary conclusion, insight: schools will change when the demand changes. Until the educational consumers in a school make it clear that they want better academic programs, and more, are willing and able to work with the school personnel to take advantage of them, don't hold your breath waiting for that school to become more than a holding tank for most students. Sooner or later, whether they consciously want to or not, schools and teachers

play to their audience. If the audience doesn't like the show it's getting, it had better come to grips with how much it is creating the show. School and teacher accountability sounds good, but it runs up against reality: more than anybody, the ones accountable, truly responsible, for what goes on in schools are students and their parents. What is, is, like it or not; and that is what is.

Coming at things from a supply/aggregate paradigm, there is the propensity to lump students together and treat them alike, when, if you actually look at them, they aren't alike. "All students will meet these standards in these subject areas." "All students will achieve competence in these skills." "White and black levels of achievement will be the same." "Girls will focus on math and science to the same extent as boys." And so on. And when that doesn't happen, rather than question basic premises or look at things from a different vantage point, the conclusion is that we haven't done enough of what we've been doing. So, more legislation! More standardization! More centralization! More controls! Better schools! Better teachers! And most of all, more money--money, money, *money!* Give us your money!!

When you look at schools from the demand and individual perspective, when you look at flesh and blood students rather than labels and numbers, it is abundantly clear that students differ greatly in every way imaginable: in capability, interests, goals, commitments, character, school-going skills, and accomplishment.

And not only do students differ individually, *groupings of students* differ. The *raison d'etre* of the fields of anthropology and sociology is that groups of people differ from one another; they aren't all alike. There is such a thing as culture, shared values and ways, and all cultures aren't alike. All groups don't go at life the same way. That should be obvious, but in our time it isn't--or better, it can't be, because we have been convinced and cowed into looking at words, concepts, slogans, pitches, and abstractions, instead of reality. A hard reality is that you can't get a better predictor of good schools than where blacks and Hispanics in critical mass (30%) aren't. The question is why that is the case. And the reason that is is whatever it is. It is not whatever we think it is, or hope it is, or stay out of trouble by believing or saying it is. If it is in some part due to culture, that's what is, and if it has nothing to do with culture, that's what is. What is, is. And it doesn't take a

Buddhist to know that. Aristotle pointed out that fact of life. In order to solve any problem, or decide on any goal or plan of action, you need to ground yourself in reality.

Students differ in native intelligence. I can't imagine anyone working with actual students for any length of time without coming away with the impression, at least deep within them even if it is repressed for whatever reason, that some students are smarter than others, and that that matters greatly for what they accomplish academically.

There are more than a few psychometricians, professionals in the area of educational and psychological measurement, who contend that general intelligence (g) exists, and that IQ can be measured, and that test bias doesn't account for the observed differences. And more, they offer, not just individuals, groups too differ on the average.<sup>32</sup> It might be noted that they are courageous souls, because saying there are genetically based differences in cognitive capability is sticking your head out of a foxhole. You are going to get your head shot off, smeared as a racist and bigot, and the facts of the matter have nothing to do with it, it's political, ideological, and religious in a way (egalitarianism is a kind of secular faith that calls up zealotry in people akin what went on in the Crusades).

Arthur R. Jensen, now professor emeritus of educational psychology at the University of California at Berkeley, holds that IQ is highly genetic, that race is a biological reality rather than a social construct, that genetic more than cultural differences cause the 15-point IQ difference between blacks and whites (blacks lower) in the U.S., and that the failures of compensatory education for disadvantaged children need to include genetic explanations.<sup>33</sup> The 15-point lower average black IQ score represents a one standard deviation difference from whites' average (a standard deviation above and below the average cuts off the 84th and 16th percentiles in a normal distribution of people)?<sup>34</sup> That means that the black average is at the 16th percentile of the white average, and that 84 percent of whites score higher than the average black. Even if this is a true difference, however, and a meaningful one, with over 30 million blacks total, in the top of the five classifications of intelligence there are over 100,000 blacks, a very large number. At the same time, to assume that equal across-the-board educational results can be attained with blacks and whites if they are not in fact

equally capable cognitively is highly problematic. And trashing and silencing anybody who points that out doesn't make it any less so. Whatever is expedient in the short run, in the long run it is better to live in alignment with reality.

The only way to get equal results among unequal people is to get the standard low enough that everybody can match up to it. For example, if it is assumed that everyone is equally capable of dunking a basketball when that really isn't true, and it is presumed that the reason that everybody isn't dunking a basketball is the coaching has been bad, sooner or later the basket is going to be six feet instead of ten feet. Or back to schools, the measure of a good school and a good education will become demonstrating minimal competence with basic reading and writing and math.

Indeed, the language of educational discourse is changing. I have in front of me an article published in a leading educational journal by a senior fellow at the Progressive Policy Institute and a former White House advisor to President Clinton on the federal role in education.<sup>35</sup> I am taken by the language, the mindset, in this article. No talk of excellence, exemplary achievement, outstanding accomplishments; nothing of that sort. Instead it is all about students being "proficient," "adequate," "equal," and when they aren't it is because schools are "low performing."

I'm imagining a high school basketball coach calling his players together at the beginning of the season and saying, "Boys, this year we are going to be . . . proficient! adequate! And you young men are going to be . . . equal to one another! I've got standards for playing basketball on this sheet of paper that every one of you are going to meet! Now let's get to it!!" And his charges leap up from the bench where they have been seated and burst past the coach and onto to the court in fevered pursuit of adequacy and equality. The point, what may make sense politically can make little or no sense in human, psychological, motivational terms. A few days ago, in reference to No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top, a parent commented to me, "Americans are a great people. That stuff is education for menials, not a great people." But his voice is unheard amid the chatter of the politicians, lobbyists, and the educational establishment (schooling is about what we think and what we do--us, us, *us!* . . . *look at us!!*).

Staying with the sport comparison, it could be assumed that blacks and whites are equally interested in playing basketball well and are equally equipped with basketball-playing skills. Therefore the NBA should reflect the racial composition of the United States and since there are six times as many whites as blacks in the population, there must be six times as many whites as blacks in the NBA, and pour money and resources into that problem until it is fixed. Of course, that would be absurd, and the NBA doesn't do things this way. It doesn't give over any time worrying about whether blacks as a group, due to culture, physiology, or whatever else, are better or worse than whites at playing basketball. They simply give every individual white and black person an equal opportunity to play the game and win a spot on the roster and however the group numbers fall out, so be it. For certain, they aren't going to lower the basket to seven feet, or have discriminatory practices against blacks, call it affirmative action or diversity, or condemn the coaches as racists because the New York Knicks are all black. And really, that is the American thing to do. America is, or should be, the land of opportunity, not the land of equal results provided by others.

Schools could do the same kind of thing. Whatever the group differences among blacks and whites in intelligence--or motivation, whatever it might be--give every individual student a shot at a good education and let the outcome be as it may. The test of a school under this arrangement is not the results they achieve with students but rather the opportunity they provide them.

If I've learned anything in a long career in education it is that education isn't something you can do to somebody. Rather, it is something somebody goes out and gets. An education is appropriated, not received. What a school and its teachers can do is provide an rich opportunity to students and support them as they move forward to take advantage of it. By that standard, I have never been in a bad school, including city schools that have been labeled, that term, "low performing." In every school I've been in, I've asked myself the question, "Could a student really intending on succeeding, and willing to work really hard, get a good, empowering education here?" And the answer has always been yes.

And more than that, some students were in fact succeeding in every school I've been in. The overall accomplishment, test scores,

may have been low, but some students were flying. When you only attend to aggregate numbers--averages, medians, this group versus that group--you miss that reality. I think of an African American girl I worked with in an urban high school, Adrian Ford. Adrian came from a rough part of town and her young mother was raising Adrian on her own with very little money. Adrian wasn't the smartest student in the school, or personally the most appealing. But one thing jumped out about Adrian: she was committed to doing her very best in school. And her mother encouraged and supported her in that direction in every way she could. And Adrian succeeded in her schoolwork even though she was in a "bad school." That bad school was a good school for Adrian, and it was because of Adrian that it was a good school. The supply paradigm tacitly assumes that students are puppets on the strings of those who manage their academic lives. Adrian was what we all have the capacity to be: her own puppet master. Look at things from the personal, human perspective and that possibility becomes a salient and important reality.

Adrian sought me out to help her with her schoolwork. I was there working in the school as a consultant to the principal. I came away from my contact with Adrian thinking we would do well to put more time into studying "success cases" like Adrian's to understand better why some individuals defy the statistics and make it in school and elsewhere. With thirty- and forty- and fifty-year-old men and women from difficult circumstances who are living happy and productive and honorable lives: how exactly did they do it? What were the influences in their lives? What capabilities did they have? How did they think and act?

If I could know only one thing as the basis for predicting which ones among a group of children in a class would be successful, it would be which ones *intend* to be successful. An intention is more than a need for success or a hope for success. It is a pervasive, physically felt posture in the world that says, "I'm getting it done." We know from our own lives that when we get ourselves into that posture, when that becomes our stance in the world, with a new diet or exercise program, whatever it is, good things happen. And we knew we were going to make good things happen because we felt it inside, it permeated our being, it was who we were, no less than that. We can quit waiting around to win the lottery--in the schools that would be hoping to be assigned to a good

teacher, getting lucky on a test, something of that sort. We can go to work with everything we have. We can learn to dream of good things, specific good things, and to make no-turning-back decisions to accomplish them, and we can learn how to put in massive and persistent effort in that direction, and we can learn how to be flexible (when something doesn't work we try something else), and to find and utilize support, and to praise ourselves for every step forward we make, no matter how small. A basic skill that all of us needs, at every point in our lives, is how to intend. But intending is something you do as an individual. It isn't a way of being that can be given to you by someone else, or done for you.

I came away from my contact with Adrian, and others like her, thinking that America should expect every student to demonstrate that they are doing their absolute best to learn before we declare the school and its teachers deficient. *Every single student should be held accountable for doing their best to learn.* And one more: *Every student should be held accountable for being kind to other students, and to teachers and the other school people.* No matter who you are, no matter what has gone on in your life, no matter how old you are, you have the capability, and the responsibility, to do your best and be kind.

When you look at students one at a time, the importance of parents jumps out. Adrian's mother expected Adrian to do her best in school, and made it clear that she and Adrian were a team and that when Adrian was in school she represented them both in everything she did there. Adrian's mother knew what Adrian was doing and celebrated every one of Adrian's academic successes, no matter how small.

Laurence Steinberg and his colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania studied the nine high schools looking for what accounts for academic success. They didn't assume that the reasons were necessarily the "usual suspects" derived from what I'm calling the supply paradigm: curriculum; teaching; school leadership; class size; funding; standards and expectations; testing; and accountability. They found that the best predictor of academic achievement was . . . *parenting approach*. Steinberg and his co-researchers published their findings in a book, *Beyond the Classroom: Why School Reform Has Failed and What Parents Need to Do*.<sup>36</sup> Even though the book was reviewed widely, it was ignored by

the people in charge of making things happen in education. The thundering silence with which the book was met is a recent-times Coleman Report response. Just as the Coleman Report didn't fit the current worldview back then, the Steinberg report doesn't fit the current worldview, paradigm, now, or the needs of the people who come to stage center when it is employed. To the extent that Steinberg is taken seriously it pulls the rug from under the current movers and shakers in education, who don't want to hear that it isn't all about them and they might be wrong.

Steinberg spends a lot of time in his book talking about Asian parents, whom he found to be particularly effective in promoting school success in their children. In one of my education classes at the university, I use a book written by two Korean-American sisters, one a medical doctor and the other an attorney, entitled *Top of the Class: How Asian Parents Raise High Achievers, and How You Can Too*.<sup>37</sup> I find the book to offer some helpful wisdom and advice about how parents can promote academic success in their children. But this is another book ignored by the establishment. My students, in training to be teachers, have gotten the word in their teacher education courses that they, not someone else, is going to save their students, smirk at the book. What do parents know, and anyway, Asians are drudges and nerds, plus the adolescent suicide rate is high in Japan (actually, it is lower than in the U.S. and has been for decades), case closed.

And then there are homeschool parents, with no teacher training and, on the average, spending \$500 a year per child, whose children outscore schooled students on every possible measure, including social adjustment. They are written off because parents and their unenlightened ways are what we educators are trying to save students from. These parents are doctrinaire and controlling (no evidence of that, and as if schools aren't) and these kids are social misfits (no evidence of that either, and if you want to see social misfits, spend a day at Wilson High). But again, reality, who needs it? I am fascinated with how beliefs trump reality. Plus, a lot of these parents are Christians and are laying that outlook on their children, and the world doesn't need that. Research shows a connection between religiosity and academic achievement (the Utah kids getting results on no money), but that doesn't fit the dogma, so we can pretend that isn't so. There is simply nothing to be learned from how these homeschooling parents go about their business, so it

goes. The only challenge is to get these children and adolescents into the government schools where we can teach them how to think and live, because we know about both of those things and these presumptuous parents--who do they think they are?--don't.

If you get up close to students one by one, you realize that, indeed, one academic size doesn't fit everybody; all students don't need the same exact school program. If you perceive students as undifferentiated masses broken up into a few politically charged categories--whites versus minorities, poor versus rich, boys versus girls--you lose sight of that reality. With the supply/aggregate perspective, that paradigm, the tendency is to assume that the same educational goals and curriculum and teaching and learning arrangements will suit everybody, or at least everybody in a particular group. Academic study is a means for individual human beings to achieve an end: living well in the time they have on this earth. That involves attaining economic viability; being respected by others and respecting themselves; getting to the place where they can contribute productively and positively to their family and to society; and being happy and at peace. How to get to that end point--academically, personally, in all ways--is different for different people.

Looking at schooling from a demand/individual angle complicates in a healthy way the question of what kind of education best suits the vastly different human beings who attend school. It's not enough from afar to pronounce that what everybody needs is minimal competence in reading and math or familiarity with traditional academic subjects or vocational training of a certain sort. Even if students do need those things, what *all* do they need in order to live well and honorably? The answer to that question may well have as many answers as there are students. As much as you and I may be alike, we are still unique and have different paths to walk in life, and we have different learning challenges to confront--or at least we do if we seek to live our lives rather than go through somebody else's prescribed motions and are to avoid winding up at the end of our days with the sense that we've blown the chance we had to live as the person we really are. All to say, we need to look at education in a way that prompts us to view students as something other than interchangeable parts.

Yet another ignored book is the one written by Richard Murnane and Frank Levy, professors at Harvard and MIT, called *Teaching the New Basic Skills: Principles for Educating Children to Thrive in a Changing Economy*.<sup>38</sup> The authors pose and answer a couple of key questions in fresh ways: What are the skills needed to earn a middle-class income? and, What are the principles around which a school can restructure to teach these skills? I won't go into what the skills are in this context; you can check out the book if you are interested. Murnane and Levy go beyond conventional wisdom and easy answers about what students need, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and that's healthy, and we aren't doing that enough approaching educational issues as we are. What I find particularly helpful is that Murnane and Levy raise a fundamentally important question: What does it take to participate in today's, and tomorrow's, economy? If you can't find a way to work that accords you a decent income and that you respect and others respect, you have a big problem. We need to look at each student individually and see whether he or she needs this approach or something else, and even more importantly, each student needs to look at themselves and make this determination. The student, not the rest of us, is the one with something truly big at stake.

When you look at students as individuals, including from the most difficult social and personal circumstances, you find some who don't need to be prodded along by the school. They are committed to living a great life, and they are willing to study with all they have in them to become what it takes to achieve that great life. I'm certainly not saying there are many students like this--or adults for that matter--but they exist and they count, and they shouldn't be lumped in with everybody else. The pursuit of greatness involves the intention to live an exemplary and true life. Those with this intention seek to experience and manifest the finest, the best, the very highest quality, in every dimension of their existence: In physical health and bodily perfection and grace (I think of the closest possible approximation of a Greek statue or a great dancer). In self-understanding. In self-value and self-importance. In character: morality, ethics, courage, autonomy, integrity, responsibility, willfulness, dedication, persistence. In relationships—parents, siblings, friends, mates, children, racial and ethnic and religious kinsmen, humankind, animals and nature. In love and sexual expression. In art and literature and historical

understanding. In grooming, fashion, and surroundings—home architecture and furnishings, work place decor. And in vocation. For these individuals, the various aspects of their being and lives reflect and give expression to their uniqueness, their singularity, at ever-increasing levels of development. All that they do and become occurs within the context of a deeply felt awareness of their mortality--death will come and eternity will begin, and all one has is the time between now and then. I wrote an essay for this site called "Autotelic Education: A Concept" in which I outlined an approach to schooling these kinds of students.<sup>39</sup> The focus in our time is so much on damage control with the least of students that the best of students, who also need support and encouragement, are essentially left to fend for themselves in arrangements that are not set up to accommodate, or even understand, people like them.

And then there is the concern that I've saved for last, and the one that matters most to me: human freedom. The human being, and that includes me, and you, has the right to direct his or her own life. America is grounded in liberty and in the inviolability of each and every unique human being. "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." I am appalled at the way individuals in our time feel mandated to direct other people's lives, whether it be politicians and government bureaucrats, think tank intellectuals, university academics, or classroom teachers. Human beings aren't lab animals for anybody, no matter how smart and well-intentioned they presume themselves to be. What I do with my life, what I think, what I value, is my business, not somebody else's, and that holds true for everyone else. Let parents and children manage their own lives and live with the consequences of that; trust and respect them enough to allow them to do that. Back off on the mandates, compulsion, requirements, reports back to you, doling out money based on how much people kowtow to you, all of that. Give people their lives back.

Educator TheodoreSizer died this past year, a great loss to us all. Sizer wrote a book back in 1984--never understood, and now ignored as if it were never was published--called oddly enough for an education book, *Horace's Compromise*.<sup>40</sup> I highly recommend the book to contemporary readers, along with his follow-up book, *Horace's Hope*.<sup>41</sup> Unlike anyone else in education I can think of, Sizer wrote about human freedom. Perhaps that came from the fact

that Sizer was an American historian with a keen sense of our roots as a people and as a nation. From *Horace's Compromise*:

We have allowed the establishment of elaborate mechanisms of control, with the folks at the top providing carrots and sticks to manage those at the bottom.<sup>42</sup>

Most Americans don't want government telling them where their children will be schooled any more than they would tolerate government telling them where to live.<sup>43</sup>

Calculus or probability and statistics? Organic or inorganic chemistry? And outside reading by [radical historians] Howard Zinn or Oscar Handlin? Mandatory instruction in birth control? The Bible as literature as literature or as a holy book? Happily, few communities can achieve a consensus on these kinds of issues. American values vary too richly for that. Such being the case, what do schools do? The only sensible answer is for them to make choices available, to give students, teachers, and their families the opportunity to follow their preferences. . . . The alternative--a course of study mandated as the result of decisions reached through special interest politics and unrelieved majority rule--is both insensitive educationally (no one of us, including an adolescent, learns much from things that, forced upon us, we resent) and un-American (the tradition of minority rights is an important aspect of American liberty).<sup>44</sup>

The state has no right to insist I be "employable" on its terms of what a "career" might be. That is my private matter, and I take the risk that no one will purchase the services that I prepare myself to offer. The state has no right or obligation to tell me how to spend my leisure time. I can enrich myself and the state if I am cultured, but it is unreasonable of the state to impose on me its own definition of culture. As long as my style of life and values do not impinge on those of others, I should have the sovereign right to be what I want to be, including a slob. Beyond expecting me to be sensitive and responsible to legal and constitutional principles that allow freedom, the state has no claim whatsoever on my beliefs or character. Beyond expecting rudimentary civility, the state has no subtle or not-so-subtle right to shape my personality.<sup>45</sup>

Sizer speaks for me. I greatly miss him.

We need to learn lessons from Jefferson and the other Founders, and the Irish immigrants in the mid-1800s, and the immigrant children and their parents of a century ago, and Adrian Ford and the untold numbers of people who have forged productive and honorable lives in this country in the face of every obstacle imaginable, and yes, from the NBA. I believe it would help things along in this direction if we tried looking at things, and not just in education, from the perspective of this country, America, and what it stands for, what it promises, what it expects of us all, and from the perspective of individual, precious, mortal human beings--call it a paradigm shift. Not that I think we will do that, sorry to say, but I think we ought to.

#### Endnotes

1. A good primer on Buddhism is Steve Hagen, *Buddhism: Plain and Simple* (New York: Broadway Books, 1997).
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3. Adam Schaeffer, "They Spend What? The Real Cost of Public Schools," *Policy Analysis*, The Cato Foundation, March 10, 2010.
4. Joseph Ellis, *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson* (New York, Knopf, 1997) p.9.
5. Ellis, p. 105.
6. Benjamin Rush, "Thoughts Upon the Mode of Education in a Republic," in Steven Tozer, Paul Violas, and Guy Senese, *School and Society" Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, second edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995) pp. 40-43.
7. John C. Fitzpatrick, editor, *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources 1745-1799, Volume 35: March 30, 1776-July 31, 1797* (Washington, D.C.: United States Printing Office, 1940) p. 229.

8. Sarah Mondale and Sarah B. Patton, *School: The Story of American Public Education* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001) p. 12.

9. Ibid., p. 23.

10. Ibid., pp 25-31.

11. Tozer, p.78.

12. Ibid., p. 79.

13. Mondale, p. 33.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., p. 34.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., p. 92.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. A biography of Boas by this grandson: Norman Boas, *Franz Boas 1858-1942: An Intellectual Biography* (Mystic, CT: Seaport Autographs, 2004).

21. A book on Dewey that provided a backdrop to this discussion of his influence is, Henry T. Edmondson, *John Dewey and the Decline of American Education: How the Patron Saint of Schools Has Corrupted Teaching and Learning* (Wilmington, Delaware: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2004).

22. Mondale, p. 76.

23. Ibid., p. 77.

24. A good example of this, the book by neo-Deweyian Mike Rose, *Possible Lives: The Promise of Public Education in America* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995).

25. Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).

26. Quoted in Mondale, p. 26.

27. See, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=31543>

28. National Commission on Excellence in Education, *Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Library, 1983).

29. It's official title is *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, and you can download it at <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/06389>

30. See Chester Finn, *Troublemaker: A Personal History of School Reform Since Sputnik* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008) p. 153.

31. An example of the "jimmying": Harvard Professor Paul E. Peterson in a *Commentary* article notes that African American students who used a voucher program to attend private schools benefitted academically from the switch. Martin Carnoy, however, in his book, *School Vouchers: Examining the Evidence* (Washington, D.C., 2001) p. 6, asserts that the Peterson data was "laced with potential biases" and that the question to ask "is not whether the Peterson group overstate private school effects but *by how much*."

32. A good place to start in looking into this is the famous--or is it infamous--chapter thirteen of Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray's book, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (New York: Free Press, 1994) entitled "Ethnic Differences in Cognitive Ability," pp. 269-316. Also, see Richard Lynn, *Race Differences in Intelligence: An Evolutionary Analysis* (Augusta, GA: Washington Summit Publishers, 2006).

33. See, Frank Mielle, *Intelligence, Race, and Genetics: Conversations With Arthur R. Jensen* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2008).
34. Hernstein and Murray, p. 278.
35. Andrew Rotherham, "A New Partnership," *Education Next*, Vol.2, No. 1, Spring 2002.
36. Laurence Steinberg, *Beyond the Classroom: Why School Reform Has Failed and What Parents Need To Do* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).
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41. TheodoreSizer, *Horace's Hope: What Works in the American High School* (Boston: Mariner Books, 1997).
42. Sizer, *Horace's Hope*, p. 47.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
44. Sizer, *Horace's Compromise*, p. 64.
45. *Ibid.*, pp, 86, 87.

