

Preface

First of all, I apologize to all the members of the N.Y.S.F.E.A. for the unusual delay in preparing this edition of *Educational Change*. Unfortunately, a series of events created a state of affairs which brought the project to a virtual standstill. A protracted illness, initially diagnosed as pneumonia (this turned out to be merely a symptom of a much more serious pulmonary disorder), but which eventually resulted in a tracheostomy (January 1993) debilitated me for part of 1991 and most of 1992, 1993 and 1994. Much more devastating, however, was the tragic death of my oldest son, Dominick, in August 1993. This loss completely undermined my bearing and left me spiritually floundering. As I try to bring this project to completion, my hope is that it may help provide an orientation that will mitigate the negativity of such an event and somehow reaffirm the positive contributions which flow from the singularity of his character and existence.

The papers assembled in this volume have a continuous thread that ties them together. Although, each is the result of the analysis of social phenomena arising from unique historical events, all, nonetheless, urgently point towards a moral rejuvenation of our social institutions especially education. The authors recognize a fundamental confusion and disorder which has infected the latter third of the 20th century and which has reached proportions threatening the entire social order.

In part, this confusion arises out of the facile behavioristic and positivistic pretensions to objectivity. The aim to objectivity is one among the many human aims, which, however significant, runs the risk of dictating to every other concern of our human existence. Furthermore, the construction of the objective order, partly if not wholly fictitious, poses special problems for humans as acting subjects. As such there is a continuous attempt to close the gap between one's personal (lived) subjective immediacy and the impersonal (sterile) objective constructions. This gap widens or narrows depending upon the acceptance or the rejection of those social forms which express the constructed objective order, i.e. the major institutions of society (politics, religion, education, military,

industry and business, entertainment including sports and, of course, the media in all of its forms, and most importantly family life, and where do we put health care and medicine?). All of these institutions face a crisis not unlike that of 14th century Europe. This crisis has called into question the legitimacy (with good reasons) of these institutions. In part this crisis finds its manifestations in dysfunctional behavior, i.e., human actions contrary to authentic individual or collective ends or in a more Deweyian vein actions which frustrate organic satisfactions and in which neither the self nor the group finds genuine fulfillment. Varied forms of drug abuse, crime ranging from violence to white collar crime such as inside trading, stock manipulations, abuse of political offices, such as the recent congressional post office scandal (even the powerful Mr. Rostenkowski has been touched and tarnished as well as a number of others of our trusted representatives), industrial abuses of the environment and the public and other forms of unscrupulous and self-serving business and medical delivery practices are some of the symptoms of the present social crisis. On the other hand, even what passes as accepted legal behavior is questionable from a moral perspective, e.g.'s the amassing of outrageous individual pension funds (ranging in the millions) by individual members of Congress representing the people at the people's expense. Without belaboring the abuses and excesses of individuals and groups entrusted with the public weal at the public's expense we may add that this form of dysfunctional behavior (for lack of a better term or avoiding a more inflammatory one) not only aggravates the general malaise but may be the cataclysm of the present social crisis. In short, these social ruptures by the entrusted representatives of our major institutions betray our trust and undermine the legitimacy of their role and authority. The result is a social, legal as well as a moral vacuum which leaves the youth floundering for guidance or direction. The evolutionary theorists can dismiss this behavior as a form of survival of the fittest (not a rosy picture of humanity) and those who adhere to emotivism (some positivists and empiricists) can take refuge in their standard claim that "violence is unhealthy" has the same knowledge claim as "I don't like prickly pears."

The above comments are intended as a way of providing a per-

spective for the work of our contributors in this issue of *Educational Change*. These observers of the contemporary educational and social climate are dealing with crucial issues which escape the simple objective scientific models put forth by positivists and other naive realists.

In his study, "The Implication of One Significant Component of 'Education 2000': Parental Choice of Schooling," Norman Bauer of SUNY Geneseo, examines the consequences of parental choice incorporated by the Bush Administration's Education 2000 strategy. Bauer's analysis exhibits the contradictions in the decision making process inherent in the model outlined in the document. He argues that the inadequacy of the model rests largely on the absence of a moral sensitivity which characterizes the social milieu of the decision makers (business leaders, the representatives of the people, religious leaders and other leaders of the major social institutions). He, further, argues that in large measure these individuals are guided by self-serving factional interests rather than inter-factional considerations.

In his "Dewey's Pedagogic Creed: Reflections on Education, Process and the Cultivation of Social Consciousness," Douglas Shrader of SUNY Oneonta, attempts to show how one may apply Dewey's "My Pedagogic Creed" to introduce the moral and religious dimension in education without turning the classroom into an instrument for a church or some other special interest group.

Edwin Cook of Russell Sage College, pursues the ethical dimension by providing some concrete and disturbing headlines which cry out for societal responses. He provokes us to think of ways by which the foundational studies may play a guiding role in shaping the concerns of the classroom. In addition, Professor Cook underscores the distance between goals established by an anti-historical "management system" alien, divorced and independent of the educational process and those faced by the teachers in the actual classroom with all of the historical diversity and contingency of everyday life.

The ethical problem which results from the contemporary perception of the moral landscape as one of hopeless contradictory systems is

treated by a recent doctorate from Cornell University, Lance Ternasky in “Moral Realism and the Search for Objectivity.” His analysis which is grounded in the work of Richard Boyd and Peter Railton attempts to develop a moral realism which avoids absolutist tendencies and steers clear of a hopeless moral skepticism.

The Christian school movement of the last two decades is examined by Claudia Guthrie of Wayland High School in “The Fourth Great Awakening.” In her analysis, she argues that to a large extent the Christian school movement, understood as Fundamentalists or Evangelical Protestants in contrast to the other Christian churches, is a response to the intrusion of relativism and secularism in the public schools. The outlawing of public prayer and compulsory Bible reading, the increasing influence of Darwinism in the early sixties, the widespread phenomena of drug abuse and the behavioral and social disorder are seen as threatening the groups’ “identity” as well as the stable traditional values and standards. These considerations bring one back to the fundamental foundational moral underpinnings of the social and educational institutions. Claudia Guthrie, thus, provides an analysis that, again, underscores the pervasive role values play in the social order, and points to that sensitive domain in which religious and secular values intersect.

The final paper of this collection, “Why the Medieval Idea of a Community-Oriented University is Still Modern,” is an attempt by Achim Köddermann of SUNY Oneonta, to trace the reasons for the confusion and disorder within the modern university. Köddermann finds that disagreements in the objectives, the basic texts and the fundamental assumptions of the educational process are some of the reasons for the present confusion. In part this results from the phenomena of diversity and the rapid accumulation of knowledge which lack any clear consensus with respect to moral and cognitive organizing principles. He suggests that an examination of the origins of the medieval universities will bring one back to the democratic spirit essential for free inquiry and help one avoid the reactionary aristocratic elitism in which the modern university has at times sought refuge.