

**The Traditional Mistake
Of
The Traditional Educator**

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The Dividing Line

“Truth,” said Hegel in the Foreword to the Phenomenology, “must be understood and expressed not only as substance but also as subject.” This insightful comment, expressed in compact form, marks the real dividing line between two very different traditions of educational philosophy and, accordingly, of curricular reform and the reform of teaching. One tradition, by far the more ancient, fixes attention on the subject in the subject-object distinction, dialectic, and identity. It is an identity theory focusing attention on the interplay of opposites, of subject and object.¹ The other, a more modern theory, fixes all attention on the object of knowledge on the substance of things, and denies the critical importance of the subject in learning and educational philosophy. It is, therefore, not an identity theory but, on the contrary, a perception theory in which the scholar or critic, teacher or student confronts the objects of knowledge, the substance of things whether these be the “facts” of history or the formulas and problems of mathematics and science. The emphasis in the first is on the theory of instruction or craft of teaching and the promotion of insight in the student. The second is engaged purely with the curriculum and the standards it is designed to reach. The watchword of the first is insight or the Eureka! flash, or thought thinking, a subject term. The watchword of the second is “intellectual capital” or thought thought, or pre-thought thought, an object term, and the discipline required to reach it. The great names in the first tradition are Plato, Aristotle, and Hegel. The great names in the second are Hume, Locke, and British empiricism, Comte and French positivism. The first is discursive in the philosophical Platonic, Aristotelian, or Hegelian mode and is predicated on a theory of the subject. The second is positivist, empiricist, or behaviorist, and is predicated on the “findings” of the social and behavioral sciences. The clash between them plays out the drama of the “culture war” in our time.

In our time, the conventional wisdom divides the two camps very differently. On the right we have conservative or traditional education, and the names which adorn this register are names such as Lynn Cheney and William J. Bennett, Chester Finn, Diane Ravitch, and E. D. Hirsch Jr. Their books range from The Book of Virtues to The Schools We Need: And Why We Don't Have Them via We Must Take Charge and Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reform. While on the left we have the many works of Neil Postman, Herbert Kohl, and Jonathan Kozol, Henry Giroux and Stanley Aronowitz, the last four presided over by the figure of Paulo Freire, and later Antonio Gramsci.

¹ So, in the Hegelian tradition Marx famously characterized the proletariat as “the identical subject-object of the historical process.” And Kukács defined historical materialism as “the self-knowledge of the proletariat.” In his study Lenin: Studie über den Zusammenhang seiner Gedanken, Malik Verlag, Berlin, 1924, opening line.

But this is to make a superficial, misleading, and purely ideological division which leads to endless confusion on the level of theory. Of course, the ideological content of one side is the polar opposite of the other and this leads to “The looking glass war” conducted as a dialectical exchange between the advocates of Wonderfulism and those of Awfulism: Everything would (again) be wonderful except for Dewey and Kilpatrick, relativism and the ravages of progressive education and, of course, the American Left. Contrariwise: Everything has been awful (at least since the end of the New Deal) from Bush One to Bush Two what with war, the economy, unemployment, continued poverty and differential wages for equal work, corporations and banks, the rich and the super-rich, the elite and the media, racism, sexism, and homophobia (fill in the rest) except for the promise of progressive education, equality, equity, and social justice, harmony and the brotherhood of man in a world now colored Green: Chester Finn meet Pedro Noguera. Structurally speaking, both sides today are based on the same premise: the denial of the subject and the consequent focus on the ideological contents of knowledge. In terms of deep structure Kozol and Kohl, Giroux and Aronowitz are simply the mirror opposites of Buckley and William Bennett, Chester Finn, Diane Ravitch, till she changed her mind, and E. D. Hirsch. One is the other with the ideological sign reversed. Ideologies apart, both are forms of “traditional” education, one conservative and the other progressive.

The true dividing line is the line which divides this false dichotomy from its genuine alternative and opposite, a theory based on the learner as subject, as the active subject of the knowing process. This tradition, too, has two main roots or sources. One is the classical tradition founded by Socrates, dramatized by Plato, and perfected by Aristotle. Via Aristotle and St. Thomas, the most outstanding work in cognitional theory or the theory of the subject comes from a school of Jesuit thinkers known as “the transcendental school” or movement and is presented by Otto Muck in his study The Transcendental Method (Herder & Herder, New York, 1968). In part, their work derives from Maréchal’s Le Pointe de Depart de la Metaphysique. But in large part it is brilliantly original and creative, showing none of the marks of the schoolmen of old. In modern times, the second source was the philosophy of Hegel, particularly the Phenomenology, and the distinguished names which make up the Hegelian tradition in our time. In philosophy, the most celebrated names are those of Croce and Labriola, not to mention Gentile, the early Lukács, Korsch, Revai, and Deborin, and more recently Ernst Bloch and Lucian Goldman. In his Philosophical Notebooks (circa 1916) Lenin returned to Hegel, making Hegel’s Logic the key to the correct understanding of Marx’s Kapital beginning with chapter one. In Leningrad, the young Andrei Zhdanov wrote his dissertation on Socrates As Pedagogue. In Moscow, a generation later, W. Lektorski wrote his dissertation and published it in East Berlin under the title Das Subjekt-Objekt Problem in der klassischen und modernen bürgerlichen Philosophie. In education, the two names coming immediately to mind are those of Gramsci and Paulo Freire. Gramsci was born into a Catholic family, as was Freire, and both turned later to Marxism. But in each case

it was a Marxism of a special kind: Marxism with a pronounced Hegelian dimension, a subject-centered tradition is not limited to these names. In our time, it extends to Dewey and the movement in educational reform called Discovery or Socratic teaching associated with the name of Jerome S. Bruner and his colleagues extending from the National Science Foundation to Berkeley. Failure to understand the dichotomy between the subject and object-centered traditions is the fundamental failure of the traditional educator as the voice of authority in educational philosophy. The many facets of this mistake, readily seen wherever we turn, demonstrate this beyond a shadow of a doubt.

Scribes and Pharisees

The literature of the culture clash in education can be divided into the clash between two sects, the Scribes and the Pharisees. If the left are the Pharisees excoriating the sins of a fallen world, the right are the Scribes grounded uncritically in the tradition or, as with Lynn Cheney, Bennett, and Buckley, expatiating forever on its virtues. A small sample, beginning with Harold Entwistle and his book on Gramsci, will illustrate the point at issue. Entwistle's approach shows all the merits of this form of investigation. It also reveals its characteristic defect. The merits are obvious. It is the product of much learning, detailed, thorough, and based on original archival research at the Istituto Gramsci. It is a painstaking, somewhat pedantic and tedious slog through the trenches, not a page turner but a learned account by a conventional academic. Books of this kind have been appearing with increasing frequency as the academic mind becomes more like the mass mind in the transformation foretold by Ortega in The Revolt of the Masses (1933). Such works bear all the stigmata of the mass mind now elevated to academic rank and status. They are uniformly atheoretical and devoid of genuine culture and learning with nothing new, or enlightening, or even interesting to say. Unlike Ortega, to mention only one example, they are monotonously repetitious, one building on another in explicating the same simple paradigm whose rightness or validity is taken for granted, or else dogmatically affirmed. In Thomas Kuhn's sense of the word, they are the "ordinary" books of the tradition. In the name of education, they function as the paradigm enforcers of mass culture. Theirs is the craft of the scribe or second-hand commentator, not the "messenger" with new light on an old and traditional problem. Unlike the messenger, the scribe himself has nothing to say.

Paradox and the Traditional Educator

Entwistle's study of Gramsci is the beau ideal of the traditionalist educator as scholar, investigator, researcher, and authority. Both E. D. Hirsch and Dante Germino base their views of Gramsci on his study. Entwistle sub-titles his book on Antonio Gramsci Conservative Schooling for Radical Politics. And he concedes right away that this is surely a "paradox." He does not stop to ask whether the paradox is really in his own mind or in Gramsci's. The conclusion toward which the "facts" drive him is the "fact" that Gramsci was a "conservative" or traditional educator, and for Entwistle that's that. It never occurs to him to ask whether the "paradox," and a host of other problems, might be the result of his own methodology and interpretation of the facts, or in a word, of the horizon he takes for granted.

His presentation of Gramsci on education, as distinct from his life and politics, ranges across nearly two-thirds of the book and defies simple summary. The main structural elements are, however, clear and can be stated in compact form. Compactly stated, Gramsci

has all the earmarks of the traditional or “conservative” educator: He favors homework and hard work, discipline and self-discipline, tests and competitive testing. Indeed, he is not even averse to drudgery. As a socialist, he is “for” the traditional conception of equality of opportunity. But, in the scheme of things this inclines towards the development of a meritocracy (pps. 54-55 ff) etc... Does this apparently solid demonstration prove the case? Not a bit! Entwistle’s case is that Gramsci was, in the final analysis, a “conservative” educator, but his evidence does not prove that at all. If Entwistle’s conclusion is mistaken, where does the error lie? What precisely is the dividing line between Gramsci and the traditional or conservative educator?

Look at it this way: What Entwistle has laid out is, broadly speaking, the phenomenology of the serious or good school, whether it be purely traditional or otherwise. What he has overlooked is the characteristic feature or defining essence; what learned folk call the differentia specifica, of “the creative school” in Gramsci’s model of the ideal school in his essay “On Education.” Here, in his final, most explicit and extended statement, Gramsci defines the student as “the discoverer of new truths,” even if these be “old truths” for the teacher. Correlatively, he characterizes the teacher as a “friendly guide,” and not as a transmitter of information, or knowledge, or the uncritical holdings of tradition. Equality of opportunity we must have, whether as socialists or as democrats. But “the creative school” in Gramsci is also oriented toward the production of those scholars who “in their thousands, or hundreds, or even dozens are necessary for every great civilization.” In this respect, Gramsci like Jefferson and every Enlightenment thinker was an “elitist” to his finger tips. The contrast between him and Entwistle or Hirsch could not be more striking.

When the student is defined as “the discoverer of new truths” we are in the presence of discovery in learning and, therefore, Discovery or Socratic teaching in which the teacher acts as “friendly guide.” In Discovery teaching, the student is immediately transformed into the subject in the knowing process just as he is transformed into the object, the passive or receptive audience, as in the lecture. In following the lecture he is still thinking. But this activity is minimal when compared with his activity as subject in the critical analysis, creation and re-creation of ideas and argument. The first form is acutely focused on him as subject, a partner, albeit a junior partner, in the development and criticism of ideas. In the second, however, he is primarily receptive to the flow of ideas in the lecture and the transmission of knowledge and information from the teacher and the textbook, the supplementary article and now the Internet. Entwistle’s cardinal mistake is to overlook this distinction, the differentia specifica of Gramsci’s theory, and to treat the phenomenology itself as the defining essence of Gramsci’s thought as expressed in his most mature and final statement.

His mistake leads to a host of errors of which the following are merely the most crucial. His procedure, or if you wish, methodology, is all backwards. Instead of “beginning” with an insight into the core of Gramsci’s thought precisely as Gramsci understood it, and scrutinizing its merits as philosopher of education, he begins with his birth and early years and scrutinizes every piece of juvenilia, early writings, letters to his wife, etc., and the comments of various and sundry secondhand writers from Broccoli to Zabaglione. The myriad pieces of this jig-saw puzzle are then fitted together to give us a picture of a “conservative” educator who looks like an idealized image of Entwistle himself. The question Entwistle addresses is, in Rousseau’s phrase, “une question mal posee.” The

question is not whether Gramsci was a progressive or conservative educator, the two alternatives Entwistle confronts steadfastly throughout his book as if there were no third. The question bien posee is: What did Gramsci actually say in his final, so to speak, death-bed statement? This test provides another paradox. Assuming for a moment Entwistle's thesis is correct, what might we expect Gramsci to say? Surely, he would say something like this: "The creative school is the culmination of the traditional school." Why then—an impish sense of humor aside—did he say the exact opposite: "The creative school is the culmination of the active school." (Page 33) The main connection between the two is the fact that in each the student is the active subject and not the comparatively passive object of instruction. Entwistle makes much of the naturalistic difference between flying and swimming, on the one hand, and thinking, on the other. But the logic and dynamic of insight in the discovery of new truths is as much a defining fact in the student as "discoverer of new truths" as it is in Homo sapiens, or man as a rational animal.² The oversight of insight, of the interplay between the knower and the known, is the besetting sin of the traditional educator from Entwistle and our galaxy of stars to the recent article by Caitlin Flanagan in the Atlantic Monthly.

Entwistle's work is iconic of the species. It is unusually thorough and careful, painstaking and attentive to the facts, learned, scholarly, and erudite. And yet, it is markedly atheoretical. Of theory, understood as self-clarification and understanding, of critical reflection on the deep structure of the argument, there is not a whisper. The ways in which the traditional educator takes the mind out of matter will become more evident with our next few witnesses. But they all spring from the cardinal error dramatized by Plato, pinpointed by Hegel and remedied by Dewey and Bruner.

Change and the Traditional Educator

"La donna e mobile." Woman is famously changeable. And a few months ago, Dr. Diane Ravitch famously changed her mind. In the galaxy of stars this makes her unique. The traditional educator is never wrong. How could he be when, like Chester Finn, he is guided by the facts or, like E. D. Hirsch, by the "findings" of mainstream science or solid mainstream science published in peer-reviewed journals. His frame of mind is dogmatic, not zetetic: the stance of inquiry, search, or investigation caught in the metaphor of the detective. For him there is no search in the Socratic sense, no insight into a puzzling fact or tormenting problem. No judgment or decision to be made with "fear and trembling." For him, the facts are always clear. It is not he who speaks, but history or science that speaks through him.³

Not so Professor Ravitch, who has looked again and changed her mind. The facts, she announced to the public, were otherwise. Question: What facts?⁴ Answer: The facts on testing and choice, multiple choice test, charter schools, and the voucher plan. So much for Chester Finn, the Fordham Institute, and National Review.

² Strauss makes the point neatly when he says that "nature is a term of distinction." Entwistle, as a positivist, is of course employing the idea as a term of inclusion. His thinking in this respect is indebted to Karl Popper's "epistemology without a subject."

³ This self conception and form of address was, I believe, created by Fustel de Coulanges who in La Cité Antique wrote: "It is not I who speak but history that speaks through me."

⁴ The facts about standardized testing have been public knowledge since at least Linda Darling-Hammonds' article "Mad Hatter Test of Teaching," New York Times educational survey, January 18, 1984.

Left Back, her most recent history is iconic in the genre and the best of her works. It is very clearly written and betrays no partisanship. It is thoroughly researched, balanced, and informative without slipping into excessive detail. Above all, it is admirably, almost marvelously, objective. So, too, in The Troubled Crusade her sketch of the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley is a model of objectivity in style, tone and detail.

Still, one comes away from this account without understanding any of the complex of issues, the Civil Rights Movement, Free Speech on the campus, the increasing radicalization of the University, and Clark Kerr's nakedly pragmatic plans for the uses of the University, which tore apart the University and still divide the nation. Is the University a better place for FSM? Is America and American education any better or worse? What were the issues down deep, and the contrasting visions of the best thinkers on the two sides? Strangely enough, the reader will not learn much from her brief account of this dramatic episode. He will not come away much enlightened by it and much else in the book. In the work Professor Ravitch does show some discernment. What is missing, what is woefully absent, is judgment, and the rationale on which it is based and which makes it more than mere opinion.

This is not history in the sense of Gibbon or Macauley, Carlyle, Trevelyan, Namier, Collingwood, Harrod's Life of Keynes, or Deutscher's magnificent biography of Trotsky, Trotsky's History of the Russian Revolution, Soloviev, Vernadsky and Karpovich, or Karamzin, Klyuchevsky, or Weber, Dierke, Troeltsch and a galaxy of contemporary German historians from Droysen to Meinecke. It is chronicle, but it is not quite history. Or, if it is history it is history of a special kind: history without the play of mind to enliven it and make it significant. An example will illustrate the point of this curiously atheoretical historiography.

Professor Ravitch concludes her history with an epilogue, (Conclusion pps.453-468) which is, I take it, the moral of the story. The moral is the same old scheme of traditional education. But does this really follow from the tale? She presents no theoretical analysis to demonstrate any organic connection. It's just tacked on as if to say "If you like my tale you'll buy my epilogue." She makes a powerful case against progressive education in all its vagaries, fits and starts. But that per se does not prove the case for traditional education. Like Entwistle, she too subscribes to the dogma that these are the only two choices,⁵ so in demolishing the claims of the first, she has proved the case for the second. But this in a theorist and educational philosopher and historian, is pure legerdemain. As history, it borders on the delusional.

Where did the ideas of Mario Savio, Suzanne Goldberg, and the key FSM leaders and sympathizers (some names coming immediately to mind, and merely to illustrate the point, are: Art Goldberg and Jack Weinberg, Peter Frank, Michael Rossman, and Lenny Glaser, Bettina Aptheker and William Marx Mendel, Suzanne Goldberg and, of course, Mario Savio) come from? The few liberals apart, they were mostly deracinated Jews and Catholics deeply influenced by the Narodniki and the rise of Russian radicalism and Marxism and later by Marcuse and the Frankfurt school.⁶ And, where, in turn, did these ideas come from? They

⁵ See, for example, her extended, lucid, but some what superficial discussion in chapter 7 of The Troubled Crusade where the work of Bruner and Davis is briefly mentioned in the course of her litany without any real analysis of its fundamental methodological difference from traditional education and marked advance over it.

⁶ While a direct acquaintance with the primary sources from Chaadayev and Radischev on down to the rise of Russian radicalism and Marxism is all but indispensable, the lay reader can none the less begin to grasp their

came, beyond a shadow of a doubt, from Paris, the French Revolution, and the French Enlightenment. As a historian, Professor Ravitch is myopic, her unit of historical time (a mere seventy-five years) too short.

She laments the decline of foreign languages in the teaching in our schools, and rightly so. But a critic will need an eagle eye to spot the influence of foreign literature in her work, even when it would have benefited the most, namely in the domain of philosophy and history, i.e. of theory in the deepest sense. Example: Her text is adorned by the names of three heroes, William C. Bagley, Michael J. Demiashkevitch, and Isaac L. Kandel. And very fine heroes they are. Consider the first two whom she treats in quick succession, and the problem this coupling raises. She quotes Bagley as saying that the one quality the teacher (!) needs most is insight. More: she goes on to quote him as saying that if he had by some miracle a choice between Socrates and the freshly produced teacher from Teacher's College with all this new fangled methods and equipment, he would choose Socrates hands down. She then praises Demiashkevitch for his grasp of foreign languages, philosophical scholarship, and easy familiarity with the great writing of the past. His orientation, she tells us, was grounded in the philosophy of Comte. And she sees no problem! To begin with, the fact that Bagley has it exactly wrong on Socrates escapes her notice. More: if the view of the Platonic Socrates is right, then the view of the positivist Comte is pure sophistry. Conversely, if the scientific positivism of Comte is right, then the transcendental orientation of Socrates with its focus on the centrality of the soul and moral knowledge is pure moonshine. Philosophy and morals or science and sociology, Socrates or Comte, you can't have it both ways.⁷ Nor will it do to say that they, Bagley and Demiashkevitch, were both critics of progressive education and favored the traditional position. This amounts to saying that as long as you favor traditional education it doesn't much matter what philosophical view you ground it in. As educational philosophy this is a scandal, papered over by the atheoretical narrative of an historian acting as mythmaker.

Here, as everywhere, the traditional educator poses as the defender of tradition. The boast of the traditionalist, strident in Lynn Cheney and Bennett, Chester Finn and Buckley, is hollow, and its hollowness is revealed the moment we ask the question: "Which tradition?" It is certainly not the classical tradition which begins with Plato and dialogue, the matching of argument and counter-argument, the dramatic form of Socratic teaching as opposed to a curriculum or catalog of contents frozen in a book and unable to answer back. Is it, then, the tradition of teaching going back to Britain since the Reformation? Again a round "No" or at best, a hesitant and a very uncertain "Yes" in light of its most representative spokesman, John Milton: "A wise man can gather gold out of the drossiest volume..." Milton wrote, "A fool remains a fool with the best book." (Milton, Areopagitica, Sabine Edition para. 30). In historical terms, the tradition to which the traditional educator has given his loyalty is the new tradition of mass education and mass indoctrination in latter-day mainstream American

significance by looking at E. H. Carr's very readable Studies in Revolution, Macmillan, London, 1950 or, more compendiously, Avrahm Yarmolinsky, Road to Revolution, Cassel, London, 1957, or still more compendiously, Franco Venturi The Roots of Revolution, (with an Introduction by Sir Isaiah Berlin), Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1960.

⁷ For a strikingly different picture of Comte as evangelist see Eric Voigelin From Enlightenment To Revolution, Third Edition, Duke University Press, Durham, NC p. 136 ff.

values, conservative and American or progressive and European or Russian: And this is “the culture war” in a nutshell.

Meta-Critique and the Traditional Educator

The traditional educator does not really dispose of a theory. Indeed, theoretical analysis of any kind is entirely foreign to his mind. Instead, what he disposes of is a meta-theory which, by definition, takes care of all his problems. Ask point blank how they would teach something simple yet important, they confess either that they do not know, or that they would leave this critical question to the teacher, the very person they criticized as “miseducated” and incompetent. Another dodge is to aver that since there are several different ways of teaching the writer will not take sides or even discuss the issue but...leave it to the teacher to decide. Some quick examples: 1) After I had done four workshops on “The Gettysburg Address,” I read a fine essay criticizing Dewey by M. D. Eschelman, a Professor of Education at Boston and Geneva. In an e-mail replying to my question “How would you instruct the teacher how to teach ‘The Gettysburg Address’?” Professor Eschelman said he did not know, and advised me to check with Chester Finn and The Fordham Institute. 2) I put the same question to Professor Diane Ravitch who e-mailed back saying “I don’t know. I’m not a teacher.” (I quote from memory). 3) On reading an excellent article by Professor William Hare of the University of Halifax, Nova Scotia, I telephoned him to ask how he would train teachers to teach the elementary mathematics taught in primary school. He, too, said he did not know because (in his words) he did not feel “competent” to do so. His article was on Russell, Whitehead and Dewey! 4) In her book, Sustain Our Schools, Professor Patricia L. Graham, Dean of the Harvard School of Education, employs the dodge that there are various and sundry ways of teaching and goes on smoothly to her next topic on the various and sundry ways of sustaining our schools! Think of a Professor of Medicine who hadn’t a clue as to what to do with a patient with a severe stomach ache and possible appendicitis, or even a simple headache! The meta-theory is defined as the structure and functioning of the traditional classroom as the mechanism for transmitting the orthodoxy of the canon. This meta-theory is seldom avowed explicitly, and never defended on the level of articulate theory. But it is always there in latent form and surfaces occasionally as in Diane Ravitch’s “Epilogue” or Hirsch’s reply to Walter Feinberg’s extended criticism of The Schools We Need and Why We Don’t Have Them.

The meta-theory dictates a strategy of attack which takes three forms. The first is the strategy of The Trojan Horse, and is best seen in Caitlin Flanagan’s attack on Alice Waters and the school gardens project (Atlantic Monthly, January/February, 2010). The meta-theory never surfaces to be defended. The impression left is that if Waters is all wet, then the meta-theory must be right. The latent assumption is, here and everywhere, that there are only two positions, and if the first can be shown to be absurd and wrong, then the second must be right. The second defines the strategic form of the traditionalist movement and is readily visible in the most prominent names associated with it: Chester Finn, Diane Ravitch, Charles Sykes, and E. D. Hirsch, and can be called “The Critique of a Thought World” strategy, to borrow a phrase from its distinguished creator, E. D. Hirsch. The third is the form of this body of literature. They vary in detail and presentation, but their underlying form is always the same. In a word, these are “theses books” in which the authors already know the answer contained in the meta-theory, before they completed or even began their “research.” They are

prosecutorial briefs presented as disinterested research. Their claim to academic neutrality is as authentic as Grandma Moses' store bought teeth. Except for Diane Ravitch, this is evident anywhere you look.

Entwistle commends the quality of disinterestedness in Gramsci. But his own book is a sustained polemic refashioning Gramsci into that dullest of creatures, a traditional schoolman. Hirsch professes neutrality. But the two main authorities, on whom he relies, Rita Kramer and James Koerner, are both situated far on the right. Koerner's research was funded by the Relm Foundation, perhaps the most conservative foundation of its time. Rita Kramer expresses her gratitude to Midge Dechter, whose right-wing credentials are impeccable. But politics aside, how useful or reliable are his authorities? Koerner, a historian, has nothing useful to say on the craft of teaching either in history, or in mathematics and the sciences. And, in her sprightly polemic against progressive education, Rita Kramer mistakes Shulman's book, Learning by Discovery, for a variety of progressive education in the Kilpatrick tradition. Shulman, of course, was a student of Bruner and the book is solidly in that tradition. One wonders whether Hirsch or his authority (Rita Kramer) ever opened the book. Perhaps they did not consider it necessary. One tactic pursued by the traditional educator is to focus attention away from themselves and on to a very different problem called the "Why Johnnie can't read, do math, or think" problem. And the reason is obvious: Johnnie can't read, do math, think, tie his shoelaces or button his shirt because of the ravages of progressive education. Specifically, what he lacks is "cognitive baggage" in Entwistle's phrase or "intellectual capital" in Hirsch's phrase. "Intellectual capital," Hirsch contends, is "the tool of tools." With "intellectual capital" at his disposal Johnnie can become a millionaire of the mind. In the debate on education, the scholars who come to the table with "intellectual capital" are the traditional educators like Chester Finn and Hirsch himself. This, in a way, is the core of the traditionalist case for "capital" or "substance" over process in teaching and the student as subject. So let's test this bold hypothesis. But let's first be clear about one point. Substance we must always have, as in Socratic or Discovery teaching. As Maritain famously observed "We don't eat eating. We eat bread."

All Discovery teaching in the strict sense is based on content, topic by topic, chapter by chapter, class after class. Content and process are like the two blades of a scissor, and one needs both to cut. The Socratic turn, if I may so put it, is in stressing the priority of the cognitional, and so of process over the substance or content to be learned or mastered. Look at it this way: if you are to benefit, really benefit, by Alice Water's "book of recipes" you must (1) already know something about cooking and (2) you must learn how to use the recipes with discernment. And that discernment is what makes for the art and craft of the chef. But no one, least of all Alice Waters, denies that you need fish and meat, vegetables and fruit, and a little of California wine.

The obsession with "content" over discernment, analysis, critical interpretation, and judgment results in a curious form of blindness in the traditional educator as critic. He is incapable of understanding the text before him precisely as the author means it. This is remarkable in the case of the author of Validity in Interpretation, though he is not alone. Hirsch criticizes "banking theory" in Freire as a variety of typically contentless progressive education. Following him, Sol Stern makes the exact same mistake in his recent article on "The Pedagogy of the Oppressor" in *City Journal* (March 2009 pps. 19-20). "Banking theory" is, of course, devoid of "content." It is a cognitional theory sketching the cognitional

mode and activity of the student as the active subject engaged in the process of knowing. This is the proper stance and activity if the student is to become “the discoverer of new truths.” Freire is here (see “The Act of Study”) in the precise line of development from Lukács and Gramsci to Lucien Goldman, i.e. the Marxian tradition with a pronounced Hegelian accent. To absorb this into a variety of progressive education American style, is to make a category mistake of the most fundamental kind. It is bad theory and worse history.

The cognitional error which prompts this mistake is expressed most crudely by Chester Finn. In Finn’s opinion “facts are to thought as bricks are to mortar.” Finn is blind to the inter-penetration of fact and thought or theory. A moment’s reflection would reveal the fact that the question: “When did the Cold War begin, and who began it?” cannot be answered without a substantial inter-penetration of fact and theory: The American critic has one view, Professor Blackett, a Defense expert and Nobel laureate in physics, another in Fear, War and the Bomb.

The traditional educator is a master of legerdemain with an authoritative style of delivery. His catalog of contents is delivered ex cathedra from the government, the think tanks, and National Review. Few have mastered this style better than William F. Buckley Jr., the founder, editor, and pundit of National Review. Yet, when we descend from airy abstractions to concrete facts, Buckley is no better than the rest. Typically, the traditional educator is a literary intellectual, for the most part a historian without any direct classroom experience. Though he regularly speaks of the 3 R’s, he seldom evinces anything more than a casual acquaintance with mathematics and the sciences. This can make for a disconcerting gaffe. In Up from Liberalism, Buckley assures us that you cannot take the square root of a negative number. But, of course you can, as any high school student can tell you. The square root of minus sixteen is four “i,” where “i” is defined as the square root of minus one. How the fact checkers at Arlington House, his publisher, allowed this to pass is anyone’s guess. Buckley’s grasp of education, which he confuses with indoctrination, is even shakier than his grasp of square roots.

Traditional education plays well in Peoria. But that is because Peoria is only Peoria, not Athens or Rome, Paris, London, or St. Petersburg, and does not aspire to be. The traditional educator is a venerable man, part of a venerable tradition. It is like the tradition of Ptolemy before the Copernican revolution. He is the last of the Ptolemaic wise men and the transcendental turn, from the primacy of “substance” to “subject” has passed him by, leaving him with nothing to say—and all the time to say it.