

Whoever controls the image and information of the past determines what and how future generations will think; whoever controls the information and images of the present determines how those same people will view the past.¹

– George Orwell, 1984 (1949)

Take at hazard one hundred children of several educated generations and one hundred uneducated children of the people and compare them in anything you please; in strength, in agility, in mind, in the ability to acquire knowledge, even in morality—and in all respects you are startled by the vast superiority on the side of the children of the uneducated.

– Count Leo Tolstoy, "Education and Children" (1862)

A Nation From The Bottom Up

ESTABLISHING SHOT

Fifty children of different ages are teaching each other while the schoolmaster hears lessons at his desk from older students. An air of quiet activity fills the room. A wood stove crackles in the corner. What drove the nineteenth-century school world celebrated in Edward Eggleston's classic, *The Hoosier Schoolmaster*, was a society rich with concepts like duty, hard work, responsibility, and self-reliance; a society overwhelmingly local in orientation although never so provincial it couldn't be fascinated by the foreign and exotic. But when tent Chautauqua with its fanfare about modern marvels left town, conversation readily returned to the text of local society.

Eggleston's America was a special place in modern history, one where the society was more central than the national political state. Words can't adequately convey the stupendous radicalism hidden in our quiet villages, a belief that ordinary people have a right to govern themselves. A confidence that they can.

Most revolutionary of all was the conviction that personal rights can only be honored when the political state is kept weak. In the classical dichotomy between liberty and subordination written into our imagination by Locke and Hobbes in the seventeenth century, America struggled down the libertarian road of Locke for awhile while her three godfather nations, England, Germany, and France, followed Hobbes and established leviathan states through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Toward the end, America began to follow the Old World's lead.

For Hobbes, social order depended upon state control of the inner life, a degree of mental colonization unknown to the tyrants of history whose principal concern had been controlling the *bodies* of their subjects. But the sheer size of an America without national roads or electronic networks ensured that liberty would be nurtured outside the ring of government surveillance. Then, too, many Americans came out of the dissenting religious sects of England, independent congregations which rejected church-state partnerships. The bulk of our population was socially suspect anyway. Even our gentry was second and third string by English standards, gentlemen without inheritances, the rest a raggle-taggle band of wastrels, criminals, shanghaied boys, poor yeomanry, displaced peasants.

Benet, the poet, describes our founding stock:

The disavouched, hard-bitten pack
Shipped overseas to steal a continent
with neither shirts nor honor to their back.

In *Last Essays*, George Bernanos observes that America, unlike other nations, was built from the bottom up. Francis Parkman made the same observation a century earlier. What America violently rejected in its early republic was the Anglican "Homily On Obedience" set down by English established-church doctrine in the Tudor state of 1562, a doctrine likening order in Heaven with the English social order on Earth—fixed and immutable:

The sun, moon, stars, rainbows, thunder, lightning, clouds, and all the birds of the air do keep their order.
The earth, trees, seeds, plants, herbs, corn, grass, and all manner of beasts keep themselves in order....

Every degree of people in their vocations, callings and office has appointed to them their duty and order.

By 1776 the theocratic utopia toward which such a principle moves, was well established in the Britain of the German Georges, as well as in the three North German states of Prussia, Saxony, and Hanover. Together with England, all three were to play an important role in twentieth-century forced schooling in America. The same divine clock, superficially secularized, was marking time in the interlude of Enlightenment France, the pre-revolutionary utopia which would also have a potent effect on American school thought. Hobbes and his doctrine of mental colonization eclipsed Locke everywhere else, but not in America.

You Had To Do It Yourself

CUT TO Abe Lincoln, by the fireplace in a log house. "An American," Francis Grund remarked in 1837, "is almost from his cradle brought up to reflect on his condition, and from the time he is able to act, employed with the means of improving it."

Lincoln, hardly a slouch as writer, speaker, or thinker, packed fifty weeks of formal schooling into his entire life over the twelve-year period between 1814 and 1826. Even that little seemed a waste of time to his relatives. Unless you want to argue that those few weeks made a decisive difference to Abe, we need to look elsewhere for his education. Clifton Johnson thinks it happened this way:

He acquired much of his early education at home. In the evening he would pile sticks of dry wood into the brick fireplace. These would blaze up brightly and shed a strong light over the room, and the boy would lie down flat on the floor before the hearth with his book in front of him. He used to write his arithmetic sums on a large wooden shovel with a piece of charcoal. After covering it all over with examples, he would take his jack-knife and whittle and scrape the surface clean, ready for more ciphering. Paper was expensive and he could not afford a slate. Sometimes when the shovel was not at hand he did his figuring on the logs of the house walls and on the doorposts, and other woodwork that afforded a surface he could mark on with his charcoal.

In Lincoln's Illinois and Kentucky, only reading, writing, and ciphering "to the Rule of Three" were required of teachers, but in New England the business often attracted ambitious young men like Noah Webster, confident and energetic, merely pausing on their way to greater things. Adam Gurowski, mid-nineteenth-century traveler in our land, took special notice of the superiority of American teachers. Their European brethren were, he said, "withered drifters" or "narrowed martinets."

Young people in America were expected to make something of themselves, not to prepare themselves to fit into a pre-established hierarchy. Every foreign commentator notes the early training in independence, the remarkable precocity of American youth, their assumption of adult responsibility. In his memoir, Tom Nichols, a New Hampshire schoolboy in the 1820s, recalls the electrifying air of expectation in early American schools:

Our teachers constantly stimulated us by the glittering prizes of wealth, honors, offices, and distinctions, which were certainly within our reach—there were a hundred avenues to wealth and fame opening fair before us if we only chose to learn our lessons.

Overproduction, overcapacity, would have been an alien concept to that America, something redolent of British mercantilism. Our virgin soil and forests undermined the stern doctrine of Calvinism by paying dividends to anyone willing to work. As Calvinism waned, contrarian attitudes emerged which represented a new American religion. First, the conviction that opportunity was available to all; second, that failure was the result of deficient character, not predestination or bad placement on a biological bell curve.

Character flaws could be remedied, *but only from the inside*. You had to do it yourself through courage,

determination, honesty, and hard work. Don't discount this as hot air; it marks a critical difference between Americans and everyone else. Teachers had a place in this process of self-creation, but it was an ambiguous one: anyone could teach, it was thought, just as anyone could self-teach. Secular schools, always a peripheral institution, were viewed with ambivalence, although teachers were granted some value—if only gratitude for giving mother a break. In the southern and middle colonies, teachers were often convicts serving out their sentences, their place in the social order caught in this advertisement of Washington's day:

RAN AWAY. A servant man who followed the occupation of Schoolmaster. Much given to drinking and gambling.

Washington's own schoolmaster, "Hobby," was just such a bondsman. Traditional lore has it that he laid the foundation for national greatness by whipping the devil out of Washington. Whipping and humiliation seem to have always been an eternal staple of schooling. Evidence survives from ancient Rome, Montaigne's France, Washington's Virginia—or my own high school in western Pennsylvania in the 1950s, where the teacher's personalized paddle hung prominently at the entrance to many a classroom, not for decoration but for use. The football coach and, if I recall correctly, the algebra teacher customized their paddles, using a dry cell battery to fashion devices similar to electrified cattle prods.

Something in the structure of schooling calls forth violence. While latter-day schools don't allow energetic physical discipline, certainly they are state-of-the-art laboratories in humiliation, as your own experience should remind you. In my first years of teaching I was told over and over that humiliation was my best friend, more effective than whipping. I witnessed this theory in practice through my time as a teacher. If you were to ask me now whether physical or psychological violence does more damage, I would reply that slurs, aspersion, formal ranking, insult, and inference are far and away the more deadly. Nor does law protect the tongue-lashed.

Early schools in America were quick with cuff or cane, but local standards demanded fairness. Despotism teachers were often quarry themselves, as Washington Irving's "Legend of Sleepy Hollow" warns us. Listen to the fate of schoolmaster Thomas Beveridge at the hands of the upper-class Latin School in Philadelphia, eleven years before the Revolution:

He arrives, enters the school, and is permitted to proceed until he is supposed to have nearly reached his chair at the upper end of the room, when instantly the door, and every window shutter is closed. Now shrouded in utter darkness the most hideous yells that can be conceived are sent forth from three score of throats; and Ovids and Virgils and Horaces, together with the more heavy metal of dictionaries, are hurled without remorse at the astonished preceptor, who, groping and crawling under cover of the forms, makes the best of his way to the door. When attained, a light is restored and a death-like silence ensues.

Every boy is at his lesson: No one has had a hand or a voice in the recent atrocity.²

In the humbler setting of rural Indiana recreated by Eggleston for *Hoosier Schoolmaster* (1871), we can easily see that passage of more than a century (and the replacement of rich kids by farmers' sons and daughters) hasn't altered classroom dynamics:

When Ralph looked round on the faces of the scholars—the little faces full of mischief and curiosity, the big faces full of an expression which was not further removed than second-cousin from contempt—when young Hartsook looked into these faces, his heart palpitated with stage fright. There is no audience so hard to face as one of schoolchildren, as many a man has found to his cost.

While Ralph was applying to a trustee of the school committee for this job, a large ugly bulldog sniffed at his heels, causing a young girl to "nearly giggle her head off at the delightful prospect of seeing a new schoolteacher eaten up by the ferocious brute." Weary, discouraged, "shivering with fear," he is lectured:

You see, we a'n't none of your soft sort in these diggin's. It takes a man to boss this deestrick...if you git licked, don't come to us. Flat Crick don't pay no 'nsurance, you bet! ...it takes grit to apply for this school.

The last master had a black eye for a month.

No Limit To Pain For Those Who Allow It

One of the most telling accounts of schooling ever penned comes directly from the lips of a legendary power broker, Colonel Edward Mandel House, one of these grand shadowy figures in American history. House had a great deal to do with America's entry into WWI as a deliberate project to seize German markets in chemicals, armor plate and shipping, an aspect of our bellicosity rarely mentioned in scholastic histories. When peace came, House's behind-the-scenes maneuvering in the League of Nations contributed to repudiation of the organization. His management of President Wilson led to persistent stories that Wilson was little more than a puppet of the Colonel.

In his memoirs, *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, we get a glimpse of elite American schooling in the 1870s. House's early years were school-free. He grew up after the Civil War, near Houston, Texas:

My brother James, six years older than I, was the leader....We all had guns and pistols... there were no childish games excepting those connected with war. [House was nine at the time.] In the evening around the fireside there were told tales of daring deeds that we strove to emulate.... I cannot remember the time when I began to ride and to shoot.... I had many narrow escapes. Twice I came near killing one of my playmates in the reckless use of firearms. They were our toys and death our playmate.

At the age of fourteen House was sent to school in Virginia. The cruelty of the other boys made an indelible impression on his character, as you can sift from this account:

I made up my mind at the second attempt to haze me that I would not permit it. I not only had a pistol but a large knife, and with these I held the larger, rougher boys at bay. There was no limit to the lengths they would go in hazing those who would allow it. One form I recall was that of going through the pretense of hanging. They would tie a boy's hands behind him and string him up by the neck over a limb until he grew purple in the face. None of it, however, fell to me. What was done to those who permitted it is almost beyond belief.

At the Hopkins Grammar School in New Haven at the age of seventeen, during the Hayes-Tilden campaign of 1876, House began to "hang around" political offices instead of "attending to studies." He came to be recognized and was given small privileges. When the election had to be ultimately settled by an Electoral Commission he was allowed to "slip in and out of hearings at will." House again:

All this was educational in its way, though not the education I was placed in Hopkins Grammar School to get, and it is no wonder that I lagged at the end of my class. I had no interest in desk tasks, but I read much and was learning in a larger and more interesting school.

House's story was written over and over in the short, glorious history of American education before schooling took over. Young Americans were allowed close to the mechanism of things. This rough and tumble practice kept social class elastic and American achievement in every practical field superb.

The Art Of Driving

Now come back to the present while I demonstrate that the identical trust placed in ordinary people two hundred years ago still survives where it suits managers of our economy to allow it. Consider the art of driving, which I

learned at the age of eleven. Without everybody behind the wheel, our sort of economy would be impossible, so everybody *is* there, IQ notwithstanding. With less than thirty hours of combined training and experience, a hundred million people are allowed access to vehicular weapons more lethal than pistols or rifles. Turned loose without a teacher, so to speak. Why does our government make such presumptions of competence, placing nearly unqualified trust in drivers, while it maintains such a tight grip on near-monopoly state schooling?

An analogy will illustrate just how radical this trust really is. What if I proposed that we hand three sticks of dynamite and a detonator to anyone who asked for them. All an applicant would need is money to pay for the explosives. You'd have to be an idiot to agree with my plan—at least based on the assumptions you picked up in school about human nature and human competence.

And yet gasoline, a spectacularly mischievous explosive, dangerously unstable and with the intriguing characteristic as an assault weapon that it can flow under locked doors and saturate bulletproof clothing, is available to anyone with a container. Five gallons of gasoline have the destructive power of a stick of dynamite.³ The average tank holds fifteen gallons, yet no background check is necessary for dispenser or dispensee. As long as gasoline is freely available, gun control is beside the point. Push on. Why do we allow access to a portable substance capable of incinerating houses, torching crowded theaters, or even turning skyscrapers into infernos? We haven't even considered the battering ram aspect of cars—why are novice operators allowed to command a ton of metal capable of hurtling through school crossings at up to two miles a minute? Why do we give the power of life and death this way to everyone?

It should strike you at once that our unstated official assumptions about human nature are dead wrong. Nearly all people are competent and responsible; universal motoring proves that. The efficiency of motor vehicles as terrorist instruments would have written a tragic record long ago if people were inclined to terrorism. But almost all auto mishaps are accidents, and while there are seemingly a lot of those, the actual fraction of mishaps, when held up against the stupendous number of possibilities for mishap, is quite small. I know it's difficult to accept this because the spectre of global terrorism is a favorite cover story of governments, but the truth is substantially different from the tale the public is sold. According to the U.S. State Department, 1995 was a near-record year for terrorist murders; it saw three hundred worldwide (two hundred at the hand of the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka) compared to four hundred thousand smoking-related deaths in the United States alone. When we consider our assumptions about human nature that keep children in a condition of confinement and limited options, we need to reflect on driving and things like almost nonexistent global terrorism.

Notice how quickly people learn to drive well. Early failure is efficiently corrected, usually self-corrected, because the terrific motivation of staying alive and in one piece steers driving improvement. If the grand theories of Comenius and Herbart about learning by incremental revelation, or those lifelong nanny rules of Owen, Maclure, Pestalozzi, and Beatrice Webb, or those calls for precision in human ranking of Thorndike and Hall, or those nuanced interventions of Yale, Stanford, and Columbia Teachers College were actually as essential as their proponents claimed, this libertarian miracle of motoring would be unfathomable.

Now consider the intellectual component of driving. It isn't all just hand-eye-foot coordination. First-time drivers make dozens, no, hundreds, of continuous hypotheses, plans, computations, and fine-tuned judgments every day they drive. They do this skillfully, without being graded, because if they don't, organic provision exists in the motoring universe to punish them. There isn't any court of appeal from your own stupidity on the road.⁴

I could go on: think of licensing, maintenance, storage, adapting machine and driver to seasons and daily conditions. Carefully analyzed, driving is as impressive a miracle as walking, talking, or reading, but this only shows the inherent weakness of analysis since we know almost everyone learns to drive well in a few hours. The way we used to be as Americans, learning everything, breaking down social class barriers, is the way we might be again without forced schooling. Driving proves that to me.

Two Approaches To Discipline

Rules of the Stokes County School November 10, 1848

Wm. A. Chaffin, Master

<i>OFFENSE</i>	<i>LASHES</i>
1. Boys & Girls Playing Together	4
2. Quarreling	4
3. Fighting	5
4. Fighting at School	5
5. Quarreling at School	3
6. Gambling or Betting at School	4
7. Playing at Cards at School	10
8. Climbing for every foot over three feet up a tree	1
9. Telling Lies	7
10. Telling Tales Out of School	8
11. Nick Naming Each Other	4
12. Giving Each Other ILL Names	3
13. Fighting Each Other in Time of Books	2
14. Swearing at School	8
15. Blackguarding Each Other	6
16. For Misbehaving to Girls	10
17. For Leaving School Without Leave of the Teacher	4
18. Going Home With Each Other without Leave of Teacher	4
19. For Drinking Spiritous Liquors at School	8
20. Making Swings & Swinging on Them	7
21. For Misbehaving when a Stranger is in the House	6
22. For Wearing Long Finger Nails	2
23. For not Making a Bow when a Stranger Comes in	3
24. Misbehaving to Persons on the Road	4
25. For not Making a Bow when you Meet a Person	4
26. For Going to Girl's Play Places	3

27. For Going to Boy's Play Places	4
28. Coming to School with Dirty Face and Hands	2
29. For Calling Each Other Liars	4
30. For Playing Bandy	10
31. For Blotting Your Copy Book	2
32. For Not Making a bow when you go home	4
33. For Not Making a bow when you come away	4
34. Wrestling at School	4
35. Scuffling at School	4
36. For Weting each Other Washing at Play Time	2
37. For Hollowing and Hooping Going Home	3
38. For Delaying Time Going Home or Coming to School	3
39. For Not Making a Bow when you come in or go out	2
40. For Throwing anything harder than your trab ball	4
41. For every word you miss in your lesson without excuse	1
42. For Not saying yes Sir or no Sir or yes Marm, no Marm	2
43. For Troubling Each Others Writing Affairs	2
44. For Not Washing at Play Time when going to Books	4
45. For Going and Playing about the Mill or Creek	6
46. For Going about the barn or doing any mischief about	7

Whatever you might think of this in light of Dr. Spock or Piaget or the Yale Child Study folks, it must be apparent that civility was honored, and in all likelihood, no one ever played Bandy a second time! I've yet to meet a parent in public school who ever stopped to calculate the heavy, sometimes lifelong price their children pay for the privilege of being rude and ill-mannered at school. I haven't met a public school parent yet who was properly suspicious of the state's endless forgiveness of bad behavior for which the future will be merciless.

At about the same time Master Chaffin was beating the same kind of sense into young tarheels that convict Hobby had beaten into little Washington, Robert Owen, a Scottish industrialist usually given credit for launching utopian socialism, was constructing his two-volume *Life*. This autobiography contains "Ten Rules of Schooling," the first two of which show a liberalization occurring in nineteenth-century educational thought:

1st Rule—No scolding or punishment of the Children.

2nd Rule—Unceasing kindness in tone, look, word, and action, to all children without exception, by every teacher employed so as to create a real affection and full confidence between the teachers and the taught.

The Owenite colony had what we now call a theory of holistic schooling as its foundation, Owen was a genuine messiah figure and his colony operated in a part of Indiana which was removed from prying eyes. New Harmony, as it was called, was the center of the transatlantic upper-class world's fascinated attention in its short existence.

Yet it fell apart in three years, slightly less time than it took for John Dewey's own Lab School to be wrecked by Owenite principles unmistakably enough to suggest to Dewey it would be the better if he got out of Chicago. And so he did, transferring to Teachers College in Manhattan, where, in time, his Lincoln School carried on the psychological traditions of New Harmony before it, too, ultimately failed.

The Schools Of Hellas

Wherever it occurred, schooling through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (up until the last third of the nineteenth) heavily invested its hours with language, philosophy, art, and the life of the classical civilizations of Greece and Rome. In the grammar schools of the day, little pure grammar as we understand it existed; they were places of classical learning. Early America rested easily on a foundation of classical understanding, one subversive to the normal standards of British class society. The lessons of antiquity were so vital to the construction of every American institution it's hardly possible to grasp how deep the gulf between then and now is without knowing a little about those lessons. Prepare yourself for a surprise.

For a long time, for instance, classical Athens distributed its most responsible public positions by *lottery*: army generalships, water supply, everything. The implications are awesome—trust in everyone's competence was assumed; it was their version of universal driving. Professionals existed but did not make key decisions; they were only technicians, never well regarded because prevailing opinion held that technicians had enslaved their own minds. Anyone worthy of citizenship was expected to be able to think clearly and to welcome great responsibility. As you reflect on this, remember our own unvoiced assumption that anyone can guide a ton of metal traveling at high speed with three sticks of dynamite sloshing around in its tanks.

When we ask what kind of schooling was behind this brilliant society which has enchanted the centuries ever since, any honest reply can be carried in one word: None. After writing a book searching for the hidden genius of Greece in its schools, Kenneth Freeman concluded his unique study *The Schools of Hellas* in 1907 with this summary, "There were no schools in Hellas." No place boys and girls spent their youth attending continuous instruction under command of strangers. Indeed, nobody did homework in the modern sense; none could be located on standardized tests. The tests that mattered came in living, striving to meet ideals that local tradition imposed. The word *sköle* itself means leisure, leisure in a formal garden to think and reflect. Plato in *The Laws* is the first to refer to school as learned discussion.

The most famous school in Athens was Plato's Academy, but in its physical manifestation it had no classes or bells, was a well-mannered hangout for thinkers and seekers, a generator of good conversation and good friendship, things Plato thought lay at the core of education. Today we might call such a phenomenon a *salon*. Aristotle's Lyceum was pretty much the same, although Aristotle delivered two lectures a day—a tough one in the morning for intense thinkers, a kinder, gentler version of the same in the afternoon for less ambitious minds. Attendance was optional. And the famous Gymnasium so memorable as a forge for German leadership later on was in reality only an open training ground where men sixteen to fifty were free to participate in high-quality, state-subsidized instruction in boxing, wrestling, and javelin.

The idea of schooling free men in anything would have revolted Athenians. Forced training was for slaves. Among free men, learning was self-discipline, not the gift of experts. From such notions Americans derived their own academies, the French their *lycees*, and the Germans their *gymnasium*. Think of it: In Athens, instruction was unorganized even though the city-state was surrounded by enemies and its own society engaged in the difficult social experiment of sustaining a participatory democracy, extending privileges without precedent to citizens, and maintaining literary, artistic, and legislative standards which remain to this day benchmarks of human genius. For its five-hundred-year history from Homer to Aristotle, Athenian civilization was a miracle in a rude world; teachers flourished there but none was grounded in fixed buildings with regular curricula under the thumb of an intricately

layered bureaucracy.

There were no schools in Hellas. For the Greeks, study was its own reward. Beyond that few cared to go.

The Fresco At Herculaneum

Sparta, Athens' neighbor, was a horse of a different color. Society in Sparta was organized around the concept of cradle-to-grave formal training. The whole state was a universal schoolhouse, official prescriptions for the population filled every waking minute and the family was employed as a convenience for the state. Sparta's public political arrangements were an elaborate sham, organized nominally around an executive branch with two legislative bodies, but ultimate decision-making was in the hands of *ephors*, a small elite who conducted state policy among themselves. The practical aspect of imitation democracy figures strongly in the thought of later social thinkers such as Machiavelli (1532) and Hobbes (1651), as well as in minds nearer our own time who had influence on the shape of American forced schooling.

Spartan ideas of management came to American consciousness through classical studies in early schooling, through churches, and also through interest in the German military state of Prussia, which consciously modeled itself after Sparta. As the nineteenth century entered its final decades American university training came to follow the Prussian/Spartan model. Service to business and the political state became the most important reason for college and university existence after 1910. No longer was college primarily about developing mind and character in the young. Instead, it was about molding those things as instruments for use by others. Here is an important clue to the philosophical split which informed the foundation of modern schooling and to an important extent still does: small farmers, crafts folk, trades people, little town and city professionals, little industrialists, and older manorial interests took a part of their dream of America from democratic Athens or from republican Rome (not the Rome of the emperors); this comprised a significant proportion of ordinary America. But new urban managerial elites pointed to a future based on Spartan outlook.

When the instructional system of Athens transferred to Imperial Rome, a few schools we would recognize began to appear. The familiar punishment practices of colonial America can be found anticipated vividly in the famous fresco at Herculaneum, showing a Roman schoolboy being held by two of his classmates while the master advances, carrying a long whip. Roman schools must have started discipline early in the morning for we find the poet Martial cursing a school for waking him up at cock's crow with shouts and beatings; Horace immortalizes pedagogue Orbilius for whipping a love of old poets into him. But we shouldn't be misled by these school references. What few schools there were in Rome were for boys of prosperous classes, and even most of these relied upon tutors, tradition, and emulation, not school.

The word *pedagogue* is Latin for a specialized class of slave assigned to walk a student to the schoolmaster; over time the slave was given additional duties, his role was enlarged to that of drill master, a procedure memorialized in Varro's *instituit pedagogus, docet magister*: in my rusty altar-boy Latin, The master creates instruction, the slave pounds it in. A key to modern schooling is this: free men were never pedagogues. And yet we often refer to the science of modern schooling as *pedagogy*. The unenlightened parent who innocently brings matters of concern to the pedagogue, whether that poor soul is called schoolteacher, principal, or superintendent, is usually beginning a game of frustration which will end in no fundamental change. A case of barking up the wrong tree in a dark wood where the right tree is far away and obscure.

Pedagogy is social technology for winning attention and cooperation (or obedience) while strings are attached to the mind and placed in the hands of an unseen master. This may be done holistically, with smiles, music, and light-duty simulations of intellection, or it can be done harshly with rigorous drills and competitive tests. The quality

of self-doubt aimed for in either case is similar.

Pedagogy is a useful concept to help us unthread some of the mysteries of modern schooling. That it is increasingly vital to the social order is evinced by the quiet teacher-pay revolution that has occurred since the 1960s. As with police work (to which pedagogy bears important similarities), school pay has become relatively good, its hours of labor short, its job security first rate. Contrast this with the golden years of one-room schooling where pay was subsistence only and teachers were compelled to board around to keep body and soul together. Yet there was no shortage then of applicants and many sons of prominent Americans began their adult lives as schoolteachers.

With the relative opulence of today, it would be simple to fill teaching slots with accomplished men and women if that were a goal. A little adjustment in what are rationally indefensible licensing requirements would make talented people, many performance-tested adults in their fifties and sixties, available to teach. That there is not such fluid access is a good sign the purpose of schooling is more than it appears. The year-in, year-out *consistency* of mediocre teacher candidates demonstrates clearly that the school institution actively seeks, nurtures, hires, and promotes the caliber of personnel it needs.

The Seven Liberal Arts

When Rome dissolved in the sixth century, Roman genius emerged as the Universal Christian Church, an inspired religious sect grown spontaneously into a vehicle which invested ultimate responsibility for personal salvation in the sovereign individual. The Roman Church hit upon schooling as a useful adjunct, and so what few schools could be found after the fall of Rome were in ecclesiastical hands, remaining there for the next eleven or twelve centuries. Promotion inside the Church began to depend on having first received training of the Hellenic type. Thus a brotherhood of thoughtful men was created from the demise of the Empire and from the necessity of intellectually defining the new mission.

As the Church experimented with schooling, students met originally at the teacher's house, but gradually some church space was dedicated for the purpose. Thanks to competition among Church officials, each Bishop strove to offer a school and these, in time to be called Cathedral schools, attracted attention and some important sponsorship, each being a showcase of the Bishop's own educational taste.

When the Germanic tribes evacuated northern Europe, overrunning the south, cathedral schools and monastic schools trained the invading leadership—a precedent of disregarding local interests which has continued ever after. Cathedral schools were the important educational institutions of the Middle Ages; from them derived all the schools of western Europe, at least in principle.

In practice, however, few forms of later schooling would be the intense intellectual centers these were. The Seven Liberal Arts made up the main curriculum; lower studies were composed of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic. Grammar was an introduction to literature, rhetoric an introduction to law and history, dialectic the path to philosophical and metaphysical disputation. Higher studies included arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. Arithmetic was well beyond simple calculation, entering into descriptive and analytical capacities of numbers and their prophetic use (which became modern statistics); geometry embraced geography and surveying; music covered a broad course in theory; astronomy prepared entry into physics and advanced mathematics.

Between the eleventh and the fourteenth centuries, an attempt to reduce the influence of emotionality in religion took command of church policy. Presenting the teachings of the Church in scientific form became the main ecclesiastical purpose of school, a tendency called *scholasticism*. This shift from emotion to intellect resulted in great skill in analysis, in comparison and contrasts, in classifications and abstraction, as well as famous verbal hairsplitting—like how many angels could dance on the head of a pin. Scholasticism became the basis for future upper-class schooling.

The Platonic Ideal

The official use of common schooling was invented by Plato; after him the idea languished, its single torchbearer the Church. Educational offerings from the Church were intended for, though not completely limited to, those young whose parentage qualified them as a potential Guardian class. You would hardly know this from reading any standard histories of Western schooling intended for the clientele of teacher colleges.

Intense development of the Platonic ideal of comprehensive social control through schooling suddenly reappeared two thousand years later in eighteenth-century France at the hands of a philosophical *cultus* known to history as *philosophes*, enthusiastic promoters of the bizarre idea of mass forced schooling. Most prominent among them, a self-willed man named Jean Jacques Rousseau. To add piquancy to Rousseau's thought, you need to know that when they were born, he chose to give away his own five offspring to strangers. If any man captures the essence of enlightenment transformation, it is Rousseau.

The Enlightenment "project" was conceived as a series of stages, each further leveling mankind, collectivizing ordinary humanity into a colonial organism like a volvox. The penetration of this idea, at least on the periphery of our own Founders' consciousness, is captured in the powerful mystery image of the pyramid on the obverse of our Great Seal.⁵ Of course, this was only one of many colors to emerge with the new nation, and it was not the most important, an inference that can be drawn from the fact that the pyramid was kept from public notice until 1935. Then it appeared suddenly on the back of our one dollar bill, signaling a profound shift in political management.

Oriental Pedagogy

The ideal of a leveling Oriental pedagogy expressed through government schooling was promoted by Jacobin orators of the French National Convention in the early 1790s, the commencement years of our own republic. The notion of forced schooling was irresistible to French radicals, an enthusiasm whose foundation had been laid in preceding centuries by utopian writers like Harrington (*Oceania*), More (*Utopia*), Bacon (*New Atlantis*), Campanella (*City of the Sun*), and in other speculative fantasy embracing the fate of children. Cultivating a collective social organism was considered the ingredient missing from feudal society, an ingredient which would allow the West the harmony and stability of the East.

Utopian schooling is never about learning in the traditional sense; it's about the transformation of human nature. The core of the difference between Occident and Orient lies in the power relationship between privileged and ordinary, and in respective outlooks on human nature. In the West, a metaphorical table is spread by society; the student decides how much to eat; in the East, the teacher makes that decision. The Chinese character for school shows a passive child with adult hands pouring knowledge into his empty head.

To mandate outcomes centrally would be a major step in the destruction of Western identity. Management by objectives, whatever those objectives might be, is a technique of corporate subordination, not of education. Like Alfred's, Charlemagne's awareness of Asia was sharpened in mortal combat. He was the first secular Western potentate to beat the drum for secular schooling. It was easy to ignore Plato's gloomy forecast that however attractive utopia appears in imagination, human nature will not live easily with the degree of synthetic constraint it requires.

Counter-Attack On Democracy

By standards of the time, America was utopia already. No grinding poverty, no dangerous national enemies, no

indigenous tradition beyond a general spirit of exuberant optimism, a belief the land had been touched by destiny, a conviction Americans could accomplish anything. John Jay wrote to Jefferson in 1787, "The enterprise of our country is inconceivable"—inconceivable, that is, to the British, Germans, and French, who were accustomed to keeping the common population on a leash. Our colonial government was the creation of the Crown, of course, but soon a fantastic idea began to circulate, a belief that people might create or destroy governments at their will.

The empty slate of the new republic made it vulnerable to advanced utopian thinking. While in England and Germany, temptation was great to develop and use Oriental social machinery to bend mass population into an instrument of elite will, in America there was no hereditary order or traditional direction. We were a nation awash in literate, self-reliant men and women, the vast majority with an independent livelihood or ambitions toward getting one. Americans were inventors and technicians without precedent, entrepreneurs unlocked from traditional controls, dreamers, confidence men, flim-flam artists. There never was a social stew quite like it.

The practical difficulties these circumstances posed to utopian governing would have been insuperable except for one seemingly strange source of enthusiasm for such an endeavor in the business community. That puzzle can be solved by considering how the promise of democracy was a frightening *terra incognita* to men of substance. To look to men like Sam Adams or Tom Paine as directors of the future was like looking down the barrel of a loaded gun, at least to people of means. So the men who had begun the Revolution were eased out by the men who ended it.

As early as 1784, a concerted effort was made by the Boston business community to overthrow town meetings, replacing them with a professionally managed corporation. Joseph Barrell, a wealthy merchant, claimed that citizen safety could be enhanced this way—and besides, "a great number of very respectable gentlemen" wished it. Timothy Dwight, longtime president of Yale after 1795, and a pioneer in modern education (advocating science as the center of curriculum), fought a mighty battle against advancing democracy. Democracy was hardly the sort of experiment men of affairs would willingly submit their lives and fortunes to for very long.

This tension explains much about how our romance with forced schooling came about; it was a way to stop democracy aborning as Germany had done. Much ingenuity was expended on this problem in the early republic, particularly by so-called liberal Christian sects like Unitarians and Universalists. If you read relics of their debates preserved from select lyceums, private meetings at which minutes were kept, journals, recollections of drawing room conversations and club discussions, you see that what was shaping up was an attempt to square the circle, to give the appearance that the new society was true to its founding promise, while at the same time a sound basis could be established for the meritorious to run things. Once again, the spirit of Sparta was alive with its ephors and its reliance on forced instruction. In discussions, speeches, sermons, editorials, experimental legislation, letters, diaries, and elsewhere, the ancient idea of mass forced schooling was called forth and mused upon.

How Hindu Schooling Came To America (I)

By the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, a form of school technology was up and running in America's larger cities, one in which children of lower-class customers were psychologically conditioned to obedience under pretext that they were learning reading and counting (which may also have happened). These were the Lancaster schools, sponsored by Governor DeWitt Clinton of New York and prominent Quakers like Thomas Eddy, builder of the Erie Canal. They soon spread to every corner of the nation where the problem of an incipient proletariat existed. Lancaster schools are cousins of today's school factories. What few knew then or realize now is that they were also a Hindu invention, designed with the express purpose of retarding intellectual development.

How Hindu schooling came to America, England, Germany, and France at just about the same time is a story which has never been told. A full treatment is beyond the scope of this book, but I'll tell you enough to set you wondering how an Asiatic device specifically intended to preserve a caste system came to reproduce itself in the early republic, protected by influentials of the magnitude of Clinton and Eddy. Even a brief dusting off of schooling's

Hindu provenance should warn you that what you know about American schooling isn't much. First, a quick gloss on the historical position of India at the time of the American Revolution—for Lancaster schools were in New York two decades after its end.

India fell victim to Western dominance through nautical technology in the following fashion: When medieval Europe broke up after its long struggle to reconcile emergent science with religion, five great ocean powers appeared to compete for the wealth of the planet: Portugal, Spain, France, the Netherlands, and England. Portugal was the first to sail for treasure, leaving colonies in India, China, and South America, but its day in the sun was short. Spain emerged as the next global superpower, but after 1600, her character decayed rapidly from the corrupting effects of the gold of the Americas, which triggered a long national decline. The Netherlands, turn followed because that nation had the advantage of a single-minded commercial class in control of things with one aim in mind: wealth. The Dutch monopolized the carrying trade of Europe with globe-trotting merchant ships and courageous military seamanship, yet as with Portugal before it, the Dutch population was too small, its internal resources too anemic for its dominance to extend very long.

Beginning in the seventeenth century, England and France gradually built business in the East, both balked for a time by the Dutch who controlled the spice trade of the Indies. Three naval wars with the Dutch made the Royal Navy master of the seas, in the process developing tactics of sea warfare that made it dominant for the next two centuries. By 1700, only France and England remained as global sea powers with impressive fighting capability, and during the last half of that century these giants slugged it out directly in Canada, India, and in the territory which is today the United States, with the result that France went permanently into eclipse.

In India, the two contended through their commercial pseudopodia, the British and French East India Companies: each maintained a private army to war on the other for tea, indigo, turmeric, ginger, quinine, oilseeds, silk, and that product which most captivated British merchants with its portability and breakaway profit potential—opium. At Plassey, Chandernagor, Madras, and Wandiwash, this long corporate rivalry ended. The French abandoned India to the British. The drug monopoly was finally England's.

Out of this experience and the observations of a wealthy young Anglican chaplain in India, the formula for modern schooling was discovered. Perhaps it was no more than coincidence this fellow held his first gainful employment as a schoolteacher in the United States; on the other hand, perhaps his experience in a nation which successfully threw off British shackles sensitized him to the danger an educated population poses to plutocracies.

How Hindu Schooling Came To America (II)

Andrew Bell, the gentleman in question, used to be described in old editions of the *Britannica* as "cold, shrewd, self-seeking." He might not have been the most pious cleric. Perhaps like his contemporary, Parson Malthus, he didn't really believe in God at all, but as a young man following the flag he had an eye out for the main chance. Bell found his opportunity when he studied the structure Hindus arranged for training the lower castes, about 95 percent of the Indian population. It might well serve a Britain which had driven its peasantry into ruin in order to create an industrial proletariat for coal-driven industry.

Bell was fascinated by the *purposeful* nature of Hindu schooling. It seemed eminently compatible with the goals of the English state church. So as many another ambitious young man has done throughout history when he stumbles upon a little-known novelty, he swiped it. Before we turn to details of the Hindu method, and how Bell himself was upstaged by an ambitious young Quaker who beat him into the school market with a working version of Bell's idea, you should understand a little about Hindu religion.

After the British military conquest of India (in reality a merchant conquest) nothing excited the popular mind and the well-bred mind alike more than Hindu religion with its weird (to Western eyes) idols and rituals. Close analysis of Sanskrit literature seemed to prove that some kind of biological and social link had existed between the all-conquering Aryans, from whom the Hindus had descended, and Anglo-Saxons, which might explain theological

similarities between Hinduism and Anglicanism. The possibilities suggested by this connection eventually provided a powerful psychic stimulus for creation of class-based schooling in the United States. Of course such a development then lay far in the future.

The caste system of Hinduism or Brahminism is the Anglican class system pushed to its imaginative limits. A five-category ranking (each category further subdivided) apportions people into a system similar to that found in modern schools. Prestige and authority are reserved for the three highest castes, although they only comprise 5 percent of the total; inescapable servility is assigned the lowest caste, a pariah group outside serious consideration. In the Hindu system one may *fall* into a lower caste, *but one cannot rise*.

When the British began to administer India, Hindus represented 70 percent of a population well over a hundred million. Contrast this with an America of perhaps three million. In the northern region, British hero Robert Clive was president of Bengal where people were conspicuously lighter-skinned than the other major Indian group, having features not unlike those of the British.

Hindu castes looked like this:

The upper 5 percent was divided into three "twice-born" groups.

Brahmins—Priests and those trained for law, medicine, teaching, and other professional occupations.

The warrior and administrative caste.

The industrial caste, which would include land cultivators and mercantile groups.

The lower 95 percent was divided into:

The menial caste.

Pariahs, called "untouchables."

The entire purpose of Hindu schooling was to preserve the caste system. Only the lucky 5 percent received an education which gave perspective on the whole, a key to understanding. In actual practice, warriors, administrators, and most of the other leaders were given much diluted insight into the driving engines of the culture, so that policy could be kept in the hands of Brahmins. But what of the others, the "masses" as Western socialist tradition would come to call them in an echoing tribute to the Hindu class idea? The answer to that vital question launched factory schooling in the West.

Which brings us back to Andrew Bell. Bell noticed that in some places Hinduism had created a mass schooling institution for children of the ordinary, one inculcating a curriculum of self-abnegation and willing servility. In these places hundreds of children were gathered in a single gigantic room, divided into phalanxes of ten under the direction of student leaders with the whole ensemble directed by a Brahmin. In the Roman manner, paid pedagogues drilled underlings in the memorization and imitation of desired attitudes and these underlings drilled the rest. Here was a social technology made in heaven for the factories and mines of Britain, still uncomfortably saturated in older yeoman legends of liberty and dignity, one not yet possessing the perfect proletarian attitudes mass production must have for maximum efficiency. Nobody in the early years of British rule had made a connection between this Hindu practice and the pressing requirements of an industrial future. Nobody, that is, until a thirty-four-year-old Scotsman arrived in India as military chaplain.

How Hindu Schooling Came To America (III)

Young Bell was a go-getter. Two years after he got to India he was superintendent of the male orphan asylum of Madras. In order to save money Bell decided to try the Hindu system he had seen and found it led students quickly to docile cooperation, like parts of a machine. Furthermore, they seemed relieved not to have to think, grateful to have their time reduced to rituals and routines as Frederick Taylor was to reform the American workplace a

hundred years later.

In 1797, Bell, now forty-two, published an account of what he had seen and done. Pulling no punches, he praised Hindu drill as an effective *impediment* to learning writing and ciphering, an efficient *control* on reading development. A twenty-year-old Quaker, Joseph Lancaster, read Bell's pamphlet, thought deeply on the method, and concluded, ironically, it would be a cheap way to *awaken* intellect in the lower classes, ignoring the Anglican's observation (and Hindu experience) that it did just the opposite.

Lancaster began to gather poor children under his father's roof in Borough Road, London, to give them rudimentary instruction without a fee. Word spread and children emerged from every alley, dive, and garret, craving to learn. Soon a thousand children were gathering in the street. The Duke of Bedford heard about Lancaster and provided him with a single enormous schoolroom and a few materials. The monitorial system, as it was called, promised to promote a mental counterpart to the productivity of factories.

Transforming dirty ghetto children into an orderly army attracted many observers. The fact that Lancaster's school ran at tiny cost with only one employee raised interest, too. Invitations arrived to lecture in surrounding towns, where the Quaker expounded on what had now become his system. Lancaster schools multiplied under the direction of young men he personally trained. So talked about did the phenomenon become, it eventually attracted the attention of King George III himself, who commanded an interview with Joseph. Royal patronage followed on the stipulation that every poor child be taught to read the Bible.

But with fame and public responsibility, another side of Lancaster showed itself—he became vain, reckless, improvident. Interested noblemen bailed him out after he fell deeply in debt, and helped him found the British and Foreign School Society, but Lancaster hated being watched over and soon proved impossible to control. He left the organization his patrons erected, starting a private school which went bankrupt. By 1818 the Anglican Church, warming to Bell's insight that schooled ignorance was more useful than unschooled stupidity, set up a rival chain of factory schools that proved to be handwriting on the wall for Lancaster. In the face of this competition he fled to America where his fame and his method had already preceded him.

Meanwhile, in England, the whole body of dissenting sects gave Lancaster vociferous public support, thoroughly alarming the state church hierarchy. Prominent church laymen and clergy were not unaware that Lancaster's schools weren't playing by Hindu rules—the prospect of a literate underclass with unseemly ambitions was a window on a future impossible to tolerate. Bell had been recalled from his rectory in Dorset in 1807 to contest Lancaster's use of Hindu schooling. In 1811, he was named superintendent of an organization to oppose Lancaster's British and Foreign School Society, "The National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church." Since those principles held that the poor were poor because the Lord wanted it that way, the content of the society's schooling leaves little about which we need to speculate. Bell was sent to plant his system in Presbyterian Scotland, while the patronage advantage of Bell-system schools contained and diminished the reach of Lancaster. For his services to the state, Bell was eventually buried in Westminster Abbey.

At first, Lancaster was welcomed warmly in the United States, but his affection for children and his ability to awaken pride and ambition in his charges made him ultimately unacceptable to important patrons who were much more interested in spreading Bell's dumbed-down method, without its Church of England baggage attached. Fortunately for their schemes, Lancaster grew even more shiftless, unmethodical, and incapable of sustained effort (or principled action). In the twenty remaining years of his life, Lancaster ranged from Montreal to Caracas, disowned by Quakers for reasons I've been unable to discover. He once declared it would be possible to teach illiterates to read fluently in twenty to ninety days, which is certainly true. At the age of sixty he was run over by a carriage in New York and died a few hours later.

But while he died an outcast, his system outlived him, or at least a system bearing his name did, albeit more Bell's than Lancaster's. It accustomed an influential public to expect streets to be clear of the offspring of the poor and to expenditures of tax money to accomplish this end. The first Lancaster school was opened in New York City in

1806; by 1829 the idea had spread to the Mexican state of Texas with stops as far west as Cincinnati, Louisville, and Detroit. The governors of New York and Pennsylvania recommended general adoption to their legislatures.

What exactly was a "Lancaster" school? Its essential features involved one large room stuffed with anywhere from three hundred to a thousand children under the direction of a single teacher. The children were seated in rows. The teacher was not there to teach but to be "a bystander and inspector"; students, ranked in a paramilitary hierarchy, did the actual teaching:

What the master says should be done. When the pupils as well as the schoolmaster understand how to act and learn on this system, the system, not the master's *vague discretionary, uncertain judgment*, will be in practice. In common school the authority of the master is personal, and the rod is his scepter. His absence is an immediate signal for confusion, but in a school conducted on my plan when the master leaves the school, the business will *go on as well in his absence as in his presence*. [emphasis added]

Here, without forcing the matter, is our modern *pedagogus technologicus*, harbinger of future computerized instruction. In such a system, teachers and administrators are forbidden to depart from instructions elsewhere written. But while dumbing children down was the whole of the government school education in England, it was only part of the story in America, and a minor one until the twentieth century.

Braddock's Defeat

Unless you're a professional sports addict and know that Joe Montana, greatest quarterback of the modern era, went to Waverly school in Monongahela, or that Ron Neccai, only man in modern baseball history to strike out every batter on the opposing team for a whole game did, too, or that Ken Griffey Jr. went to its high school as well, you can be forgiven if you never heard of Monongahela. But once upon a time at the beginning of our national history, Monongahela marked the forward edge of a new nation, a wilder West than ever the more familiar West became. Teachers on a frontier cannot be bystanders.

Custer's Last Stand in Montana had no military significance. Braddock's Last Stand near Monongahela, on the other hand, changed American history forever because it proved that the invincible British could be taken. And twenty-one years later we did take them, an accomplishment the French and Spanish, their principal rivals, had been unable to do. Why that happened, what inspiration allowed crude colonials to succeed where powerful and polished nations could not, is so tied up with Monongahela that I want to bring the moment back for you. It will make a useful reference point as we consider the problem of modern schooling. Without Braddock's defeat we would never have had a successful American revolution; without getting rid of the British, the competence of ordinary people to educate themselves would never have had a fair test.

In July of 1755, at the age of twenty-three, possessing no university degrees, the alumnus of no military academy, with only two years of formal schooling under his belt, half-orphan George Washington was detailed an officer in the Virginia militia to accompany an English military expedition moving to take the French fort at the forks of the Monongahela and Allegheny, the point that became Pittsburgh. His general, Edward Braddock, was an aristocrat commanding a well-equipped and disciplined force considerably superior to any possible resistance. Braddock felt so confident of success, he dismissed the advice of Washington to put aside traditional ways of European combat in the New World.

On July 9, 1755, two decades and one year before our Revolution commenced under the direction of the same Washington, Braddock executed a brilliant textbook crossing of the Monongahela near the present Homestead High Bridge by Kennywood amusement park. With fife and drum firing the martial spirit, he led the largest force in British colonial America, all in red coats and polished metal, across the green river into the trees on the farther bank. Engineers went ahead to cut a road for men and cannon.

Suddenly the advance guard was enveloped in smoke. It fell back in panic. The main body moved up to relieve,

but the groups meeting, going in opposite directions, caused pandemonium. On both sides of the milling redcoats, woods crackled with hostile gunfire. No enemy could be seen, but soldiers were caught between waves of bullets fanning both flanks. Men dropped in bunches. Bleeding bodies formed hills of screaming flesh, accelerating the panic.

Enter George, the Washington almost unknown to American schoolchildren. Making his way to Braddock, he asked permission to engage the enemy wilderness fashion; permission denied. Military theory held that allowing commands to emanate from inferiors was a precedent more dangerous than bullets. The British were too well trained to fight out of formation, too superbly schooled to adapt to the changing demands of the new situation. When my grandfather took me to the scene of that battle years after on the way to Kennywood, he muttered without explanation, "Goddamn bums couldn't think for themselves." Now I understand what he meant.

The greatest military defeat the British ever suffered in North America before Saratoga was underway. Washington's horse was shot from under him, his coat ripped by bullets. Leaping onto a second horse, his hat was lifted from his head by gunfire and the second horse went down. A legend was in the making on the Monongahela that day, passed to Britain, France, and the colonies by survivors of the battle. Mortally wounded, Braddock released his command. Washington led the retreat on his hands and knees, crawling through the twilight dragging the dying Braddock, symbolic of the imminent death of British rule in America.

Monongahela began as a town fourteen years later, crossing point for a river ferry connecting to the National Road (now Route 40) which began, appropriately enough, in the town of Washington, Pennsylvania. In 1791, leaders of the curious "Whiskey Rebellion" met in Monongahela about a block from the place I was born; Scots-Irish farmers sick of the oppression of federal rule in the new republic spoke of forging a Trans-Allegheny nation of free men. Monongahela might have been its capital had they succeeded. We know these men were taken seriously back East because Washington, who as general never raised an army larger than seven thousand to fight the British, as president assembled thirteen thousand in 1794 to march into western Pennsylvania to subdue the Whiskey rebels. Having fought *with* them as comrades, he knew the danger posed by these wild men of the farther forests was no pipedream. They were descendants of the original pioneers who broke into the virgin forest, an evergreen and aggressive strain of populism ran through their group character.

Monongahela appears in history as a place where people expected to make their own luck, a place where rich and poor talked face to face, not through representatives. In the 1830s it became a way station on the escape route from Horace Mann-style Whiggery, the notion that men should be bound minutely by rules and layered officialdom. Whiggery was a neo-Anglican governing idea grown strong in reaction to Andrew Jackson's dangerous democratic revolution. *Whigs* brought us forced schooling before they mutated into both Democrats and Republicans; history seemed to tell them that with School in hand their mission was accomplished. Thousands of Americans, sensibly fearing the worst, poured West to get clear of this new British consciousness coming back to life in the East, as if the spirit of General Braddock had survived after all. Many of the new pilgrims passed through Mon City on the road to a place that might allow them to continue seeing things their own way.

Each group passing through on its western migration left a testament to its own particular yearnings—there are no less than twenty-three separate religious denominations in Monongahela, although fewer than five thousand souls live in the town. Most surprising of all, you can find there world headquarters of an autonomous Mormon sect, one that didn't go to Nauvoo with the rest of Smith's band but decamped here in a grimier utopia. Monongahela Mormons never accepted polygamy. They read the Book of Mormon a different way. From 1755 until the Civil War, the libertarianism of places like Monongahela set the tone for the most brilliant experiment in self-governance the modern world has ever seen. Not since the end of the Pippin Kings in France had liberty been so abundantly available for such a long time. A revolution in education was at hand as knowledge of the benefits of learning to the vigor of the spirit spread far and wide across America. Formal schooling played a part in this transformation, but its role was far from decisive. Schooled or not, the United States was the best-educated nation in human history—because it had liberty.

Farragut

When I was a schoolboy at the Waverly School in Monongahela, Peg Hill told us that David Farragut, the U.S. Navy's very first admiral, had been commissioned midshipman at the ripe old age of ten for service on the warship *Essex*. Had Farragut been a schoolboy like me, he would have been in fifth grade when he sailed for the Argentine, rounding the Horn into action against British warships operating along the Pacific coast of South America.

Farragut left a description of what he encountered in his first sea fight:

I shall never forget the horrid impression made upon me at the sight of the first man I had ever seen killed. It staggered me at first, but they soon began to fall so fast that it appeared like a dream and produced no effect on my nerves.

The poise a young boy is capable of was tested when a gun captain on the port side ordered him to the wardroom for primers. As he started down the ladder, a gun captain on the starboard side opposite the ladder was "struck full in the face by an eighteen-pound shot," his headless corpse falling on Farragut:

We tumbled down the hatch together. I lay for some moments stunned by the blow, but soon recovered consciousness enough to rush up on deck. The captain, seeing me covered with blood, asked if I were wounded; to which I replied, "I believe not, sir." "Then," said he, "where are the primers?" This brought me to my senses and I ran below again and brought up the primers.

The *Essex* had success; it took prizes. Officers were dispatched with skeleton crews to sail them back to the United States, and at the age of twelve, Farragut got his first command when he was picked to head a prize crew. I was in fifth grade when I read about that. Had Farragut gone to my school he would have been in seventh. You might remember that as a rough index how far our maturity had been retarded even fifty years ago. Once at sea, the deposed British captain rebelled at being ordered about by a boy and announced he was going below for his pistols (which as a token of respect he had been allowed to keep). Farragut sent word down that if the captain appeared on deck armed he would be summarily shot and dumped overboard. He stayed below.

So ended David Farragut's first great test of sound judgment. At fifteen, this unschooled young man went hunting pirates in the Mediterranean. Anchored off Naples, he witnessed an eruption of Vesuvius and studied the mechanics of volcanic action. On a long layover in Tunis, the American consul, troubled by Farragut's ignorance, tutored him in French, Italian, mathematics, and literature. Consider our admiral in embryo. I'd be surprised if you thought his education was deficient in anything a man needs to be reckoned with.

When I was a schoolboy in Monongahela, I learned how Thomas Edison left school early because the school thought him feeble-minded. He spent his early years peddling newspapers. Just before the age of twelve he talked his mother into letting him work on trains as a train-boy, a permission she gave which would put her in jail right now. A train-boy was apprentice of all work. Shortly afterwards a printer gave Edison some old type he was about to discard and the boy, successfully begging a corner for himself in the baggage car to set type, began printing a four-page newspaper the size of a handkerchief about the lives of the passengers on the train and the things that could be seen from its window.

Several months later, twelve-year-old Edison had five hundred subscribers, earning a net profit monthly about 25 percent more than an average schoolteacher of the day made. When the Civil War broke out, the newspaper became a goldmine. Railroads had telegraph facilities so war news was available to Edison as quickly as to professional journalists, but he could move it into print sooner than they could. He sold the war to crowds at the various stops. "The Grand Trunk Herald" sold as many as a thousand extra copies after a battle at prices per issue from a dime to a quarter, amassing for Edison a handsome stake. Unfortunately, at the same time he had been experimenting with phosphorus in the baggage car. One thing led to another and Edison set the train on fire; otherwise there might never have been a light bulb.

When I was a schoolboy in Monongahela, I learned with a shock that the men who won our Revolution were barely out of high school by the standards of my time: Hamilton was twenty in the retreat from New York; Burr, twenty-one; Light Horse Harry Lee, twenty-one; Lafayette, nineteen. What amounted to a college class rose up and struck down the British empire, afterwards helping to write the most sophisticated governing documents in modern history.

When I was a schoolboy in Monongahela, I learned the famous Samuel Pepys, whose *Diary* is a classic, wasn't just an old gossip but president of the Royal Society, the most prominent association of scientists in existence in the seventeenth century. He was also Secretary of the Admiralty. Why that's important to our investigation of modern schooling is this: *Pepys could only add and subtract right up to the time of his appointment to the Admiralty*, but then quickly learned to multiply and divide to spare himself embarrassment. I took a different lesson from that class than the teacher intended, I think.

At the age of five, when I entered the first grade, I could add, subtract, and multiply because Dad used to play numbers games with my sister and me in the car. He taught me the mastery of those skills within a matter of a few hours, not years and years as it took in school. We did all calculations in our heads with such gusto I seldom use a pencil today even for much more intricate computation. Pepys verified my father's unstated premise: You can learn what you need, even the technical stuff, at the moment you need it or shortly before. Sam Pepys wasn't put in charge of Britain's sea defense because he knew how to multiply or divide but because he had good judgment, or at least it was thought so.

Ben Franklin

Ben Franklin was born on Milk Street, Boston, on January 17, 1706. His father had seventeen children (four died at birth) by two wives. Ben was the youngest. Josiah, the father, was a candlemaker, not part of the gentry. His tombstone tells us he was "without an estate or any gainful employment" which apparently means his trade didn't allow wealth to be amassed. But, as the talkative tombstone continues, "By constant labor and industry with God's blessing they maintained a large family comfortably, and brought up thirteen children and seven grandchildren reputably."

Writing to his own son at the age of sixty-five, Ben Franklin referred to his circumstances as "poverty and obscurity" from which he rose to a state of affluence, and to some degree, reputation. The means he used "so well succeeded" he thought posterity might like to know what they were. Some, he believed, "would find his example suitable to their own situations, and therefore, fit to be imitated."

At twelve he was bound apprentice to brother James, a printer. After a few years of that, and disliking his brother's authority, he ran away first to New York and soon after to Philadelphia where he arrived broke at the age of seventeen. Finding work as a printer proved easy, and through his sociable nature and ready curiosity he made acquaintance with men of means. One of these induced Franklin to go to London where he found work as a compositor and once again brought himself to the attention of men of substance. A merchant brought him back to Philadelphia in his early twenties as what might today be called an administrative assistant or personal secretary. From this association, Franklin assembled means to set up his own printing house which published a newspaper, *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, to which he constantly contributed essays.

At twenty-six, he began to issue "Poor Richard's Almanac," and for the next quarter century the Almanac spread his fame through the colonies and in Europe. He involved himself deeper and deeper in public affairs. He designed an Academy which was developed later into the University of Pennsylvania; he founded the American Philosophical Society as a crossroads of the sciences; he made serious researches into the nature of electricity and other scientific inquiries, carried on a large number of moneymaking activities; and involved himself heavily in politics. At the age of forty-two he was wealthy. The year was 1748.

In 1748, he sold his business in order to devote himself to study, and in a few years, scientific discoveries gave him

a reputation with the learned of Europe. In politics, he reformed the postal system and began to represent the colonies in dealings with England, and later France. In 1757, he was sent to England to protest against the influence of the Penns in the government of Pennsylvania, and remained there five years, returning two years later to petition the King to take the government away from the Penns. He lobbied to repeal the Stamp Act. From 1767 to 1775, he spent much time traveling through France, speaking, writing, and making contacts which resulted in a reputation so vast it brought loans and military assistance to the American rebels and finally crucial French intervention at Yorktown, which broke the back of the British.

As a writer, politician, scientist, and businessman, Franklin had few equals among the educated of his day—though he left school at ten. He spent nine years as American Commissioner to France. In terms only of his ease with the French language, of which he had little until he was in his sixties, this unschooled man's accomplishments are unfathomable by modern pedagogical theory. In many of his social encounters with French nobility, this candlemaker's son held the fate of the new nation in his hands, because he (and Jefferson) were being weighed as emblems of America's ability to overthrow England.

Franklin's *Autobiography* is a trove of clues from which we can piece together the actual curriculum which produced an old man capable of birthing a nation:

My elder brothers were all put apprentice to different trades. I was put to the grammar school at eight years of age, my father intending to devote me, as the tithe of his sons, to the services of the (Anglican) church. My early readiness in learning to read (which must have been very early, as I do not remember when I could not read) and the opinion of all his friends, that I should be a good scholar, encouraged him in this purpose...I continued, however, at grammar school not quite one year.

Young Ben was yanked from grammar school and sent to another type less ritzy and more nuts and bolts in colonial times: the "writing and arithmetic" school. There under the tutelage of Mr. Brownell, an advocate of "mild, encouraging methods," Franklin failed in arithmetic:

At ten years old I was taken home to assist my father in his business.... Accordingly I was employed in cutting wick for candles, filling the dipping mold and the molds for cast candles. Attending the shop, going on errands, etc. I disliked the trade, and had a strong inclination for the sea, but my father declared against it.

There are other less flattering accounts why Franklin left both these schools and struck out on his own at the age of ten—elsewhere he admits to being a leader of mischief, some of it mildly criminal, and to being "corrected" by his father—but causation is not our concern, only bare facts. Benjamin Franklin commenced school at third-grade age and exited when he would have been in the fifth to become a tallow chandler's apprentice.

A major part of Franklin's early education consisted of studying father Josiah, who turns out, himself, to be a pretty fair example of education without schooling:

He had an excellent constitution...very strong...ingenious...could draw prettily...skilled in music...a clear pleasing voice...played psalm tunes on his violin...a mechanical genius...sound understanding...solid judgment in prudential matters, both private and public affairs. In the latter, indeed, he was never employed, the numerous family he had to educate and the straitness of his circumstances keeping him close to his grade; but I remember well his being frequently visited by leading people, who consulted him for his opinion in affairs of the town or of the church...and showed a great deal of respect for his judgment and advice...frequently chosen an arbitrator between contending parties.

We don't need to push too hard to see a variety of informal training laboratories incidentally offered in this father/son relationship which had sufficient time to prove valuable in Franklin's own development, opportunities that would have been hard to find in any school.

Josiah drew, he sang, he played violin—this was a tallow chandler with sensitivity to those areas in which human

beings are most human; he had an inventive nature ("ingenious") which must have provided a constant example to Franklin that a solution can be crafted ad hoc to a problem if a man kept his nerve and had proper self-respect. His good sense, recognized by neighbors who sought his judgment, was always within earshot of Ben. In this way the boy came to see the discovery process, various systems of judgment, the role of an active citizen who may become minister without portfolio simply by accepting responsibility for others and discharging that responsibility faithfully:

At his table he liked to have as often as he could some sensible friend or neighbor to converse with, and always took care to start some ingenious or useful topic for discourse, which might tend to improve the minds of his children. By this means he turned our attention to what was good, just, and prudent in the conduct of life; and little or no notice was ever taken of what related to the victuals on the table...I was brought up in such perfect inattention to those matters as to be quite indifferent what kind of food was set before me.

No course of instruction or quantity of homework could deliver Franklin's facility with language, only something like Josiah's incidental drills at the dinner table. We can see sharply through Franklin's memoir that a tallow chandler can indeed teach himself to speak to kings.

And there were other themes in the family Franklin's educational armory besides arts, home demonstrations, regular responsibility, being held to account, being allowed to overhear adults solving public and private problems, and constant infusions of good conversation:

He...sometimes took me to walk with him, and see joiners, bricklayers, turners, braziers, etc., at their work, that he might observe my inclination, and endeavor to fix it on some trade or other.... It has ever since been a pleasure to me to see good workmen handle their tools; and it has been useful to me, having learnt so much by it as to be able to do little jobs myself. As it is for most members of a literate society, reading was the largest single element of Franklin's educational foundation.

As it is for most members of a literate society, reading was the largest single element of Franklin's educational foundation.

From a child I was fond of reading, and all the little money that came into my hands was ever laid out in books. Pleased with *Pilgrim's Progress* my first collection was of John Bunyan's works in separate little volumes. I afterwards sold them to enable me to buy R. Burton's *Historical Collections*; they were small chapman's books, and cheap, 40 to 50 in all. My father's little library consisted chiefly of books in polemic divinity, most of which I read....*Plutarch's Lives* there was in which I read abundantly, and I still think that time spent to great advantage. There was also a book of Defoe's, called an *Essay on Projects*, and another of Dr. Mather's, called *Essays to Do Good*, which perhaps gave me a turn of thinking that had an influence on some of the principal future events in my life.

You might well ask how young Franklin was reading Bunyan, Burton, Mather, Defoe, Plutarch, and works of "polemic divinity" before he would have been in junior high school. If you were schooled in the brain development lore of academic pedagogy it might seem quite a tour de force.

How do you suppose this son of a workingman with thirteen kids became such an effective public speaker that for more than half a century his voice was heard nationally and internationally on the great questions? He employed a method absolutely free: He argued with his friend Collins:

Very fond we were of argument, and very desirous of confuting one another, which disputatious turn is based upon contradiction. [Here Franklin warns against using dialectics on friendships or at social gatherings] I had caught it [the dialectical habit] by reading my father's books of dispute about religion.... A question was started between Collins and me, of the propriety of educating the female sex in learning, and their abilities to study. He was of the opinion that it was improper.... I took the contrary side.

Shortly after he began arguing, he also began reading the most elegant periodical of the day, Addison and Steele's

Spectator:

I thought the writing excellent and wished, if possible, to imitate it. With that in view I took some of the papers, and making short hints of the sentiment in each sentence, laid them by a few days, and then, without looking at the book, try'd to complete the papers again, by expressing each hinted sentiment at length, and as fully as it had been expressed before, in any suitable words that should come to hand. Then I compared my *Spectator* with the original, discovered some of my faults, and corrected them.

This method was hammered out while working a sixty-hour week. In learning eloquence there's only Ben, his determination, and the *Spectator*, no teacher. For instance, while executing rewrites, Franklin came to realize his vocabulary was too barren:

I found I wanted a stock of words...which I thought I should have acquired before that time if I had gone on making verses; since the continual occasion for words of the same import, but of different length, to suit the measure, or of different sound for the rhyme, would have laid me under a constant necessity of searching for variety, and also have tended to fix that variety in my mind and make me master of it.

As a good empiricist he tried a home cure for this deficiency:

I took some tales and turned them into verse; and after a time when I had pretty well forgotten the prose, turned them back again. I also sometimes jumbled my collection of hints [his outline] into confusions and after some weeks endeavored to reduce them into the best order, before I began to form the full sentences and complete the paper. This was to teach me method in the arrangement of thoughts. By comparing my work afterwards with the original I discovered many faults and amended them; but I sometimes thought... I had been lucky enough to improve the method or the language.

By the time he was sixteen Franklin was ready to take up his deficiencies in earnest with full confidence he could by his own efforts overcome them. Here's how he handled that problem with arithmetic:

Being on some occasion made ashamed of my ignorance in figures, which I had twice failed in learning when at school, I took Crocker's book of Arithmetick, and went through the whole by myself with great ease. I also read Seller's and Shermey's book of Navigation and became acquainted with the geometry they contain.

This school dropout tells us he was also reading John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, as well as studying the arts of rhetoric and logic, particularly the Socratic method of disputation, which so charmed and intrigued him that he abruptly dropped his former argumentative style, putting on the mask of "the humble inquirer and doubter":

I found this method safest for myself and very embarrassing to those against whom I used it; therefore I took a delight in it, practis'd it continually, and grew very artful and expert in drawing people, even of superior knowledge, into concessions, the consequences of which they did not foresee, entangling them in difficulties out of which they could not extricate themselves, and so obtaining victories that neither myself nor my cause always deserved.

Might there be an instructive parallel between teaching a kid to drive as my uncle taught me to do at age eleven, and the incredible opportunities working-class kids like Franklin were given to develop as quickly and as far as their hearts and minds allowed? We drive, regardless of our intelligence or characters, because the economy demands it; in colonial America through the early republic, a pressing need existed to get the most from everybody. Because of that need, unusual men and unusual women appeared in great numbers to briefly give the lie to traditional social order. In that historical instant, thousands of years of orthodox suppositions were shattered. In the words of Eric Hoffer, "Only here in America were common folk given a chance to show what they could do on their own without a master to push and order them about." Franklin and Edison, multiplied many times, were the result.

George Washington

A good yardstick to measure how far modern schooling has migrated from the education of the past is George Washington's upbringing in the middle eighteenth century. Although Washington descended from important families, his situation wasn't quite the easeful life that suggests. The death of his father left him, at eleven, without Ben Franklin's best rudder, and the practice of primogeniture, which vested virtually the entire inheritance in the first son (in order to stabilize social class) compelled Washington to either face the future as a ward of his brother, an unthinkable alternative for George, or take destiny into his own hands as a boy. You probably already know how that story turned out, but since the course he pursued was nearly schoolless, its curriculum is worth a closer look. For the next few minutes imagine yourself at "school" with Washington.

George Washington was no genius; we know that from too many of his contemporaries to quibble. John Adams called him "too illiterate, too unlearned, too unread for his station and reputation." Jefferson, his fellow Virginian, declared he liked to spend time "chiefly in action, reading little." It was an age when everyone in Boston, even shoeblacks, knew how to read and count; it was a time when a working-class boy in a family of thirteen like Franklin couldn't remember when he didn't know how to read.

As a teenager, Washington loved two things: dancing and horseback riding. He pursued both with a passion that paid off handsomely when he became president. Large in physical stature, his appearance might have stigmatized him as awkward. Instead, by developing the agile strength of a dancer and an equestrian, he was able to communicate grace through his commanding presence, élan that counterpoised his large build at any gathering. Thanks to his twin obsessions he met his responsibilities with the bearing of a champion athlete, which saved his life during the Revolution. In the midst of the fray, a British sharpshooter drew a bead on this target, but found himself unable to pull the trigger because Washington bore himself so magnificently! George Mercer, a friend, described Washington as a young man in the following way:

He is straight as an Indian, measuring six feet, two inches in his stockings and weighing 175 pounds.... His frame is padded with well developed muscles, indicating great strength.

British military superiority, including the best available war-making technology, would have made hash of a brainless commander in spite of his admirable carriage, so we need to analyze the curriculum which produced "America's Fabius," as he was called.⁶

Washington had no schooling until he was eleven, no classroom confinement, no blackboards. He arrived at school already knowing how to read, write, and calculate about as well as the average college student today. If that sounds outlandish, turn back to Franklin's curriculum and compare it with the intellectual diet of a modern gifted and talented class. Full literacy wasn't unusual in the colonies or early republic; many schools wouldn't *admit* students who didn't know reading and counting because few schoolmasters were willing to waste time teaching what was so easy to learn. It was deemed a mark of depraved character if literacy hadn't been attained by the matriculating student. Even the many charity schools operated by churches, towns, and philanthropic associations for the poor would have been flabbergasted at the great hue and cry raised today about difficulties teaching literacy. American experience proved the contrary.

In New England and the Middle Atlantic Colonies, where reading was especially valued, literacy was universal. The printed word was also valued in the South, where literacy was common, if not universal. In fact, it was general literacy among all classes that spurred the explosive growth of colleges in nineteenth-century America, where even ordinary folks hungered for advanced forms of learning.

Following George to school at eleven to see what the schoolmaster had in store would reveal a skimpy menu of studies, yet one with a curious gravity: geometry, trigonometry, and surveying. You might regard that as impossible or consider it was only a dumbed-down version of those things, some kid's game akin to the many simulations one finds today in schools for prosperous children—simulated city-building, simulated court trials, simulated

businesses—virtual realities to bridge the gap between adult society and the immaturity of the young. But if George didn't get the real thing, how do you account for his first job as official surveyor for Culpepper County, Virginia, only two thousand days after he first hefted a surveyor's transit in school?

For the next three years, Washington earned the equivalent of about \$100,000 a year in today's purchasing power. It's probable his social connections helped this fatherless boy get the position, but in frontier society anyone would be crazy to give a boy serious work unless he actually could do it. Almost at once he began speculating in land; he didn't need a futurist to tell him which way the historical wind was blowing. By the age of twenty-one, he had leveraged his knowledge and income into twenty-five hundred acres of prime land in Frederick County, Virginia.

Washington had no father as a teenager, and we know he was no genius, yet he learned geometry, trigonometry, and surveying when he would have been a fifth or sixth grader in our era. Ten years later he had prospered directly by his knowledge. His entire life was a work of art in the sense it was an artifice under his control. He even eventually freed his slaves without being coerced to do so. Washington could easily have been the first king in America but he discouraged any thinking on that score, and despite many critics, he was so universally admired the seat of government was named after him while he was still alive.

Washington attended school for exactly two years. Besides the subjects mentioned, at twelve and thirteen (and later) he studied frequently used legal forms like bills of exchange, tobacco receipts, leases, and patents. From these forms, he was asked to deduce the theory, philosophy, and custom which produced them. By all accounts, this steeping in grown-up reality didn't bore him at all. I had the same experience with Harlem kids 250 years later, following a similar procedure in teaching them how to struggle with complex income tax forms. Young people yearn for this kind of guided introduction to serious things, I think. When that yearning is denied, schooling destroys their belief that justice governs human affairs.

By his own choice, Washington put time into learning deportment, how to be regarded a gentleman by other gentlemen; he copied a book of rules which had been used at Jesuit schools for over a century and with that, his observations, and what advice he could secure, gathered his own character. Here's rule 56 to let you see the flavor of the thing: "Associate yourself with men of good Quality if you Esteem your own reputation." Sharp kid. No wonder he became president.

Washington also studied geography and astronomy on his own, gaining a knowledge of regions, continents, oceans, and heavens. In light of the casual judgment of his contemporaries that his intellect was of normal proportions, you might be surprised to hear that by eighteen he had devoured all the writings of Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett, and Daniel Defoe and read regularly the famous and elegant *Spectator*. He also read Seneca's *Morals*, Julius Caesar's *Commentaries*, and the major writing of other Roman generals like the historian Tacitus.

At sixteen the future president began writing memos to himself about clothing design, not content to allow something so important to be left in the hands of tradesmen. Years later he became his own architect for the magnificent estate of Mt. Vernon. While still in his twenties, he began to experiment with domestic industry where he might avoid the vagaries of international finance in things like cotton or tobacco. First he tried to grow hemp "for medicinal purposes," which didn't work out; next he tried flax—that didn't work either. At the age of thirty-one, he hit on wheat. In seven years he had a little wheat business with his own flour mills and hired agents to market his own brand of flour; a little later he built fishing boats: four years before the Declaration was written he was pulling in 9 million herring a year.

No public school in the United States is set up to allow a George Washington to happen. Washingtons in the bud stage are screened, browbeaten, or bribed to conform to a narrow outlook on social truth. Boys like Andrew Carnegie who begged his mother not to send him to school and was well on his way to immortality and fortune at the age of thirteen, would be referred today for psychological counseling; Thomas Edison would find himself in Special Ed until his peculiar genius had been sufficiently tamed.

Anyone who reads can compare what the American present does in isolating children from their natural sources of education, modeling them on a niggardly last, to what the American past proved about human capabilities. The

effect of the forced schooling institution's strange accomplishment has been monumental. No wonder history has been outlawed.

Washington's *critics* dubbed him "Fabius" after the Roman general who dogged Hannibal's march but avoided battle with the Carthaginian. Washington wore down British resolve by eroding the general belief in their invincibility, something he had learned on the Monongahela when Braddock's force was routed. Eventually the French became convinced Washington was on the winning side, and with their support America became a nation. But it was the strategy of Washington that made a French-American alliance possible at all.

Montaigne's Curriculum

Between the fall of Rome in the late fifth century and the decline of monarchy in the eighteenth, secular schooling in any form was hardly a ripple on the societies of Europe. There was talk of it at certain times and places, but it was courtly talk, never very serious. What simple schooling we find was modestly undertaken by religious orders which usually had no greater ambition than providing a stream of assistants to the ecclesiastical bureaucracy, and perhaps molding the values of whatever future leaders proved susceptible; the few exceptions shouldn't be looked upon as the spark for our own schools. School was only a tiny blip on the radar until the last half of the eighteenth century.

If you and I are to have a productive partnership in this book you need to clear your mind of false history, the type that clogs the typical school chronicle written for teacher training institutes where each fact may be verifiable but the conclusions drawn from them are not. Turn to typical school history and you will learn about the alleged anticipation of our own schools by Comenius, of the reformed Latin Grammar School founded by Dean Colet at St. Paul's in London in 1510, of the "solitaries of Port Royal," whoever those lonely men may have been; each instance is real, the direction they lead in is false. What formal school experimentation the West provided touched only a tiny fraction of the population, and rarely those who became social leaders, let alone pioneers of the future.

You can disinter proclamations about schooling from Alfred's kingdom or Charlemagne's, but you can't find a scrap of hard evidence that the thing was ever seriously essayed. What talk of schooling occurs is the exclusive property of philosophers, secret societies, and a host of cranks, quacks, and schemers. What you never find anywhere is any popular clamor for a place to dump children called School. Yet while schooling is conspicuous by its absence, there's no shortage of intelligent commentary about *education*—a commodity not to be conflated with the lesser term until late in history.

Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, Pope Pius II, in his tract *The Education of Children* (1451), prescribes the reading and study of classical authors, geometry, and arithmetic "for training the mind and assuring rapidity of conceptions." He included history and geography in his recommended curriculum, adding that "there is nothing in the world more beautiful than enlightened intelligence." The sixteenth century is filled with theories of education from men like Erasmus, Rabelais, and Montaigne. French schoolman Gabriel Compayre, in his *History of Pedagogy* (1885), holds all three in the highest regard:

Erasmus, Rabelais, and Montaigne...before pretending to surpass them, even at this day, we should rather attempt to overtake them, and to equal them in their pedagogical precepts.

Like most educated men and women, Erasmus was his own teacher. He assigned politeness an important place in education:

The tender mind of the child should...love and learn the liberal arts...be taught tact in the conduct of the social life...from the earliest be accustomed to good behavior based on moral principles.

Montaigne, who actually attended school at Guienne from the age of six until he was thirteen, bequeathed an image of late sixteenth-century schooling amazingly modern in its particulars:

Tis the true house of correction of imprisoned youth...do but come when they are about their lesson and you shall hear nothing but the outcries of boys under execution, with the thundering noise of their *Pedagogues*, drunk with fury, to make up the consort. A pretty way this to tempt these tender and timorous souls to love their book, with a furious countenance and a rod in hand.

What Montaigne requires of a student seeking education is the development of sound judgment: "If the judgment be not better settled, I would rather have him spend his time at tennis."

Montaigne was preoccupied with the training of judgment. He would have history learned so that facts have contexts and historical judgment a bearing on contemporary affairs; he was intrigued by the possibilities of *emulation*, as were all the classical masters,⁷ and so informs us. He said we need to see the difference between teaching, "where Marcellus died," which is unimportant and teaching "why it was unworthy of his duty that he died there," which has great significance. For Montaigne, learning to judge well and speak well is where education resides:

Whatever presents itself to our eyes serves as a sufficient book. The knavery of a page, the blunder of a servant, a table witticism...conversation with men is wonderfully helpful, so is a visit to foreign lands...to whet and sharpen our wits by rubbing them upon those of others.

And in *Gargantua* the physician Rabelais set out a pedagogy quite in harmony with the experience-based curriculum of John Locke.

When I started teaching, I was able to transfer principles of Montaigne to my classroom without any difficulty. They proved as useful to me in 1962 as they must have been to Montaigne in 1562, wisdom eternally sane, always cost-free. In contrast, the bloated lists of "aims," "motivations," and "methods" the New York City Board of Education supplied me with were worse than useless; many were dead wrong

One important bit of evidence that the informal attitude toward schooling was beginning to break up in seventeenth-century New England is found in the Massachusetts School Law of 1647, legislation attempting to establish a system of schools by government order and providing means to enforce that order. Talk like this had been around for centuries, but this was a significant enactment, coming from a theocratic utopia on the frontier of the known universe.

Yet for all the effort of New England Puritan leadership to make its citizenry uniform through schooling and pulpit, one of history's grand ironies is that orderly Anglican Virginia and the heirs of Puritan Massachusetts were the prime makers of a revolution which successfully overthrew the regulated uniformity of Britain. And in neither the startling Declaration of Independence, which set out the motives for this revolution, nor in the even more startling Bill of Rights in which ordinary people claimed their reward for courageous service, is either the word *School* or the word *Education* even mentioned. At the nation's founding, nobody thought School a cause worth going to war for, nobody thought it a right worth claiming.

⁷Horace Mann and the entire inner coerie of mid-nineteenth to early-twentieth century school men derided emulation or the imitation of notable models as an effective spring of learning; thus was the most ancient and effective motivation to learn—to become like someone admirable—put to death deliberately by institutional pedagogy.