



Why we choose to be stupid : the responsibility of andragogy and a search for answers in paradox,
Canon, multiculturalism and the philosophy of postmodern critical education theory
by Gregory Norton Garcia

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in
Adult, Community, and Higher Education
Montana State University
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Abstract:

In this study ideas and concepts that can be used to describe the phenomenon of stupidity and explore the possibility that we choose to be stupid, were developed from the social and political philosophy of Western Civilization. The research methods applied were based on the phenomenological school of qualitative inquiry using a narrative style.

Findings suggest we choose to be stupid and stupidity can be generally described in the following ways: Conceptually, it is a paradox or antilogy that can be behaviorally chronicled in a number of ways.

Culturally, stupidity is a philosophically implied concept that has consistently been instrumental in shaping our ideas of intelligence.

Andragogically, stupidity is voluntary behavior that may be conscious and/or unconscious, but is manifestly anti-moral if not immoral and so it is counterproductive.

Individually and personally, stupidity is a seemingly anatomic behavioral response to serendipitous personal and cultural predicaments.

Stupidity can result from confused thinking. It can result from a misinterpretation of reality and it can also be generated by the human incapacity to live a moral existence. While stupidity may not be curable, by developing more precise awareness, we can compensate for stupidity by more fully realizing consequences.

It is suggested the ideas generated in this study are rich in possibility as subjects for more research and theory development of stupidity. Recommendations were made in support of developing more precise definitions of stupidity. The development of schemata and categories of stupidity can be also be generated by further research.

Educationally, the idea of this study supports and encourages changes in learning and teaching process, procedure and theory that represent the universe non-holistically. As an application in andragogy, it is recommended this study be applied as the basis for the generation of methodology that encourages awareness development as an educational process.

**WHY WE CHOOSE TO BE STUPID:
THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ANDRAGOGY
AND A
SEARCH FOR ANSWERS IN
PARADOX, CANON, MULTICULTURALISM
AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF
POSTMODERN CRITICAL EDUCATION THEORY**

by

Gregory Norton Garcia

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

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MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY-BOZEMAN
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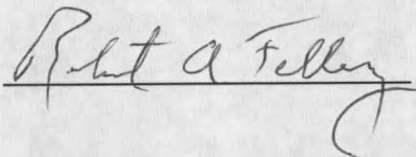
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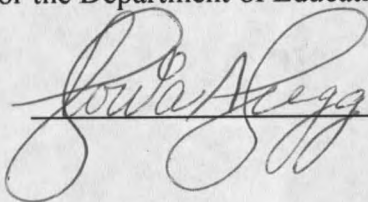
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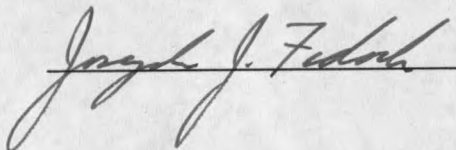
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This thesis is dedicated to Marcia Ann Hawbaker Garcia,
my best friend, my partner, my heroine, and my bride.

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ABSTRACT

In this study ideas and concepts that can be used to describe the phenomenon of stupidity and explore the possibility that we choose to be stupid, were developed from the social and political philosophy of Western Civilization. The research methods applied were based on the phenomenological school of qualitative inquiry using a narrative style.

Findings suggest we choose to be stupid and stupidity can be generally described in the following ways:

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Individually and personally, stupidity is a seemingly anatomic behavioral response to serendipitous personal and cultural predicaments.

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It is suggested the ideas generated in this study are rich in possibility as subjects for more research and theory development of stupidity. Recommendations were made in support of developing more precise definitions of stupidity. The development of schemata and categories of stupidity can be also be generated by further research.

Educationally, the idea of this study supports and encourages changes in learning and teaching process, procedure and theory that represent the universe non-holistically. As an application in andragogy, it is recommended this study be applied as the basis for the generation of methodology that encourages awareness development as an educational process.

CHAPTER 1

WHY WE CHOOSE TO BE STUPID

The Reality of Stupidity

“The resistance of the popular occurs on a terrain altogether different from that of culture in the strict sense of the word...and it takes the most unexpected forms, to the point of remaining more or less invisible to the cultivated eye.”
(Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words*, 1990).

Definitions of Stupidity

Traditionally, lexicographic concepts synonymous with what is stupid include that which is dull, dense, crass, and dumb (Webster's Dictionary of Synonyms, 1942). Generally, these “agree in meaning conspicuously lacking in intelligence or power to absorb ideas or impressions, or exhibiting such a lack” (p. 798).

However, upon closer examination, even when viewed in the more traditional as opposed to contemporary context, a variety of possibilities arise that go beyond the limitation imposed by positivist assumptions of an explicit circumscription of congenitally defined limitations.

In these instances, in order to give definition to concepts that are prescribed by idiomatic expression, dictionary editors refer to the authority of literary canon represented by culturally artistic legitimacy recognized, arguably, through relative historical consensus.

Thus, by way of example, "although it seldom is applied to the insane or the imbecile, it often also suggests senselessness, as, 'stupid with age'" (Shakespeare); "stupid with Drink; he could not stand stupid people, especially those who are made stupid by education" (Wilde) (p.798). "What force, what fury Drove us into saying the stupid; intolerant, denunciatory things we said...?" (L.P. Smith). (p. 798).

Defined as conditions as well as concepts or things, traditional editors of dictionaries provided gradients: "A person or thing that is stupid reveals a deadness or deadening of the mental powers; a person or thing that is dull manifest a lack of mental quickness, or heavy, labored mental processes" (p. 798). However, these are apparently not irreversible conditions since, "thus constitutionally dull pupils progress slowly until they are awakened by good teaching" (p.798).

More current representations of stupidity concepts are found in the 1982 edition of the American Heritage Dictionary (p.1209) where stupid is defined as:

Slow to apprehend; dumb. Showing a lack of intelligence. Dazed or stunned. Pointless; worthless; a stupid job. A stupid person. Synonyms; stupid, dumb, slow, dull, obtuse, dense and crass. These adjectives mean lacking in mental acuity. Slow and the informal dumb can imply chronic sluggishness of perception or understanding; stupid and dull occasionally suggest a merely temporary state. Stupid and dumb can also refer to individual actions that are extremely foolish. Obtuse implies insensitivity or unreceptiveness to instruction.

An Intellectual Concept of Stupidity

Does stupidity have value as an intellectual concept? Probably not if stupidity is defined as a diminished physiological or cognitive capacity that involuntarily results in an individual possessing comparatively less capability to act wisely, to think intelligently, to conceptualize intellectually or to acquire and refine effective skills.

In this instance, stupidity exists as a relative ineptness in a measurable, content oriented, positivist, or known, view of the natural world in which a normative standard can be arrived at and from which relative gradients of non-normalcy can be fixed.

However, there are other definitions of stupidity that can be found in formal linguistic lexicography, in both written and spoken idiomatic expression, as well as in experience. These suggest the potential for a representation or a formalized schematic of stupidity that is not only sufficient to allow for the development of theory, but also perhaps interesting enough to urge that development, especially as such theory development relates to learning and education in the evolving multicultural postmodern world.

The Idea of Voluntary Stupidity

In the architecture of this scheme there exists voluntary and selective processes through which we choose, albeit sometimes consciously and sometimes perhaps unconsciously, to act unwisely, to think unintelligently, to conceptualize falsely, and to impede our capacity to consider, to accept, to learn, or to develop new skills, knowledge, or awareness.

Significantly, in all of these representative definitions of stupidity, the antonym of stupidity is intelligence. Thus, the examination of intelligence also lends itself to the

exploration of stupidity by identifying those things inferred or implied as the opposite of, or otherwise opposed to, intelligence.

Multiple Ideas of Stupidity

In these broader, more dynamic, versatile, and utilitarian definitions of stupidity, we can begin to imagine a view of nature and its realities quite different from that suggested by more limited and superficial structural concepts of stupidity that are framed in the idea of an involuntary diminished capacity that is congenitally constituted and permanently fixed.

Now, we are faced with multiple ideas of both stupidity and intelligence that in one sense can be considered absolute, fully defined, and evident, opposite representations. But in another sense, they are understood differently and less definitively. In these representations stupidity, and intelligence too, are seen to convey ideas that are more vague and interdependent, if not related. This perspective infuses these definitions with natural human dynamism as represented by irony and paradox. At the same time, the more explicitly formal definitions infuse ironical circumstances and paradoxical representations with meanings sufficient to allow functional or practical understanding.

For example, common expressions such as *an educated idiot*, or the description of someone as *so smart she (or he) has no common sense*, or even the ironic expression *that was smart*, used to show how stupid an act was, make it difficult to maintain stupidity and intelligence as independent from one another. In these instances, it appears neither are absolutely opposed to each other, nor absolutely complementary to one another, but probably very subjectively related in a number of ways that are clearly constituted in cultural thought and behavior.

A Fundamental Philosophy of Stupidity

Using this subjective relativity with the view of stupidity and intelligence as relative and relational values, we can join with Søren Kierkegaard, in supposing "that subjectivity is the truth, and that subjectivity is an existing subjectivity" (Soloman, 1981, p. 246). Living in Kierkegaard's subjectivity is to live in and with the possibility if not probability that we live in a state of greater doubt, belief, faith and wonder, than in certainty and with true knowledge. This is a fundamental point because it positions stupidity as misinterpretation in the attempt to find the certain and true.

This is, of course, central to the canon of the possible human condition that philosophers have wondered about through the centuries, and begging the question of this uncertain reality led Descartes to conclude:

I am, however, a real thing and really exist; but what thing? I have answered: a thing which thinks... What is a thing which thinks? It is a thing who doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, which also imagines and feels. (Soloman, 1981, p. 105)

I interpret this as a capacity to be confused.

Epistemological Implications

It is here in this relationship then, between thinking and reality, where stupidity plays an important epistemological role. For example, is stupidity simply the confusion that results when Descartes' thinking becomes too clouded and he works through rational thought to reconcile doubt, understanding, affirmation, denial, willfulness, refusal, imagination and feeling?

Or, is stupidity the misinterpretation of reality that is unavoidable in Kierkegaard's subjectivity? Or, is stupidity something else entirely, such as the predominance of one of Descartes' components of thinking over those others and occasioned because of some other predominance in the nature of the human being? Does it, for example, result from the interplay of Maslow's needs? Or, does it result from the conflict inherent in the multiplicity of Freud's egos? Or, is it some or all of these?

In a sense the history of the tradition of intellectual thought in Western civilization represents major patterns in searches of discovery in the confusion that is to be a thing that thinks living in an existing subjectivity. Three fundamental configurations in these patterns include the search for meaning through morality (philosophy), survival through knowing and improving (experience), and the expansion or refinement of capacities through learning (education). It is evident, then, there are significant epistemological issues that relate to the concept of stupidity as inaccuracy, impeded development, or the undermining of progressive refinement of these three processes.

The Philosophical Function of Stupidity

The historic imperative that prescribes each of these three categories of being that flow from thought, frame human consciousness, and shape human behavior are found in their eternal and all-encompassing properties: They are both inevitable and inescapable.

That is to say, all human beings search for meaning through morality. Whether they themselves or others might consider them moral, immoral, or amoral from a philosophical, psychological or theological perspective is irrelevant; to be human is to search for meaning through morality whether one understands this or is aware of it or not.

Universality is the cornerstone of theory, and the immoral and amoral can only exist, therefore, as omnipresent notions that spring from the moral. The fountainhead that the moral represents here can be summarized in the reflection of experience as a lesson of functionally effective human behavior. In written form this was given us by the Greeks at the Genesis of Western thought and abridged by Solomon in the maxim, we ought to desire everything that is really good for us. (This is the definition of the moral and morality that I will use throughout this study).

To ignore or deny the importance of this human characteristic, that is, as a being in search of meaning through morality, is philosophically stupid.

Likewise, all human beings are involved in living as praxis, as in the going about and making an experience of life as well as in experiencing the living of life. This involves a constant knowing process, as well as a process of knowing. Whether one sees and understands this as formalized behavior is, again, irrelevant. The point is, it is unavoidable. However, again, I think there is clear validity to the theoretical postulate that to deny or to ignore this characteristic of what it is to be human is stupid, and therefore dangerous.

Finally, all human beings are involved in expanding and refining their capacities, that is, in educating themselves. This too is inevitable and unavoidable as it is in large measure what may be otherwise known as part of, if not the heart of, the evolutionary process. However, in the modern formalized processes of education, there are immeasurable capacities to manipulate people for immoral reasons. Denying, ignoring, or participating in this immorality is, I submit, stupid.

These then are the distinctions that delineate the human being; its existential definition as an organism, and the universe it is part of, which is to say the universe that it thinks it is part of, which is after all, the only universe it can know. Stupidity, it appears, may be a significant part of what it is to be human.

Excerpts From The First Interview

Twila, is a mother of two teen aged girls. She's 50 years old and lives in Wyoming where she currently teaches Title I - Reading, to children in grades 1-5. She has been teaching elementary school for 30 years throughout the west and mid-west.

Watching the growth of little children and watching them learn and then develop reading skills is a great joy to Twila. She enjoys watching how shocked parents are when they realize how much their children have learned in a year.

One of her most rewarding experiences was teaching migrant children. What impressed her most of all about these children was their extraordinary capacity to be thoroughly bilingual and "how easily they moved from one language to the other. They were also very eager to learn, and very protective about their brothers and sisters. They were very strong in being family."

Twila doesn't like the word stupidity and has a real problem working with it. It's a word that she doesn't tolerate in her classroom among children because they use it as an insult and it is both hurtful and harmful. It is a form of ignorance -- a way of putting people down-- and it's also behavior and ways of behaving. Bigotry as behavior is stupid and people have choices, and they make choices in these things.

In school, discipline problems are choices and when kids do things that are not good for them they are being stupid behaviorally. But, they are not stupid mentally, just not choosing to be intelligent. Their actions are reactions to things. They are inappropriate responses.

In some cases the causes are:

Rebellion against authority, home life problems, being angry inside; all of these cause responses that are stupid because they don't know how to channel their emotions into intelligent behavior. Impulse is not stopping to think... stupid. Still, stupid is a bad word.

Twila doesn't like the word.

They did, perhaps, once have a teacher who was so smart she was stupid because she was almost divorced from reality. She was extremely intelligent mentally but socially stupid or inept. Stupidity has a bad tradition as a word. Bright people can be stupid and stupid people can be intelligent. Common sense is most important. Intelligence or stupidity should be looked at as behavior rather than knowing things or having certain skills, though that's one kind of intelligence. But knowing what to do with knowledge and skills is even smarter.

Twila agrees she has, like all of us, done some pretty stupid things. Reminds her of:

Gump--Stupid is as stupid does. What is it? Lack of memory? Age? Presence? Confusion? Seems like we always say its the result of being at a stage of life, teen-age years, then young adulthood, then getting old, when actually we do stupid things all the time all our lives.

Twila was just recently stopped for speeding which really surprised her since she never speeds. She admits she didn't exercise good judgment and that was stupid. A form of stupidity.

Kids need to know 'how' not 'what'. Intelligence has everything to do with interpretation. Stupidity is not being oriented properly in the world. It is not always conscious. But we still choose. Sometimes we let ourselves fool ourselves.

Research into stupidity is good for education because we get set in our opinions about children and we need to see where they are at. By looking at levels of awareness and the awareness a child is centered in, we can deal with them better.

The Problem

"We can pool information about experiences, but never the experiences themselves."
(Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception*, 1954)

Statement of the Problem

An adequately estimable intellectual concept of stupidity, wherein stupidity is a choice, does not appear to exist in the canon that is the philosophy of education.

Discussion of the Problem

The idea of stupidity that has its genesis in confused thinking, misinterpretation of reality, or an insufficiently moral human nature, reveals two more underlying axiom that provide an opportunity to reasonably conclude there is sufficient potential for an adequately estimable intellectual concept of stupidity, which does not appear to exist.

The first of these is the "basic assumption of all metaphysics, that the universe is intelligible" (Solomon, 1981, p. 91). If this is so then we can choose from two major ideal examples through which we can approach the construction of reality. We can, for instance, revel in Plato's esoteric or ground ourselves in Aristotle's common sense experience. Either way we are involved in contention with the alternative and the reality of that comparison is also the substance of the debate between intelligence and stupidity.

On the other hand, if the universe is unintelligent, or more precisely, non-intelligible, then we must look to paradigms such as Einstein's declaration that it is only through faith that the problematic of the universe can be transcended. This view significantly enhances the

metaphysical debate through the expansions of thought enabled by materialism and immaterialism, processed by the distinctions of ontological examination. Again however, both intelligence and stupidity must still be viewed as functionally fundamental contentious standards.

The second underlying axiom that can be viewed as an integral component in the validity of stupidity as an intellectual concept are the parameters by which we determine fact, truth, or being. In other words, ontology itself. This involves the interplay between the two components of argument, logic, (or objective reasoning), and rhetoric, (or the invocation or petition to personal sentiment, empathy or bias).

It may be axiomatic to point out that the epistemological tradition that postulates truth can be arrived at through good argument is not necessarily true. Good argument is that in which logic and rhetoric function together. There is in good argument an absence of fallaciousness and a presence of valid deductive or inductive reasoning. All of these, however, do not inevitably express anything more than good argument.

Understandably, the implication of a world in which the human cannot know may be more than humankind, as an intellectually defined organism, can accept and the refusal to even imagine such a possibility has remained with us at least since Parmenides; "It must be that what can be spoken and thought is: for it is possible for it to be, and it is not possible for what is nothing to be"(Solomon, 1981, p.37).

Nevertheless, Parmenides only proved good argument may be nothing more than good argument, leaving human beings, with their supposed great nuclear capacity for thinking, no better off (and perhaps ultimately far less better off) than any other specie. After all, in this

possibility the human being is simply a product of either an unintelligent evolution, or perhaps an accidental one. In this sense, we can view ourselves as a malfunctioning specie gone awry that will eventually self-destruct through a dysfunctional counterproductive dependence on limited but immensely potent problematic survival capacities. These include imagination, language and the creation and usage of tools.

The Fundamental Assumption

The question now arises as to whether stupidity is also an inherent and irreconcilable wrong-headedness. That is, whether stupidity is the natural state of humankind. If so, then the enigma posed by the question about the validity of stupidity is far greater than the dilemma posed by Kant when he wrote, "It is the common fate of human reason to complete its speculative structures as speedily as may be, and only afterwards to inquire whether the foundations are reliable," (Solomon, 1981, p. 144) for now the idea of an unobtainable reliability arises. This scenario provides for the envelopment of all three of the potentials we have earlier described, which are stupidity as confused thinking, a misinterpretation of reality, and a critical limitation inherent in human nature itself.

If these are the realities of our existence, neither reason nor faith will suffice to ally intelligence with human existence since the thing that thinks, living in a subjective reality, can never reconcile what it perceives in its capacity to imagine with what it experiences in its immoral existence.

For the purposes of this inquiry, I will assume these are the fundamental realities of our existence. To summarize and restate the problem then, is to ask the following questions:

1. Is stupidity to be found in, and/or does it result from, confused thinking? This question arises from Descartes' declaration that he is a thing which thinks, and it therefore follows, to think is to be confused.

2. Is stupidity a misinterpretation of reality? This is the question that flows from Kierkegaard's conjecture that subjectivity is the truth.

3. Is stupidity an inevitable reality resulting from humankind's incapacity to live a moral existence? This is a slightly modified version of one of the most essential questions posed by the Greek philosophers.

4. If any of these questions can be answered affirmatively, are these conditions correctable, or, can they be compensated for by conscious choice sufficient to allow humankind the possibility of an intelligent existence? This question, and the answer to it, validate the importance of the problem.

Excerpts From The Second Interview

Terry, a mother of three living in South Texas, was born in Dallas, where she lived for 36 years. The middle child of three, and the only high school graduate among her siblings, Terry is a college graduate who holds a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting. She is 42 years old.

After high school, she married her high school beau and dropped out of college when she became pregnant. She subsequently divorced and later re-married. Her second husband was a truck driver, and Terry suffered physical and mental abuse in this relationship for 11

years. Single for six years with three children, she managed a hotel until she met her current husband.

Now Terry is married to a loving and caring man. Currently, she has one child still in school, (high school). Disabled because of a stress-related disease and attending counseling, Terry is currently working on developing a happier life and gaining better health through an improved living of life. Terry says:

One form of stupidity is when we don't realize that everyone is not the way we see them or think of them or want them to be. Whether these views, the way we think things are, or should be, are good or bad isn't the point. Stupidity is just not seeing things as they really are...but.. instead kind of operating off our conception of what they are. Or, what we want them to be.

"This can make many people unhappy, and disappointed too, not just the person who has the inflexible view but those he or she views, and others affected by that person. Everybody is what they are," Terry says, and we have to "take them as they come. We can't go around expecting the world to be the way we want it to be, trying to make it that way, and then getting frustrated when we find we can't change it."

People have choices not to act or think stupidly but they also choose to believe they don't have a choice. When people choose to see things black or white, no curve in the road, no room for error, well, then they lock themselves in. That's stupid.

Terry feels she was stupid to stay with her second husband and suffer his abuse. She felt at the time that the most important thing for her to do was to save the marriage. She was afraid of the stigma of divorcing for a second time, and she wanted her children to have a father. Once the verbal, mental, and physical abuse took away her self-respect and self-worth,

Terry says she realized she was a victim. Until that realization came to her, she felt she was what her husband told her she was: unattractive and stupid.

Another aspect of stupidity is overloading the mind, Terry says.

That's why we have to take notes. Some people have to have a daily planner. They aren't stupid...they are just overloading their mind...okay, maybe we are all stupid more than we're smart...

One thing good about stupidity, Greg, the way you are looking at it, is people can't use it as a weapon when we understand it's kinda like a condition, and all of us are in it maybe, or probably maybe, most of the time.

We're also stupid about many of the ways we live. We live in a past or future that "doesn't exist." Now is the only time that exists but "we're not very smart about living in it."

Purpose of the Study

"Intelligence is all about improvising, creating a wide repertoire of behaviors, 'good moves' for various situations....The good moves repertoire is an end point very different from snapshots of passive contemplation."

(William H. Calvin, *How Brains Think*, 1996)

The purpose of this study is to suggest the potential exists for a complex representation, or formal scheme, of stupidity that is sufficient to allow the development of an educational theory of stupidity. The representation suggested in this study appears to be a positive project in that stupidity emerges as a behavior, or an interpreting, of a pervasive human trait that has no relationship to the idea of an exclusive individual human property of obtuseness as an individual deficiency.

Research Questions

"Although the intellectual fear of mass culture can be traced back to the coming of industrialization, the die was cast by early sociologists of popular culture like the Frankfurt School. Their work was set in the context of the expanding capitalist leisure industry, with the emphasis on the stupefying effects which the consumption of 'popular culture' (the culture industry) had on people's ability to transform the world." (Andy Lovatt, Jonathan Purkis, 1995)

Can stupidity be described in these interrelated contexts?

1. Conceptually, as a paradox or antilogy that can be behaviorally chronicled in a number of ways including something that is extant as well as nonexistent, and absolute as well as inadequate.

2. Culturally, as an (unacknowledged) concept in philosophy that has consistently been instrumental in shaping Western ideas of intelligence.

3. Educationally, especially andragogically, as voluntary behavior that may be conscious and/or unconscious, but is manifestly anti-moral if not immoral and therefore counterproductive.

4. Individually, as a seemingly anatomic behavioral response to serendipitous personal and cultural predicaments that will inevitably result in the necessity to successively engage in increasingly potent and apparent stupid behavior.

Assumptions

"Perhaps moments of exegesis, of definitions in context would be replaced by the exposure to moments of dialogue and their use in the ethnographer's revision of familiar concepts that define the analytic limits of his or her work, and of anthropological discourse more generally. Such a move would open the realm of discussion of ethnographies to organic intellectuals (to use Gramsci's term) and

readerships amongst one's own subjects." (Lovatt and Purkis, *Shouting in the Street*, 1995)

Assumptions upon which this study has been based include a virtual lack of educational theory of stupidity. Therefore, this study is intended to suggest, rather than prove, there is a sufficient reason to explore the development of an educational theory of stupidity, i.e., it exists, it is a complex phenomenon, and it is vitally important to learning theory, especially for adults (Andragogy).

Additionally, because the assumption has been made stupidity is voluntary, it has been assumed there is a responsibility, inherent in adulthood, to strive not to be stupid. Also, because it appears interpretations of stupidity vary according to culture, and are culturally arrived at, assumptions have been made in selecting the targets that are the focus of this study (i.e., paradox, canon, multiculturalism, and the philosophy of postmodern critical education theory). A discussion of these assumptions follows.

Paradox, Canon, and Multiculturalism

Using a qualitative approach, this study searches for representations of stupidity both in and through the use of canon and multicultural paradigms. This approach assumes the effecting of a relevance with contemporary educational thought.

In a way, the subjective nature of the object of this inquiry, stupidity, is in itself a compelling question in a number of cultural, sociological, psychological and emotional viewpoints. It has been suggested by one informant for example, that stupidity is a taboo, one that is especially evident in the desultory, accusatory and insulting use of the word, especially when applied in family, school, and peer relationships.

For the purposes of this study however, it is assumed there is an all encompassing, pervasive, or universal category of stupidity in a most general sense that may also include a multitude of specialized forms or categories of stupidity. My purpose here is to suggest the existence of the former rather than delineate the latter.

Postmodern Critical Education Theory

Indeed, because there are so many varied perspectives an inquiry into stupidity can encompass, it is important to distinguish this study will view a variety of elements of a whole as those elements relate to a single issue or point of reference. That issue is whether we chose to be stupid, especially when our behavior is involved with learning. Related issues do include the sociological, the psychological, and the emotional. But above all, this is a work of cultural critique from my view of the adult learning experience as an andragogy of common, chosen, or voluntary, behavior.

More specifically, I am interested in what intelligent behavior is in an evolving multicultural world. Related to this latter concern are the implications of chosen stupidity as a stupefying behavioral process from critical education perspectives and other views and ideas about stupidity that emanate from paradox, irony (humanness), and the change of paradigms, that are consistent with the historic imperative as canon.

Andragogical Responsibility

It is at this point where a greater definition of the inquiry into stupidity is being applied where it is also incumbent to refine and narrow the scope of the examination.

If we interpret and explore Kant's characterization of reason as a broad representation of education, and assume it is a valid reflection, then elementary and pre-school learning is a palpably critical juncture where a vital function is being performed.

Obviously, the reliability of the foundation in human reason that is constituted, constructed, and reproduced in early childhood development has a great deal to do with distinctions about concepts of self worth, capabilities, capacities, human effectiveness, stupidity, intelligence, and the quality of behavior in adulthood.

Unfortunately, children do not have the capacity to participate authoritatively in a dialogue about the validity of their perspectives of truth, reality concepts, the purposes of human existence and other existential issues, even if they may possess some very well defined but rudimentary perceptions. Thus, at the very point when cultural reproduction, including the initial conceptual outline of intelligence and stupidity is initially taking place, those who are the targets of that project have no voice.

This is probably very unfortunate because the precocity of originality that is so much of being in childhood offer interesting and compelling insights that we do not take seriously. It may also be very unfortunate because adult dialogue may be so representative of an acquired non-originality that it is difficult to achieve the potency of truly good thought at precisely that point when the most powerful impression of what truly good thought is, is being codified for people who have no voice by people who's voice has no originality.

While this dilemma is paradoxical, it also lends itself to the recognition of a mandate of responsibility on the part of those who are in adulthood. I term this responsibility of adulthood the responsibility of andragogy because it is in the sense of humankind as the

voluntarily learning specie that we are examining stupidity. Fyodor Dostoevsky, alluded to this mandate of adult responsibility this way:

In the first place... it is possible to love children, at close quarters, even if they are dirty, even if they have ugly faces, although to me a child's face is never really ugly. In the second place, I also will not speak of adults at the moment, because, besides being disgusting and undeserving of love, they have something to compensate them for their suffering: they have eaten their apple of knowledge, they know about good and evil and are like gods themselves. And they keep eating the apple. But little children haven't eaten. They're not yet guilty of anything. (Soloman, 1981, p. 251)

As I understand Dostoevsky, I cannot help but agree that it is indeed adults who shape the world. Also, they have a capacity to be conscious of not only their reactive role in the cause and effect concurrence of symptoms, but to recognize and deliberately act on their proactive potential to influence cause and effect with an awareness of their knowledge about good and evil.

The Assumption of Moral Bias

Because a cultural view of stupidity is so rooted in the anthropologic, this work will also refer to some of that which can be considered, at least in part, theology. I have made the assumption that it is not my intent to parochially pursue an ideal of religiosity. Nor, I assume, is it my intent to argue against religious discourse. However, I clearly recognize a major bias in my critique in that I assume the validity of ideas about what constitutes the intelligent, the educated, the wise, the efficient, the effective, and the functional, with what is moral. Moreover, I don't believe any of these can exist without a moral value. Finally, in defining moral, I point back to the Greek philosophers and those things that are really good for us.

Excerpts From The Third Interview

Born in 1979 in Wisconsin, Steven is a sophomore at a mid-sized University in Montana where he is majoring in Political Science and History. Steven is a student center advocate and is a member of honor societies.

"Stupidity is a way of categorizing other people. You rarely consider your own behavior stupid" (but he will grant to himself that he makes stupid actions or choices). Yet, for the most part, Steven feels stupidity is always applied to the realm of others.

"At the University, new students make remarks that seem stupid or are considered stupid by older students, but its really a matter of perspective whether they are stupid or not." Steven says the most stupid thing he has done recently is "roll" the family pickup truck (twice) because he was driving too fast for conditions and that was "stupid on my part." The consequences (he hasn't "heard the end of it!") are that he has lost his driving privileges, and he realizes he could have been killed, so he doesn't think he will do that again. Steven says "stupidity is part of who we are and what we learn and we must have a balance, we must balance the smart side with the stupid side."

Another way we use stupidity is to:

Justify our wars by viewing or propagandizing about other people. Yet, when we say stupid we recognize they are human. We also use it in politics, such as at school, when we apply it as a control mechanism.

And, political behavior is stupid at times such as when, in WWII, the allies knew what was going on, the holocaust, and did nothing about it, morality has something to do with it....

Also, politicians put spins on things and distort views, and that's stupid. But, it's, you know, it's yin and yan.... We have to have the stupid side to have the smart side.

Procedural Outline

Bibliographic Research

Anthropologic issues will be explored by researching a bibliography of Western philosophy and critical education theory using a hermeneutical approach in order to find quintessential patterns of nominal definitions. In as much as possible, this approach will seek to borrow from those epistemological discovery methods used by Plato (Dialogues), St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and others. For the most part, this research will focus on the traditional cultural defining of ideas related to intelligence in order to determine, by inference, the traditional cultural defining of stupidity, so it can be determined if conclusions may be drawn relating to choosing to be stupid and learning.

Interviews

Selected informants will be initially contacted by either Email or telephone and provided a background of the project, why they have been selected and asked to participate, and what will be expected of them, including:

1. A written or taped informal, anthropological, biography.¹
2. A request to read a description of the issue and discuss it.

¹A bibliography is necessary to document the personal experience of informants, and to orient informants to a holistic self perception consistent with their function as informants. The purpose of informants reading the issue is to provide them with a broad scope idea of the range of content in the subject of stupidity, and especially in terms of the premise and question: "We humans sometimes choose to be stupid. We humans sometimes choose to be stupid when we should be, or could be, learning (i.e., learning can be considered formal or also learning in everyday life in the developing multicultural world). If true, why?" Finally, the purpose of the interview is to elicit new, unanticipated viewpoints. Thus, interviews will be thematic, using methodologies outlined by Pentti Routio (Arteology, 1997).

3. Participation in a taped interview.

The Internet

Phenomenological issues will be researched by use of the Internet. Using a variety of search engines in addition to the Electric Library, contemporary publications, home pages, books, articles, and electronic forums identified by a search for the key words 'stupid' and 'stupidity' will be surveyed in order to identify stupidity as words, philosophical concepts, attributes of objects, attributes of perceptions, as a message, and as discovery. This aspect of the research is also intended to reveal patterns of meaning so it can be determined if conclusions may be drawn relating to choosing to be stupid and learning.

CHAPTER 2

SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS IN PARADOX

Introduction

“...But the capability for handwriting probably got the longest free ride off the throwing lateralization, until it got put to work a mere 5000 years ago. Whereupon the left brain and right hand created a written language which allowed an accumulation of generation-jumping knowledge, and all that. Throwing strikes again. And beside explaining minor things, such as how humans got started and what made book-learning culture possible, the throwing theory even reveals the true origins of baseball, establishes it as the most elegant of all sports, the fast ball as the most fundamental of inventions....”

(William Calvin, *The Throwing Madonna, Essays On The Brain*, 1983)

Implication of Paradox, Stupidity, Intelligence

In Western cultural literature, and especially in the literature of philosophy (and educational philosophy), a proposition that reappears so often it takes on the dimension of being a universal theme is the idea that the exercise of man's intellect has much to do with the state of man's soul. That is, to the degree the intellect is being exercised, the wholeness of the soul is being constructed. Also, to the degree the soul is defined, the purposes of the intellect are refined.

It is always difficult to reduce universal mantra to minutiae because even the most common perceptions are individually understood and therefore reconstructed. Nevertheless, it is in this very problematic dilemma that the power of paradox lends itself to the search for understanding.

A classic example of the power of paradox can be found in Allan Bloom's manuscript, The Closing Of The American Mind (1987). Opining on the theme of the relation of the intellect to the soul, Bloom wrote, "Men may live more truly and fully in reading Plato and Shakespeare... because then they are participating in essential being and are forgetting their accidental lives" (p. 380). As a philosopher and educator, Bloom's view of the exercise of intellect effecting the state of the soul encompasses a description of the human community as well. "The real community of man... is the community of those who seek the truth, of the potential knowers, that is, in principle, of all men to the extent they desire to know" (p. 381).

In applying (perhaps unknowingly) the idea of the power of paradox, Bloom (1987) wrote:

But in fact, this includes only a few, the true friends, as Plato was to Aristotle at the very moment they were disagreeing about the nature of the good. Their common concern for the good linked them; their disagreement about it proved they needed one another to understand it. They were absolutely one soul as they looked at the problem. (p. 381)

Ontological Imperatives

There are two fundamental characteristics that shape the idea that a causal relationship exists between the intellect and the soul, as well as between the soul and the intellect. The first characteristic is an abstraction of education as a quest that is circumscribed by the quintessential and ubiquitous.

In other words, essential human nature prevails and endures correspondingly, even in very changed environments, at least to the extent that we still face the same problems even

if in different form. We also share a universal need to understand these problems, perhaps especially because it is our hope, (if not an article of human faith), they are not insoluble.²

The second characteristic is an inspiration of education as a permanent dialogue addressing the quintessential and insoluble through a quality of thought and behavior that ensures, assures, and furthers community. One of the results of this educational praxis is the initiation of an ontological forum to compare and define qualifications of thought that meet a logical test to a degree of quality that furthers community. In this case, logic considerations include both archetypes of theoretical perfection as well as more limited models framed in the experienced reality of human behavior.³

Ontological Tradition (Canon)

In Western civilization the on-going forum deliberating quality of thought has been consistently engaged since the age of the Greek philosophers with every succeeding generation contributing its perspective theses. Invariably, each and every critique has fashioned a premise of the ideal form of thought that is representative of what it means to be intelligent, that is, to be educated, intellectual, wise, or otherwise the antithesis of stupidity. Stupidity, however, is always implied, it is never explicitly or definitively conceptualized as

² In The Structure of Freedom, (1978) Christian Bay supports the idea that "All human activity is related to values, explicitly or implicitly. No man in his right mind would seriously occupy himself with a problem unless its clarification or solution were of some value to him."

³ Again, I refer to Bay who in turn references Myrdal, An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy, pp 1027 ff, in clarifying goal values as a matter of personal faith: "Two particular canons at least seem to have a wide acceptance. One is the canon of logical consistency. Most of us do not wish to be self contradictory, not even in our system of goal values, in so far as this can be avoided. Secondly is the canon of insight. We generally want to be as aware as possible of practical implications of our important values, so that we can know how to promote them and avoid counteracting them."

a cultural scheme to the extent that intelligence (and sometimes wisdom) has been developed as a theoretical proposition.

In the remainder of this introduction, I will attempt to reveal the quality of canon as what I believe is a tradition of wisdom seeking in reaction to ideas that have arisen and have been seen as implications of stupidity.

Axiological Stupidity

In terms of theory development, classic philosophical arguments include descriptive postulates about the composition of the individual, thought, behavior, the environment, time and space paradigms, and what is supposed to be known as truth (i.e., historical avenues of thought up to that point in time). For the most part, attempts to bring the power of paradox to bear, as we have identified it thus far as the Greek method of opposed but friendly argument coming from a shared value for the good, are contained in an envelope framed by rational thought comprised of shared values reflecting contemporary societal norms qualified by conventionality. In other words, most views, philosophically speaking, become axiomatic.

Invariably, this bounded thinking box severely limits the potential capacity of paradox to enable opposed thinkers to participate in essential being, and to become absolutely one soul, so as to understand the problem, as Bloom remarked. This incapacity, (an axiological component of stupidity, if you will) is effected because of confusion between argument that is in opposition with argument that is paradoxical.

By this I mean to submit that the perspective of man--both her view and her place--are paradoxical and this may not have as much to do with opposed perspectives as much as it has to do with the perspectives of opposition.

If our very existence is paradox, we must search out the paradoxical in every inquiry in order to more truly search for the good, for it will always, in this view, be found as part of some or many other things related to one another in strangely opposed, but complementary, ways. If in recognizing this we are acting intelligently, to reject the exploration of paradox then, would be to act stupidly.

Fundamental Paradox of Consciousness

In William Calvin's home page Internet column, *Science Surf*, he quotes from Derek Bickerton's (1990) book, Language and Species:

The paradox of consciousness – that the more consciousness one has, the more layers of processing divide one from the world – is, like so much else in nature, a trade off. Progressive distancing from the external world is simply the price that is paid for knowing anything about the world at all. The deeper and broader [our] consciousness of the world becomes, the more complex the layers of processing necessary to obtain that consciousness.⁴

It is necessary to understand the idea of Bickerton's paradox of consciousness in order to understand the role of paradox both as stupefying agency as well as revealing medium. In other words, paradox can function both to enlighten and to disguise because it is, I think, what arises when we progressively distance from the external world, as Bickerton puts it, and it is therefore a product of the deeper and broader consciousness of the world.

Dealing with paradox then, becomes synonymous with the more complex layers of processing necessary to obtain the greater consciousness of the world. Conversely, in this

⁴ William H. Calvin teaches neurobiology at the University of Washington and has published extensively on the subject of evolution.

project, the failure to recognize paradox is a failure to reach for greater consciousness, and accordingly defines--to a greater or lesser extent--stupidity.

The Positivist Denial of Paradox

The incapacity to understand or recognize the unique human perspective and the concomitant paradox as well as the power of paradox inevitably result in argument postulated by closed mind, or positivist, views that do little to advance anything except opposed argument itself. When the argument centers on topics related to intelligence as a societal product, boundaries customarily include class and power constructs with points of convergence on political, economic, and social mantra. As an observation, normally the inflexibility of the argument can be found in the degree to which the title of the work is positivist in its communicative nature.

However, I feel I need to point out my critique of the positivist viewpoint is being selectively applied here: It should be evident I view the phenomenon of stupidity in one sense at least, as a potential product of certainty in an uncertain existence. As such, positivism, representing the decided certainty, can be a major producer of stupidity.

Of course, the same may be said of uncertainty and the denial of a known reality, and this view, properly I think, would be the defense of positivism. However, it is not the subject of this thesis, but its antithesis, therefore it should be understood my critique of positivism is an intellectual exercise and not a political program.

Stupidity Issues and Positivist Critiques

To provide a contemporary example, I submit Donald Wood's (1996) Post-Intellectualism and the Decline of Democracy: The Failure of Reason and Responsibility in

the Twentieth Century, Donald Wood is professor of Radio-Television-Film at California State University, Northridge. He is author of a number of books about telecommunications, Mass Media, and television productions.

I have selected his work as an example of a contemporary positive critique because of the similarities of his outline with the projects of others who use the same myths to exemplify social maladies, political deficiencies and human insufficiencies.

Wood's work is basically about what is wrong with today's world, how it went wrong, and what we need to do to bring it back on course. According to Wood we have left the age of reason and entered into the post intellectual (unidentified except as reason gone wrong) age where the fruit of reason, technology, has enabled the masses, rather than elite authoritarian leadership, to define culture. In this classist rationale civilization is lost. What we need to do to bring the world back on course is to return to a redefined reason, one that does not lead to excess, especially among the masses.

What went wrong? According to Wood, a wide variety and large number of things. First, the underpinnings of democracy, based as they are on an idealized view of the constitutive nature of humanity, represent an error that culminates in the impossibility of the masses to achieve the state of human quality and competence found in the elite.

Second, government itself, (whether democratic or totalitarian) is an imperfect mechanism that can't solve inherent deficiencies in human beings. It is too impaired by corruption, the influence of the power elite, and interests in maintaining the status quo, to serve Enlightenment ideals.

Third, there's the rise of nihilism, the greed of capitalism and its bastard children, commercialism and consumerism, and the explosion of information, joined by image or picture-based mass media and communication.

Finally, intellectualism fell into the abyss of hopeless post-intellectualism when educationally we abandoned the great truths, the discipline of rigor, and the competitiveness that breeds high standards. We did this in order to embrace egalitarianism, and a misguided regard for self worth. Post-intellectualism also represents the abandonment of classic curricula, the disintegration of morality (based on either humanism or theology), and, the hyphenated-American-led return to the cultural state of tribalism.

The result of all these deficiencies are all the maladies that chronicle the contemporary state of the disintegrating, dysfunctional Republic and world at large. To name a few, we no longer value reason, social analysis, or the liberal arts. Literacy (devoured by the pictorial media), privacy (shattered by computer technologies), self-sufficiency (taken away by the welfare state), and individualism (denied us by tribal lobbying groups), have fallen by the wayside.

Stupidity Construct of Immoral Existence

In the Introduction major philosophic avenues of inquiry were used to construct a philosophic framework of stupidity centering on three issues. These are, confused thinking, a misinterpretation of reality, and an immoral existence. One of the laments of the contemporary positivist critique, (if not also practically all contemporary critiques) is the perception of widespread immorality, albeit many times described otherwise. Wood's portrayal of 'wrong' for example, is extensively related to a perceived fall from morality:

We citizens have stood aside and turned over the government to special interests and specialized technocrats. Ecological coherence (diffused by technological determinism), and moral decline (in general morality has been rendered extinct by just about everything from television to an economy that requires both parents to work, as well as the single parent dilemma that results from divorce and illegitimacy) have become the mushroom cloud of the end of civilization as we know it.

Stupidity Construct of Misinterpreted Reality

Wood's perception of reality may be considered inflexibly concentrically positivist and as such, impaired by a perceptual narcosis brought about by a changing world represented by new paradigms springing up around him. The result is Wood, it appears to me, instead of trying to understand a new reality emerging, emits a long and incessant lament. But it is a popular refrain because it sounds right.

It sounds right because, in large part, his litany of modern malaise are the same representations we all read about in the newspapers and hear on the radio and watch on television and sometimes experience as reality personally, or in our relationships with family and friends. Still, they are all myths and, conceivably, there are other myths to choose from.

Perhaps the persuasiveness of persistently preponderant media-ized myth conditioned Wood's belief in revisionist history. In pointing to a time of greater civilization in the romantic notion of some time long ago in a place far away, Wood re-writes a record of slavery, and distinct classism that includes 'democracies' founded on autocracy and aristocracy, widespread squalor, male domination, blatant inter and intra-family violence, segregation, a complete denial of universal suffrage, absences of public sanitation and a

corresponding assault on the environment in a most general sense, genocide against native peoples; I could go on. Perhaps a quote would be more telling:

We had, in retrospect, what:

must be considered a combination of extraordinary advantages never before enjoyed by any new nation: A vast continent protected from foreign intervention on two sides by oceans, a preliterate native population easily subdued by advanced technologies, a robust economy based upon slave labor.... We had an incredible head start in setting up our democratic demonstration project. (Wood, 1996, p. 214)

What I read is celebration of the opportunity to exploit, subdue, and enslave without concern for outside interference. Moreover, there is in this kind of language a clear example of situation ethics that is an integral part of the rational project. Those who would speak from the age of faith might be a little more pronounced in their consistency. The idea that an evil as egregious as slavery can be translated as a pragmatic means to an end is possibly tantamount to declaring the institution an acceptable tradition.

Stupidity Construct of Confused Thinking

Similar to Bloom's bombast in this vein, Wood substitutes a positivist's indoctrination for a scholar's critique. Read in its cultural context (that is, its ethnic posture) it all passes for truth and one of the reasons why it does has to do with the manufacture of the same group thought Wood laments.

Interestingly, Wood associates his post-intellectual with the post-modern. One of the contexts in the many views of the post-modern has to do with the potential for error that occurred when man left the age of faith and entered the age of reason, ushering in the period of the Enlightenment. In lucid terms these arguments have to do with the relative differences

in thinking (including advantages and disadvantages), both cognitively and affectively, that can be characterized as belonging to the age of faith or belonging to the age of reason and thus stemming from the more modernist Enlightenment.

The problem for Wood, (and since we are using his view as an example by implication, we must also point to the general discomfort voiced by those who have been most comfortable with the mythical status quo, by which I mean the establishmentarian), is the seeming incompatibility of what they consider the positive results of the Enlightenment and rationalism, such as capitalism and technology, with the negative results of the ideals of the Enlightenment and rational consumptive behavior, especially as these are exhibited in social and ideological terms.

Another example of confused thinking relates to the more contemporary, multicultural reality: Wood is unthinkingly Eurocentric. When Wood speaks of world history and civilization all of his paradigms are Eurocentric. The problem then becomes one of validity since he cannot imagine the *Intellectual* or *Democracy* as being anything other than what has evolved from Western civilization. What this view does is deny the legitimacy of other ideas, especially the notion of democracy as praxis instead of polity (as was customary in many Native American societies), as well as the plausibility of intellect as behavior instead of thought (as practiced in many Asian societies).

Of particular interest here, parenthetically, is the nature of this criticism about the Eurocentric paradigm. The problem with Eurocentrism in this context has little to do with a critique of racism or ethnocentrism, as much as it has to do with a diminishment of intellectualism. The point is, when we take it upon ourselves, institutionally, to determine

what intelligence is, especially on the basis of a classist or evident cultural bias as well as in the absence of definition of the counter-coterminous, we are not advancing intelligence as much as we are advancing stupidity. Perhaps the answer here is to look more closely to anthropology and social science for definitions of intelligence rather than solely to education and science.

Positivist Response to Stupidity Constructs

Rather than use this incompatibility as a beginning point to ponder, the establishmentarian, or positivist, response is to either redefine the ethic and the moral or redefine the nature of man. To illustrate, since democracy can't possibly be what we see as reality, the problem has to be with those who fail to see democracy in its true lights, or, democracy has failed because those who fail to share the ideal are themselves deficient. Interestingly, Wood uses both of these arguments.

For example, while Wood appears to work hard in some areas to present as balanced a view as possible, in too many instances he is conspicuously biased and blind to the degree to which he considers his bias as indisputable. It is when this occurs bias becomes an obstacle. Consider the following deficiencies.

Wood is patently both partisan and elitist, and this bias has the effect of discounting his entire work:

Today's two major parties reflect the two opposing strands of post-intellectualism. Republicans represent the distended intellectual approach. People must assume responsibility for their own destinies and pull themselves up by their bootstraps, eliminate welfare; encourage competition and self reliance; rely on unrestricted free enterprise. This is a commendable libertarian political position that has made much sense for much of the nineteenth century.

The Democrats on the other hand, represent a counter-intellectual approach. Since society has gotten too complicated and unbalanced for the average citizen to handle, the state must assume responsibility for rectifying the situation with welfare programs, affirmative action legislation, safety regulations, and other social programs. This authoritarian political philosophy accepts the fact that as individuals we can no longer manage an intellectual political system; we must now rely on the technocrats and bureaucrats to run things for us. (Wood, 1996, p. 31)

While Wood would not have us led by the technocrats or bureaucrats, he finds no problem highlighting what he considers the traditional and rightful role of the elite:

"Democracy survives because the elites [*sic*], the handful of activists and idealists who make the system work, continue to defend the rights of the masses to enjoy the fruits and freedoms of representative government" (Wood, 1996, p. 231).

The Paradox of Positivism

Viewed as a paradox positivism becomes understandable from a variety of both perspectives and representations. Positivism, considered in slang language as the attitude of the know-it-all, is generally considered an excrescence of reason and deep in the bosom of its contention is the idea that all can be proven and what can't be proven doesn't exist.

Because this is so, the wider the scope being examined by the positivist, the more obvious the fallacious reality being described becomes. To invalidate this hazard the positivist's argument is usually based on a master narrative, or world view, that has been constructed or fabricated to provide a more apparent reality that usually owes its power of illusion to a number of mythical expressions that represent the ideal, or the way we think it ought to be in a more perfect world.

Fault Lines In The Master Narrative

Wood crafts his reality by characterizing all that he sees as stemming from true reason as intellectualism and when what emanates from reason goes awry, he qualifies it as an altered intellectualism, most generally, as post-intellectualism. Actually, he goes farther than this by then defining the intellectual age (from about a century before the Enlightenment up to the nineteen sixties).

The intellectual heritage given us from this era was:

characterized by a populace that would seek knowledge, think rationally, could engage in meaningful social criticism, and was dedicated to a broad, liberal arts cultural perspective. This populace would be literate, analytic, competitive, morally clear headed, and determined to make the system work as a collaborative coming together of reasoning individuals. (Wood, 1996, p. 15)

The United States, "founded on the firm intellectual ideals of the Enlightenment," was established as a democracy "based on the elegant ideal that men and women are rational enough and responsible enough to manage their own affairs," and "comprehend and control their social, economic, political and scientific environments" and "reach informed and selfless decisions about governance" (Wood, 1996, p.15).

Of course, the problem with constructing a master narrative as a historical fabricate is it is built on hundreds if not millions of faults--not necessarily of the events, but in the attempt to then use those events as an interpretation of the motives, mind sets, behavior, and beliefs, of the people in that time.

Wood, however, arrogates the mien of the scholar and so the unsuspecting reader probably assumes a certain degree of neutrality and objectivity and depth that Wood's unwitting volition transforms into a sense of vacuity. Still, there is something else:

Wood (1996) is a classist ethnocentrist:

Today the hyphenated citizen - the African American, the Italian American, the Jewish American, the Korean American, finds him or herself putting increasing emphasis on the tribal modifier (African, Italian, Jewish, Korean) rather than on the more abstract and intellectual nation-state identity (American). (p. 191)

Quoting Newt Gingrich, Wood goes on to vicariously make the point that "America can absorb an amazing number of people from astonishing number of backgrounds if our goal is assimilation. If people are encouraged to resist assimilation the very fabric of American society will break down." Wood's postscript on this is "all separatist movements represent a post intellectual trend" (1996, p. 191). Apparently, an exception would be the separatist movement of the English colonies in America in the eighteenth century.

Of course, others have argued the experience of the *hyphenated* American is that assimilation does not work, that is why they have been hyphenated. And, from the perspective of the other what needs to be remembered is, historically it was originally the practice of the cultural majority, to hyphenate Americans of certain heritage. Accepting the finality of their otherness in their own land and society, these Americans have decided for themselves that difference is a matter of continuing pride and value and see their sense of identity as an enrichment of their citizenship.

Using A Unified Quintessential Canon

Some of the questions that arise from reading Wood and applying a critique of Western political thought include, for example, whether or not there is a moral superiority in the theory of democracy. A philosophical Gestalt if you will, that demands allegiance to its form despite its weaknesses. If we apply a critique from some of the freedom syllogisms we will examine, we have to ask whether freedom is a struggle for individual liberty or for the preservation of Wood's system. Correspondingly, we also have to ask, if positive answers incline toward the former, what that means in terms of definitions of government, society, and intelligence.

It is critically important to examine theory this way in order to search for unified, quintessential, canon that is consistent and defensible. Otherwise, we silence opposition through intimidation. This is the primary strategy employed by the positivist through the construction of implied stupidity schemes that automatically apply to the opposition of the world view communicated, for example, through Wood's treatise. As a result the social, emotional, and political power that is generated against any opposition to such views are enormous.

In short, we can see the power of dogma in the unspoken inference that opposed argument is not only wrong but stupid, as are then, those who would make such arguments. For our purposes, we can identify this phenomenon as argument as opposition rather than argument as paradox. It also becomes apparent when the conflict as competition, for example, becomes conflict as violence.

Note: In the field of education, Wood also echoes the call for tougher standards, a return to canon for the sake of adherence to tradition, and schooling to serve the interests of society. He strongly entreats an education that serves the state and trains workers for corporate interests. He encourages rigorous academic discipline to ensure success in the job market. All of these invite critique through a number of educational perspectives. We will examine those perspectives as well as implications of philosophy and curricula and, the curiously baffling relationship between dogma and stupidity as dilemma.

Using Critical Education Theory Philosophy

Wood's references to the social order and style of the culture he visualizes as his society provide an interesting challenge to the new anthropological models of Renato Rosaldo,(1993) and the ideas about consciousness that embody Chalmers' (1996) search for fundamental theory. This contrast with elements of postmodernism is especially valid when comparison is made of Wood's interpretation of American Otherness (an autonomous, internally coherent universe) with the interdependent, externally transparent multiplicity represented by the ambiguous and sometimes enigmatic hyphenization that these Others themselves refer to.⁵

If the interpretation of the Greek search for the good has to do with the best of what it means to be educated, intelligent, intellectual and wise, and if each of these are paradoxically related to stupidity, even if linearly as in gradients on a continuum, then written

⁵ My use of the term Other, consistent with applications in critical education theory and multicultural narratives follows the general postmodern interpretation to mean the identification of categories of people other than mainstream or majority groups. These include, by inference, categorizations by ethnicity, race, citizenship, religion, gender, age, or other identifying factors.

statements beg scrutiny in a number of ways. After all, examinations of capacities and expression informs us about ideas of what it is a speaker values and conformably does not value.

Also, an examination of the scope, level, content and context of an author's capacities of exclusion and inclusion not only reveals what the writer is saying, but who and what he or she is speaking for as well as what is omitted whether consciously or unconsciously. Finally, the reality of motive cannot be ignored. Because it appears there is a tendency to transmit authoritarianism even through the subtle communication of tone and allusion, social and cultural reproduction may indeed manifest powerfully, and in that process much can be made of the effect of the resulting hegemony on the statement of the Other.

The Imperative of The Multicultural

To provide a more definitive example, Woods' view of immigration is shaped by an attitude that seems to center on selectively allowing people admission, rather than proactively recruiting new converts to an ideal embodied in a system of laws. However, in reading the American experience, when the statement of the Other begins to form and shape in definition, it becomes evident there is a meaningful representation of American immigration that Wood, others might argue, is blind to.

It could be said for example, the uniquely super sensitive state of nationalism that envelopes what it is to be an immigrant results, anthropologically, in the immigrant constituting more of what it is to be an American than non-immigrant citizens.

Furthermore, with the application of a little imagination, we might also begin to understand just how seriously monumental and far reaching this statement of the Other, the

representation of American immigration, and the combination or the blend of these are, as liberation theory. In my estimation, while there is potential here for a liberation theory superior to all others because it is liberating in principle, praxis, and the construction of intelligence, a conscious intent not to be stupid must be exercised in order to see this potential.

The Cultural Production of Stupidity

From the perspective of the postmodern and the multicultural, the inability to see or to understand the statement of the Other, as exemplified by Wood, is tantamount to an incapacity to comprehend the validity of feminism, recognize the raging contest inherent in cultural politics, and realize that educational boundaries are going to be re-drawn whether we interpret the statement of the Other or not.

Far more important though is the failure to understand, accept, appreciate, and become involved in what Giroux (1991) calls the "self constructed as terrain of conflict and struggle," where "subjectivity is seen as site of both liberation and subjugation" (p.30).

The conflict thus defined by Giroux, not only represents a battle for a politicized concept of freedom, but within this context, a fight for intelligence by overpowering and defeating stupidity through not only an understanding of what is intelligent, but of what is stupid as well. For example, when an understanding of the statement of the Other as far more than a condemnation of superficiality begins, we can begin to realize the change that causes such pandemonium for Wood doesn't have much to do with the altered definition of what he considers his country or society or nation to be, as much as with his conception of what people are.

This is because it is in the constitution of the perception of individual human beings where the great changes, the real paradigm shifts are taking place, and perhaps always have.

In order to move Woods' opposition argument into a more beneficial paradoxical contribution, we will use John Dewey's work, Experience and Education, (1963) for comparison. In comparing the two, one of the first impressions that comes to mind is the need to recognize the existence of socio-cultural courage as a component within the intelligence - stupidity scheme.

Borrowing from mythology and the arts, we can conceptualize the sociology of contemporary trends as forms of group thought, or as streams and currents of consciousness. Within a stream, or defined category, there are a number of currents, or schools of thought based on a particular awareness. Political trends, for example, include conservative and liberal interpretations which in turn include social, economic, psychological and historical manifestos that may or may not be rationally or emotionally consistent. Likewise, in education theory a deliberating forum is always extant and, as in politics, very sensitive to societal pressures.

Excerpts From The Fourth Interview

Peter is a 26-year-old first-year law school student living in a northern plains state. Single, he was born in Nebraska, and was raised in Europe, the Far East, and the Western U.S. As a political consultant, Peter is interested in environmental issues, writing, especially creative writing, cultural critiques, prejudice and the politics of gender, and interpretations of the world.

Definite in his belief that people are stupid, Peter points to a number of ways that "people demand much of the myth making that is politics." Clearly, this demand comes from the desire of people for significance in their universe. The problem is that "people are also very lazy about thinking and being intelligent; they absolutely choose to be stupid, especially in politics, because it makes things easier for them. They don't have to think or deal with things, which is just too troublesome."

One of the popular notions about media and politics, for example, is that the sound bite and spin technique is a political ploy. Actually, "it serves the public well. People are stupid about politics-- it takes effort to understand issues, but they don't want to think about them, they just want sound bites or slogans or compartmentalized views."

Unfortunately, this stupidity "causes problems because the issues are bigger than their understanding so they become disillusioned. This keeps the system from working as well as it should."

Stupidity as Status Quo

In his time, John Dewey, said some very original things about schools and learning and the profession of education and in doing that he had the socio-cultural courage to isolate himself by placing his position outside as well as between, both the former and latter dialogue of his time.

This is significant. While it may not be initially apparent that the exercise of courage has much to do with whether behavior is stupid or intelligent, exercising behavior in pursuit of the intelligent usually requires a significant departure from those currents that make up the popular stream of consciousness. What is often ignored is that socio-cultural courage is

necessary not only to struggle with the external human community but with those internal psychological interpretations of the identification of the self that are constituted at least in part by the external community as well.

Dewey's ideas about the beau ideal of his contemporary and historical time-space communicate a certain strength and compatibility if not comfort with all three time concepts, past, present and future, that reflect also a meaningful degree of congeniality with the human condition.

Within his sense of ethic and value, Dewey, it appears, was fond of the best of the past, wanted the best of the future, and knew precisely how to go about identifying and communicating both the content and contexts of these concepts. That is, Dewey wanted to assure himself he would focus correctly on the specifics of what needed to be changed and why, and how, and where, and when.

Likewise, he wanted just as much to be sure, to be specific about what should not be changed, about what was good or otherwise necessary in the status quo, the traditional. This specificity was far more important to Dewey than posturing and postulating progressive theory because, as I read him, he wanted to live in a possible world.

In Experience and Education, Dewey applies a great deal of specificity in enumerating the strengths and weaknesses of traditional and progressive education at the level where these concepts and contexts live, which is in human experience. Even more definitively, Dewey differentiated between the learning experience and the educational experience.

His distinction between these two has much to do with the central thrust of all of the literature that presupposes the antithesis of human cultural stupidity. Dewey goes beyond these by

returning to the idea of the Greek overture that there exists a capacity to strive for a universal intelligence in opposition to a universal stupidity. The difference is that of the act of civilizing, or creating civilization, as a daily practice and that has to do with the creation, evolution, and transmission of morality in learning. In short, purposefulness.

Dewey's insistence on the idea that morality is the difference between learning and education is based on his observation that learning is going to take place anyway, it is natural human behavior whether conscious or unconscious, physical or metaphysical. But it is not independent of value, it is on the other hand very dependent on value just as value is dependent on human behavior, and it is this last point that is so often neglected.

As Dewey (1963) puts it, "every experience is a moving force; its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves toward and into. It is the business of the educator to see in what direction an experience is heading" (p.38). For Dewey, "all human experience is ultimately social, it involves contact and human communication" (p. 38).

Stupidity as Stasis

Thus Dewey sees not the compartmentalized reductionist presentation that is behavior in science but a very dynamic complex of synergism in which intelligence--read morality--plays a fundamental part. Behold:

Experience does not go on simply inside a person. It does go on there for it influences the formation of attitudes of desire and purpose. But this is not the whole of the story. Every genuine experience has an active side which changes in some degree the objective conditions under which experiences are had. The difference between civilization and savagery is the degree in which previous experiences have changed the objective conditions under which subsequent experience takes place. (Dewey, 1963, p. 39)

This then is the reason why Dewey could not escape throwing the ingredient of responsibility into the recipe for an educated experience, or living of life, along with morality and intelligence. Indeed, Dewey's whole life view differed little from that of the Eden that Aristotle conceptualized.

"We live from birth to death in a world of persons and things which in large measure is what it is because of what has been done and transmitted from previous human activities" (Dewey, 1963, p. 39). Dewey believed to ignore this fact is to avoid responsibility, which is tantamount to a dereliction of the moral duty to seek an educated experience through intelligence. I would call it part of the process of choosing to be stupid.

The Stupidity of De-personalized Schooling

It was on these grounds that Dewey (1963) condemned traditional education. Because it dodged this responsibility which has at its heart the ethics of morality:

A primary responsibility of educators is that they not only be aware of the general principle of the shaping of actual experience by environing conditions, but that they also recognize in the concrete what surroundings are conducive to having experiences that lead to growth. Above all, they should know how to utilize the surroundings, physical and social, that exist so as to extract from them all they have to contribute to building up experiences that are worthwhile. Traditional education did not have to face this problem; it could systematically dodge this responsibility. (p. 40)

In assessing the difficulty facing progressive education, Dewey pointed not only to the conscious and other-than-conscious aspects of being human but to the power of habit, adaptation, and the environment as well. It is because of the complexity of these forces, he argued, that the educator must adapt material to the needs and capacities of the individual in order to assure education can take place. It is in the power and purposes of those who are

taught, along with the distinctions that can be contributed by those who teach, that enable an educational experience to take place.

Dewey did not hesitate to speak clearly on this issue about the centrality of the learner and the very flesh of knowledge saying there is no such thing as educational value in the abstract. He went on to say it is a mistake to suppose the acquisition of arithmetic, geography, history, etc., actually becomes useful in the future and it is a mistake to suppose the acquisition of skills in reading and figuring will automatically constitute "preparedness for their right and effective use" (Dewey, 1963, p. 47).

There is here an added dimension that must be considered in the construct of the intelligent, and in its absence, in the construct of the stupid, which is both the content (or degree of value) and context (or range of applicability) of utility. To be sure, Dewey is not saying arithmetic skill, for example, is not useful. Rather, it is in the proper application of the skill where its usefulness will be determined. In failing to address this issue traditional schooling may not be furthering education. Therefore, by implication, it may be furthering stupidity.

But there may be an even greater danger in traditional education. Dewey argued that the collateral learning from distasteful traditional education easily negates natural capacities for learning. By collateral learning he means in addition to the data learned, people also realize, and learn, they don't like certain situations, subjects, processes and procedures, not to mention personality types, behaviors and philosophical orientations.

Stupefying Through Schooling

Then, among those who do progress through traditional education, Dewey pointed to the danger of what I would call a hidden dumbing down, or submerged stupefying effect:

What avail is it to win prescribed amounts of information about geography and history, to win ability to read and write, if in the process the individual loses his own soul: loses his appreciation of things worth while, of the values to which these things are relative; if he loses desire to apply what he has learned and, above all, loses the ability to extract meaning from his future experiences as they occur? (Dewey, 1963, p. 49)

Clearly, Dewey and Wood are not saying the same things, and probably cannot be found to be in agreement on the points where the subject matter of their discourse intersect. However, the architecture of their thinking is joined in the Greek school of traditional Western literature where the exercise of the intellect has to do with the defining of the soul, and in turn, the defining of the soul has to do with refining the purposes of the exercise of the intellect. Where this intersection leads to significant differences between the two is in their views of the ideas of freedom that the implication of moral choice requires.

Freedom To Be, Or Not To Be, Stupid

By substituting individually relative learning in a cooperative community, Dewey hoped for an intellectual environment that would assure the exercise of those freedoms which in turn enable an educational learning. These freedoms include those of thought, desire and purpose.

Dewey, preceded by the Greeks, makes a very strong connection between freedom and purpose through intelligence. "The only freedom that is of enduring importance is freedom of intelligence, that is to say, freedom of observation and of judgment exercised in

behalf of purposes that are intrinsically worth while" (Dewey, 1963, p. 61). And, while Dewey appreciates freedom as power of movement, that is a relatively minor point.

Freedom from restriction has relevance to Dewey only insofar as it relates to the larger question of purpose. Dewey cautioned that freedom from restriction, if a negative freedom, can only be justified as a way to gain the power to frame purpose and to judge wisely. Actually, Dewey said this was the same as self-control since "the formation of purposes and the organization of means to execute them are the work of intelligence" (Dewey, 1963, p. 67).

All of this of course begs the question about purpose, or the particular ethics that would comprise the incipient morality that then not only comprises intelligence but defines it as well as the lacking of it defines stupidity. Here, once again, Dewey does not hesitate to proffer an answer, and that answer is "a purpose is an end-view. That is, it involves foresight of the consequences which will result from acting on impulse" (Dewey, 1963, p. 67).

And it is the educator, according to Dewey, who has the unique responsibility of assisting with the development of educational learning experiences that help students realize their futures. Because this is such an important responsibility, Dewey always cautioned against falling into the trap of what he called the *Either-Or* syndrome. By this he meant either the total adoption or rejection of any particular idea. Instead he argued for precise consideration in analyses that includes very selective discrimination of all of the parts that

make up the whole, as well as speculation about other possibilities of interpretation of content and context, including the potential multiplicity of the relationships between the two.⁶

Excerpts From The Fifth Interview

Mary (not her real name) is a legal secretary in San Antonio, Texas. Born in Pennsylvania, she moved with her family to Ohio when she was about three years old. Mary had a relatively happy childhood and was also happy as a young adult, and was married to her first husband when she was 21. Four years later, she divorced and remarried two years after that.

She is currently separated and has filed for divorce. She has an Associate's Degree in Paralegal Studies. Mary has two boys, ages 11 and 15. Her hopes for them are "to be happy, to be loved...and to be self-sufficient."

Mary feels stupidity is something "that hurts someone and its more what people do than what they are." She feels this is a "cultural lesson taught to all mothers in our society and its important to separate behavior from the person." For example, one of her boys in particular "does some stupid things that are the kinds of things boys do. His most recent misadventure was starting the backyard on fire playing with matches." Mary says she has noticed he is a very curious youngster.

⁶ Dewey recognized the difficulty inherent in suppositions about causal relationships between learning, education, and the achievement of desired ends. His answer is deeply rooted in his idea of education as experience: "Means and ends are two names for the same reality. The terms denote not a division in reality but a distinction in judgment...Only as the end is converted into means is it definitely conceived, or intellectually defined, to say nothing of being executable. Just as end it is vague, cloudy, impressionistic. We do not know what we are really after until a course of action is mentally worked out. Aladdin with his lamp could dispense with translating ends into means, but nobody else can." In Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology, pp. 36-37)

Work is another very stupid thing and can be the most stupid thing if you are wasting time doing something you don't want to do just because its a job. Also, being preoccupied with having, or wanting to have things, is stupid. Having good and enjoyable relationships with people is far better.

Mary recently saw a story on television about bank robbers who did "some very stupid things. One wrote a stickup note to the teller on the back side of his own check--with his name and address printed on the other side." Mary feels this happens "because they are not thinking and they're very nervous." Mary says she doesn't know any stupid people.

CHAPTER THREE

SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS IN CANON

"...Now if only the lessons of hand ax heaven were known in earlier centuries: One of the reasons that the cannon was so effective when first introduced was because opposing generals were fond of infantry formations that clustered soldiers together. They make rather easy targets, even for the inexperienced gunner – a lesson that I suspect was first learned several million years ago with herds visiting water holes."

(William Calvin, *The Ascent of Mind*, 1990)

"The need is not really for more brains, the need is for a gentler, a more tolerant people than those who won for us against the ice, the tiger, and the bear. The hand that hefted the ax, out of some blind allegiance to the past, fondles the machine gun as lovingly. It is a habit man will have to break to survive, but the roots go very deep."

(Loren Eiseley, *The Immense Journey*, 1957, quoted by Calvin in *The Ascent of Mind*)

Avoiding Stupidity: The Heroic Antecedent

Dewey's view, suggests paradox in the either-or syndrome is rooted in issues and questions of morality. It also demands judgments about questions of power as an ongoing series of events, especially as they relate to polity and governance. Following this train of thought, my purposes in reviewing the history of the political aspect of the literature are to explore the general metanarratives of the largest cultural component (Western Civilization).

From these metanarratives it is possible to gain an understanding of the growth and change of overt and covert concepts of intelligence and wisdom. By searching for paradox, conclusions can be made about implied contexts of stupidity as they are shaped by the struggle between concepts of individuality and community. Finally, as the evolution of this

struggle is charted, the general philosophical orientation behind educational constructs can be explored and defined.

The idea here is to try, as much as possible, to avoid the palpably biased subjectivity of political and philosophical partisanship since we can assume such doctrine is always temporal and circumstantially relative. Therefore, guiding questions include, specifically and fundamentally, what shared forms of power are exercised by those who govern as well as those who are governed, how are these forms of power reproduced in order to re-visit generation after generation, and what are the relationships of power to freedom, education, and stupidity?

Judd Harmon (1964), author of Political Thought, From Plato to the Present, bespeaks the view that an examination of Western political thought might be well served when it centers its focus on the "study of political thought as it has involved attempts to explain, justify, or criticize the various aspects of political relationships, that is, relationships between those who govern and those who are governed" (p. 1).

There is a great deal to be said for this viewpoint when the object of the investigation has to do with a cultural tradition of the sociological production of concepts of intelligence. Moreover, traditional Western ideas about intelligence seem to include an adversarial relationship between individual considerations and societal demands that are framed by issue of power, hegemony and reproduction.

In terms of categorically framing the subject matter, I would like to reiterate a distinction that I outlined earlier and enjoin it with another that I have not alluded to but which applies with equal import to an examination of political theory. These are, first, a

theorist's judgment will predominantly reflect her assessment about the essential character of human nature. Second, there is considerable disagreement in the academies of Social Science and History as to the causal capacity of theory.

My own judgment is associated with the school that holds political theory is without causative capacity since it reflects experience. However, since ideas always have an inherent potential to affect experience, I agree that theory, while it may not cause behavior, does indeed influence behavior. Thus the relationship inherent in correlation, while not causal, is still extant.

With these caveats in mind I will review my assessment of Western political theory, following the outlined used by Harmon (1964). Consistent with the general tendency in Western cultural canon, I will begin with a brief recapitulation of the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle and continue through Roman political thought to the political theory of the early fathers (including Jesus and the Apostles). I will then list the major influences of medieval political thought, the Reformation, the Renaissance, and the Enlightenment influence. To complete this examination, we will outline some of the twentieth-century ideas related to Fascism and National Socialism.

The Greeks

Western thought began long before the Greek city-state, but the age of Greece give canon its Eden because the record of the struggle of individual will against totalitarian law achieves its initial comprehensibility with Socrates' search for the good. However, predominantly because Plato's quest included the Socratic contribution and then went far beyond, especially through his academy and voluminous tomes, we will begin with Plato.

Part of Plato's contribution was alluded to at the beginning of this chapter. However, positioned as he is at the fountainhead or genesis of Western thought, it is difficult to abbreviate his importance. Driven by the principle of his mentor, Socrates, Plato's epistemology is framed by the idea that virtue is knowledge and therefore inseparable from the search for the moral. As an aristocrat he supported and furthered the idea that welfare of the state was the proper motive through which the energies of the individual, as well as a system public education, should be exercised. These concepts reflect Plato's view of human nature in which the majority of people are both greedy and inept and thus government is necessary to advance the civilizing of mankind. Nevertheless, his ideas about the moral and purposefulness provide a basis to conceptualize stupidity as the immoral and purposeless.

In commercial and cultural matters Plato crafted schemes that reached epic metanarrative proportions as models for economic communism and behavioral socialism. However, he also established a well defined and long lived parameter vital to the development of theory. That is, a recognition that one of the clear distinctive capacities of the human being is ability to imagine an ideal that is perfect in human consciousness but unattainable, and therefore impractical, in reality. This view lends itself well to dialogue about one of the fundamental ideas of stupidity we have framed as the question: Is stupidity a misinterpretation of reality?

If paradox is to be found at the pinnacle of Western thought represented in the intellectual triumvirate of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, it is probably in the complementary dissension achieved by Aristotle. Through this contention models of constitutionalism and the rule of law were significantly democratized. This was achieved through what has become

known as the Aristotelean method which refined the contemporary idea of science and reconciled it with political theory development.

Aristotle's purpose was to fulfill the Socratic initiative through the goal of seeking to establish the most realistic state, given the inability of humankind to achieve the perfection that can only be imagined. Hallmarks of Aristotle's civil sociology included an appreciation for both custom and tradition when popularly maintained. He viewed these as collective societal expressions of value, whether they appeared to be logically justified or not. This position reflects another fundamental value of Aristotle's thought, (which is comparable with the thinking of James Madison), in that Aristotle disagreed with Plato's conviction about the supremacy of the state even at the cost of personal freedom.

The Idea of the Individual

After the classic Greeks, influences and contributions were made by the hedonistic Epicureans, the populist anti-establishment Cynics, and the energetic but zealous Stoics, all of whom served to re-position the classic Greek argument about the good from a content of government to a context of the individual. The Stoics capped the thematic evolution to the individual by answering, or clarifying the classic Greek question, How can a man be good?

The original answer went far beyond the political and in effect, opined a person should only do those things that were absolutely good for them. The Stoic modification is that goodness is conformance with nature. They cast aside the notion that who one is has consequence, instead it is what one is that counts.

"They accepted the Cynic distinction between the wise man and the fool. Wise men can understand the law through their reason, and in their wisdom they are joined in a universal brotherhood" (Harmon, 1964, p. 79). Obviously, the fool's perspective is quite stupid.

The Romans and Christianity

The Romans, especially exemplified by Cicero, extended the Stoical premise with the inspiration that true law is reason that is in agreement with nature and is therefore of universal application.

Christianity, while hardly a political theory, has and continues to have significant effects on polity, governance, power struggle, hegemony, and conceptions of intelligence and wisdom. For example, Jesus' distinction between things that are Caesar's and those which are God's clearly outlines the separation of church and state. Still, in St. Paul's letter to the Romans there is a conclusive ratification of the maxim of divine right of government. These contradictions gain increasing significance as they re-form throughout Christian doctrine and grow from dilemma to paradox.

Despite, for example, configuring the temporal beneath the spiritual, Christian doctrine places man outside and above nature, positioning the human specie below the angels, but paradoxically, still responsible for the good husbandry of the natural realm. Here, in the latter principle, there is one of a large number of instances where Christianity and Stoicism share principles.

However, for our purposes the great import of Christianity lies in the both the concept and context of supremacy in an all knowing single deity which is the wellspring of the universe: the holistic and infinite order and answer. Therefore, because of the existence of

God, one can be secure in faith provided that one is at least intelligent enough to recognize that free will is the God given capacity to accomplish the greatest sin of commission, which is to reject God.

The failure to apply this intelligence is the stupidity that arises when one cannot recognize the dysfunctionality that is to live in human reason rather than Christian faith. Thus, in the Western tradition, because of Christianity, the Greek pursuit of the good becomes codified along with two other related, but separate concepts. These are original sin, which separates man from nature and a state of grace, and redemption, which gives man the opportunity to return to the state of grace and the rationality of an everlasting plan founded on love. This view of limited but God given intelligence inspired the Christian Fathers, St. Augustine, Gelasius I, etc., who believed that spiritual doctrine and good government helps man to live so that she will be enabled to enter the kingdom of God.

The Reformation

Because of their efforts, the idea of the supremacy of both government and individual man, so well espoused on the one hand by Plato, and on the other by Aristotle and the Stoics, was lost in the struggle between Church and state for primacy in defining Western polity. This struggle finally came to a conclusion in the period beginning with the scholarly clarification of Thomas Aquinas and the ensuing Reformation and ending with the Renaissance and the great monarchies.

The Separatist Movement: Science and Capitalism

In a sense it is in the turbulence of the paganism of the Renaissance when the idea of intelligence and education re-adjusted itself by separating from philosophy and religion and

a concern with morality and purpose. In the fifteenth century the idea of intelligence and methods of learning that focused on craft and skill development were fueled by the capitalist provocation of a new, self interested and profit motivated, economic man.

"The man of the middle ages had been ideally an ascetic; morality had meant self restraint, the abjuration of physical pleasures. The man of the Renaissance took another view..." (Harmon, 1964, p. 152).

The Modern Idea of Stupidity

Conversely then, we now begin to see the advent of the modern idea of stupidity as related to a lack of, (or a relative degree, or comparable, lack of) craft or skill capacity, or craft/skill development. From this scheme we can easily comprehend views of the bright as those who readily grasp instruction, especially technical instruction, as opposed to those not as bright or slower.

The transformation of the intellectual world was paralleled by that of the economic. During the Middle Ages commercial profit had been regarded as sinful. In the fifteenth century a new economic class was emerging. The new economic man had no qualms about making a profit. Self interest was a legitimate motive, in fact it was the economic expression of the individualistic spirit of the Renaissance. Capitalism was being born. (Harmon, 1964, p. 153)

Return to the Preeminence of Government

With the advent of capitalism came the expansion of a new and dynamic middle class, --allied with kings-- and intent on the expansion of the nation state with its attendant enlarged marketplace, national regulation, and the demise of local restrictions on trade. In Italy, especially sensitive to the forces of change, new academies arose providing secular studies

and emphasizing rationalism and empiricism as in lieu of scholasticism. Ultimately, these forms joined with, or were seized by, forces fueled by capitalism and nationalism.

At the pinnacle of examples epitomizing these forms of thinking are the tomes of Nicolo Machiavelli, the Italian writer and civil servant who, deeply concerned with the pursuit of Italian unity, penned the classic authority on the hallmark subordination of means to ends. In so doing, Nicolo not only developed a new political science but provided a philosophical blueprint for self-centered and self-justified organizational rational thought that continues to shape political, and, one might argue, practically all organizational discourse, to this day.

This form of thinking, or thinking form, is absolutely non-spiritual, refuses to acknowledge either the idea of natural law or the obligation of responsibility to those who are the objects of the thinking, and, makes no attempt to cite any authority or precedent. By way of explanation, Harmon points out Nicolo was a practicing politician, and he wrote like one. Perhaps, but it is most important to remember he was then the first politician who "took political theory out of the religious context in which it had been mired for a thousand years" (Harmon, 1964, p. 159).

But not entirely. The first two centuries of modern rationalism are essentially a record of the conflict of oppositional argument that rival the Greek period of paradox in intensity. In a sense the democratization of Christianity represented by the forces of Reformation re-introduced both religion and freedom in the equation of intelligence that was being constructed by capitalistic nationalism. In northern Europe, as a result, the question was whether or not a coherent community could be created by human intelligence. (Presumably then, an incoherent community is created by stupidity).

In responding to this challenge all of the new thinkers, including those who argued for rationalism as well as those who argued against the rationalists, relied on their faith in processes constructed by the scientific revolution. These included, but were not limited to, the likes of Hobbs, Descartes, Locke, Montesquieu, Hume, Burke, Hegel, Smith, Bentham, Mill, Malthus, Ricardo, the Americans, and especially Marx.

The Rise of Rationalism

The new narratives used the architecture of rational logic, in which each phase in the theoretical structure is based in the previous point, so as to allow the thinker to reason through to a conclusion. Obviously, if there is a strong foundation to the argument it will stand, if not, it will be vulnerable. Unfortunately, logic so engineered made possible the shared attractiveness of ideas absolutely opposed to one another, as well as theories that made no practical sense in reality, along with those that made a horrible kind of sense.

In Harmon's (1964) view:

The emancipation of men's minds from the intellectual restraints of the Middle Ages progressed more rapidly in the physical than in the social sciences. In the physical sciences empiricism-the method of observation, experimentation, and experience-could now be accepted. In human relations, the concept of natural rights remained in vogue. (p. 317)

Capitalism, self interest, and the continuing rise of the modern nation state reduced the use of natural law to an individual centered notion that stressed rights to a greater extent than law. The best examples of this modification can be found in justifications for the French and American revolutions.

There were exceptions, however, and Jean Jacques Rousseau is foremost among those who deliberated against the rational project. Rousseau argued that feeling, emotion and

passion, rather than rational calculation, gave rise to human association and action. Likewise, David Hume worked to contain reason, to provide it a very limited role that would not exclude the existence as fact those truths that are values determined by emotion and learned through experience. Along With Hume, Edmund Burke believed that differences among men represented greater or lesser capacities to learn through experience. Therefore, the great majority of people simply are not capable of knowing how to achieve their interests. In effect, as far as Burke was concerned, it appears the majority of people were simply stupid.

Rational Revisionist Project

Significantly, the rationalist view toward history was purely revolutionary in that they saw history as a "record of opposition to the free employment of reason, which, unobstructed, could be used to create a better world" (Harmon, 1964, p. 344). While G.W.F. Hegel and others argued against this view, it remained a part of both the neo-rational (as prefaced by classical moral rationalism) and the new scientific project, through modern time.

Moral Intelligence Of Capitalism

With both rationalists and scientists set ontologically free to recreate political, economic, and social theory, people such as Bentham, Smith, and Jefferson, hammered out a discourse that ultimately represented government and the individual as utilitarian capitalist components dedicated to an individual centered freedom concept designed to both ensure and assure a pursuit of happiness as the ultimate human purpose.

However, others, who might also be considered modern rationalists and scientists too, tried to point out potential fundamental flaws in this discourse. In the writing of J.S. Mill, for example, he defended freedom, especially that of expression, as an almost absolute right but

not because freedom is an avenue on which the pursuit of happiness can be staged as much as a requisite to "the good, the moral, community...made up of free and moral individuals..." because "freedom and morality go hand in hand; one is not possible without the other" (Harmon, 1964, p. 385).

Mill put it this way in On Liberty:

The worth of a State, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it; and a State which postpones the interests of their mental expansion and elevation, to a little more of administrative skill, or that semblance of it which practice gives, in the details of business; a State which dwarfs its men, in order that they may be more docile instruments in its hands even for beneficial purposes, will find that with small men no great thing can really be accomplished; and that the perfection of machinery to which it has sacrificed everything, will in the end avail it of nothing, for want of the vital power which, in order that the machine might work more smoothly, it has preferred to banish. (Harmon, 1964, p. 360)

Reconciling The Individual and the Modern State

If it can be said that scientism gave birth to the new rationalism that secured a philosophical place for capitalism, then it can also be said that capitalism and the genesis of the industrial revolution gave birth to socialism which in turn secured a place for Marxism. While the scientific ontology that produced the new rationalism provided the blueprint for a capitalist democratic ideal focusing on individual happiness, the excesses of greed centered economics fueled the socialistic ideal focused on class division and collective security, especially of the working class.

In both events the advent of the modern age, or the age of science, has resulted in a modern Western cultural dialectic in which the purposes of government, (including polity itself), commerce, (if not economics), and the individual, are seen as either means to ends of

happiness or security. Overwhelmingly, the debate, such as it is, centers on the degree of freedom that is used as a form of social or cultural currency that must be paid by the means (i.e., the government, in economics,¹ for the individual) to secure the ends (the degree of happiness or security desired).

Two significant splinters from the primacy of this discourse occurred with the advent of Fascism and Nation Socialism. Irrational and reactionary, these doctrines promised neither freedom, happiness, nor security. Instead, the preservation of the state, serving purposes higher than the individuals who comprise it, was the aim of the Fascist, while the Nazi served to preserve the sociology of the culture, especially as it is defined by race, rather than concerns for either the individual or the state.

At the other extreme of the political compass we can point to the individualism of Henry David Thoreau, the nineteenth century writer, lecturer, and student of Emerson, who believed in such limited forms of government that even modern democracy was insufficient in recognizing the supremacy of the rights of the individual. Foremost among these rights, incidentally, was a minimalist obligation on the part of the individual to do the best thing, which is to do the least possible things.

Stupidity and Intelligence In Government

It seems to me a chronological examination of the history of Western political thought reveals that process and thinking is governed, restricted, and consequently shaped, by two functional limitations. The first is a form of cultural relativity that centers on functionality. In this case the range of theoretical political alternatives are limited by the degree to which

those alternatives are possible as political realities in the time and circumstances in which they are considered.

For example, a popular theme among political scientists is the degree of representation afforded by the Greek city states or the New England town meeting, cannot be duplicated in the modern large industrial state. Similarly, another theme is an inherent dysfunctionism in certain theory, such as the fundamental doctrinal error in Communism, the irrationality of Fascism and Nazism, or the delusional romanticism of Thoreau's individualism.

The second limitation has to do with the idea that severe deficiencies may exist in the validity of both the content and context of the accepted historic pattern of history as "not a haphazard and disconnected series of events in time. It has a pattern (which Hegel calls the Idea), and it is purposeful and intelligent" (Harmon, 1964, p. 344). Surely, if Fascism and National Socialism demonstrate anything it is the falsity of the premise that the sole existence of government is to broker the concerns of the few and the many. Suffice to say at this point there are many purposes to which man applies government.

Thus, referring to the content of the historical pattern, I would argue these two doctrines, Nazism and Fascism, called millions to give their lives for ideals that had nothing to do with what is purposeful or intelligent. Referring to the context of the historic pattern of history, we see many instances in which paradigm is obviously shaped by the cultural menu of the moment of the record. In our time the more popular interpretation of the dialectic centering on proper motives of governance would be, what has ceased and is now lacking is an effective debate on the fundamental premise itself. That is, whether happiness or security are in and of themselves, valid life goals for the human being.

Paradoxically, it seems as though it is just when the dialectic ends it begins anew and in this resurgence denies the limitations of cultural relativity and refuels the Idea. Interestingly, the greater the change that causes the return to the deliberation, the greater the scope of propositions, including the irrational and dysfunctional.

Change and Ideas About Stupidity/Intelligence

I think this point, the import of the degree or magnitude of change that distinguishes our present real life perspective, is also crucial to understanding postmodernism and critical education theory. Human nature may not change noticeably, but the circumstances humans find themselves in can change monumentally quickly and when that happens the paradigm shaped by the intercourse between man and her environment challenges all assumptions. This is why the postmodern cannot be defined by any other, more explicit and definitive word. When it can be, we will have then defined the change we are currently experiencing and see ourselves as having arrived at some time, state, or definition of our reality, or myth, as you choose. For now, we only know that we have departed and embarked on a journey, or, what we thought we saw around us has fallen away.

I introduce postmodernism, multiculturalism, and critical education theory at this time because we have arrived, chronologically, at the point where the idiom of Western political thought produces the effects that I think are, in our time, best described through these postulates, at least for now.

In recognizing the eternal questions, Harmon gives us the envelope of a doctrine that is highly relevant to current issues of multiculturalism and the philosophy of postmodern education theory. For example, regardless of the form of government people choose or have

chosen for them, it is the essential character of the governing and the responses of the governed that are the more eternal, fundamental, questions.

The Fundamental Moral Issue of Politics

As Harmon explores the architecture of political theory he points to moral postulates and ethics as the foundations of political forms (just as we point to them as foundations of intelligence, and the lack of them as foundations of stupidity). In turn, these are forged in the views of human nature held by those who would be designers of the polity. Obviously, because a wide range of interpretation of human nature is conceivable, the achievement of consensus is always problematic, if not unsustainable. But it is in the specifics of these problems that we must search for answers, and in guiding us through the canon of the theorists, Harmon provides us with the opportunity to gain insight into the challenges of the postmodern era.

Is the good leader Plato's wise leader, the philosopher king? Is it the godly leader of the church of the middle ages? Is it Machiavelli's strong and unscrupulous despot? Is it the natural leader of National Socialism, industry, or the corporation, rising out of the competitive jungle? Or, is it the elected leader of democracy, serving the interest of the majority that elected that person?

Albeit obliquely, Harmon alludes to many of the tenants of both multiculturalism and postmodern theory. He illustrates for instance, the aristocratic bent of Plato, Burke and Hobbs, a clear indication that the thoughts of people cannot help but be framed by the inescapability of the cultures within which they exist. In my view, the multiplicity and diversity of culture and the transcultural capacity of imagination can allow people to reach to

the boundaries of their civilization. But I think it is practically impossible to penetrate beyond time and place, (except by redefining knowledge -- a related, but separate issue understood best by the artist) and while they fix the limits of those places and instances, they are also defined by them and both of these acts are expansionist and circumscribing in the same moment.

But these are individual perceptions. No matter how widespread the commonality they attain in transmission through the masses, this aspect of political theory, that which emanates from the more singular perspective, challenges the alternate assumption that it is the essential character of the governing body that is fundamental. It is in the individual perception, at the wide base of the pyramid, where we begin to assimilate thinking along the lines of the many, the multiple, which is after all the aggregate of the individual. Since this is the heart and soul of the multiples of individuality that begin to constitute multi-dimensionalism in culture, the beginning point in thinking about multiculturalism obviously has its genesis in what the early Greeks thought of as common sense, which is not group think, but those things that we all, as individuals, know of and about through the certainties of both faith and experience.

Defense of Canon as Subject of Examination

While we are speaking more specifically about multiculturalism, please allow me to digress once more in order to address a related salient issue: A popular notion voiced by many writers in the multicultural milieu is the dismissal of canons of Western thought as irrelevant to those who do not share a European heritage. A corollary of this channel of thinking is the idea that thought has not only cultural identity, but some kind of an ethnic face

as well. I'm not sure I agree with these arguments as much as I appreciate their sentiment. To be sure, thought is culturally produced and even defined, but it does not necessarily follow that all thought has a singular cultural identity, and this is the same conclusion the Greeks arrived at.

By way of illustration, when I read Cervantes, the search for love, honor, justice, meaning, and therefore immortality, may have a Spanish voice from a speaker standing on Spanish territory and speaking to a Spanish audience. Still, I would argue the thoughts are trans-cultural. So, my own outlook on canon is that it should be given greater volume by expanding inclusive expeditions into both cross-cultural and trans-cultural thought rather than silencing histories of thought simply because they are representative of a dominant culture at any given moment in time. Further, and most importantly, if it is culture that defines knowledge, and therefore intelligence, surely it follows the more enriching the culture the greater the opportunity to seek greater knowledge and intelligence.

Harmon, is also very vocal in his pronouncement that theory is *ex post facto* and has no causative effect, while at the same time agreeing with Marx, that there nevertheless exists a relationship between theory and practice since elements of theory are institutionalized. Thus, ideas do influence action: "a theory that has been developed to justify an existing situation almost invariably affects subsequent events" (Harmon, 1964, p. 2). By way of example he points to Montesquieu's theory of separation of powers that eventually found its way into the blueprints of American government. This relationship between theory and practice becomes important when we delve into postmodern theory and read about schools and classroom relationships centering on teaching and learning theory.

The theory and practice relationship is also an important ingredient in social theory because moral and ethical determinants, as foundations of political forms, return to frame questions about suffrage and freedom. That is, should all have an equal right to choose who governs? Are all persons equal? If so (or even if not so), how are differences relating to gender, mentality, physical strength, and culture compensated for in the search for equity? And, how does this issue relate to the idea of majority rule? To what extent are protections of the minority extended? What capacities of thought, expression and physical behavior are within and beyond the influence of government and society in general? And just how and to what extent is suffrage and freedom defined as a product of governance and the invisible relationships of power in education and curriculum?

Without exploration of the relationships between theory and practice none of these questions can be adequately answered and by remembering that practice precedes theory we can begin to understand the role motive plays in theory. In the postmodern era these questions are complicated by the advent of influences that have not previously existed. Examples here would include issues about privacy in the face of an electronic mass media indemnified by the size and force of its penetrative monopolistic omnipotence and omnipresence. Another are the definitions of minority, majority, ruled, ruling, power and marginalization, leaders and the led. Even a cursory examination leads us to understand the classic contexts of the communities, forces, situations and relationships no longer apply.

Stupidity As The Absence of Political Theory

Still, despite the newness of these kinds of complications in the social order, political theory allows us to re-orient ourselves. This is especially true of the heritage of political

theory that each of us who now live in the United States can choose to adopt as our own, not so much because it was the heritage of our parents as much as it is relevant to our capability to re-shape that theory for our own purposes in our own time, a capability supposed in doctrine as an element of intelligence.

I agree very much with Judd Harmon (1964), when he says:

The need is for effective ideas, constructive rather than reactionary. But democratic ideas, if they are to be effective, cannot merely be put together by experts and exported ready-made for the consumption of those toward whom they are directed; they must be representative of the people of a democracy and incorporate their fundamental views.

In the West considerable confusion exists as to precisely what the people's views are. A great deal is said in support of the democratic ideals of liberty, equality, majority rule, minority rights, voting privileges, and all the rest, but the ambiguity of the statements shows little understanding of the complications and contradictions involved in such ideas. It is not unusual to hear a speaker enthusiastically endorse two mutually contradictory democratic principles.

Democracy can draw upon a substantial tradition of political thought, but to do so sensibly requires some study of that tradition. Supporters of democracy will also want to know the equally long tradition of antidemocratic ideas and to understand why those ideas can be attractive. (p. 10)

Harmon, in confessing his preconception, admits that he is a democrat. Readers of this project should know I too prefer democracy. In my view it is more than axiomatic to say democracy only exists when it is inclusive. What may be lost in this aphoristic revelation is what happens to democracy when it grows exclusive, which is to say when it is no longer democracy.

Of course, it is not necessary for our purposes to postulate when democracy is no longer. Suffice to say at this point that I believe the degrees to which exclusivity increases

are correspondingly measures in which democracy is in demise. Further, I also believe that it is unassailable that the definition of democracy mandates multiculturalism:

If there is no multicultural capacity in a very real sense, then there is no democracy and again, the degree to which exclusivity reduces multiculturalism corresponds with exactitude to the degree to which democracy is diminished. Also, I believe this idea of democracy, this idea that democracy mandates multiculturalism, and vice versa, is peculiarly a U.S. American invention that we have never consciously recognized.

In my view, in the history of the United States we have sampled the dysfunctionality of the effects of exclusivity in a matrix of racial, ethnic, class, gender and economic exclusions that resulted in slavery, segregation, economic depression, male dominance, and poverty. Seen in terms of the historic epic, at its best exclusionary democracy resulted in harmful migrations and a permanent class of paupers, institutionalized to a degree no other class in our history has ever experienced outside of slavery. At its worst restrictive democracy led to slavery, the rebellion of the 1770's, the 1860's, and the insurrection of the 1960's.

However, there is another exclusionary defect less evident but perhaps more threatening to democracy. It is the vice of ignorance and Harmon, unknowingly perhaps, refers to it when he speaks about the Socratic tradition of thought and examination through which the common sense of the common man is exercised.

Harmon's catalog of Western political thought provides a wide array of ideas about the mechanisms, functions, capacities, styles, and limitations of a number of political theories as well governmental forms. For us, it might be helpful to contextualize his work as an examination of political theory as noun, as thing, as almost one-dimensional.

Harmon's work is a technical manual of sorts, a map, and a very good one. However, the issue is whether an examination and understanding of polity is requisite to intelligence in modern man, and whether the absence of such examination and understanding is paramount to stupidity.

Stupidity as Apathetic and/or Extreme Politics

Obviously, one does not have to be a political scientist to live effectively in the world. That is, to be at peace with others, (including institutions of governance), in both a positive, effective, and engaged manner.

However, it appears to me the canon that is Western political history clearly indicates there are at least two epistemological scenarios in which stupidity can appear as a political behavioral phenomenon with a potential for serious negative or harmful effects. Likewise, canon also provides a record of two other political behaviors where the absence of stupidity creates the potential for human effectiveness.

The first is when there is an ignorance of political knowledge, and the second is when false, or deluded, but strongly held political knowledge becomes an inflexible belief structure. These are especially evident during periods of turmoil and conflict.

A third alternative political capacity would be that of the expert, the scholar or student of the social condition of man that is the political. Canonical indices of this capacity point to a conscious adherence to an awareness of neutrality in examination in order to sustain contemplation and cogitation in lieu of involvement and commitment.

Finally, there appears to exist a fourth political behavioral category that encompasses the overwhelmingly majority of those living perceptively within their sociology. They include

the practicing nonprofessionals or the everyday lay citizenry that comprise society itself and who operate within as well as outside their social political systems with a functional awareness that is partly conscious and partly formalized.

It is important to understand elements within this category include those for or against any given issue and may comprise those in rebellion as well as those in defense of the status quo. The point is they have a clear understanding of power and rule in the greater dominion that is polity and can engage effectively.

Another lesson that can be drawn from an examination of canon is the idea of awareness and understanding depending on the acquisition of a philosophy (again, perhaps not fully conscious or formalized) sufficient to provide a satisfactory level of functionality for the individual, the mass, and governance. My interpretation of canon leads me to believe there is sufficient argument to suppose that the absence of philosophy, no matter how unconscious or informal it may be, represents stupidity.

As with the issue of political knowledge, one may be ignorant, expert, wrong-headed, or functionally efficient when it comes to a philosophical capacity, but it is difficult to imagine the construct of the human animal without a philosophical component. Of course, philosophy is a many faceted thing that represents a multitude of perspectives.

Excerpts From The Sixth Interview

Lucinda, an adult educator, is about 50 years old and lives in the West proximate to the Northern Rocky Mountains. She is married and has one child in college. She specializes in adult education and artistry in areas that include history, communication, public relations, English, Writing, Anthropology, Communications and Reading Skills.

Stupidity, in Lucinda's view, is:

A judgmental thing when positioned as a question of stupid versus smart. It is probably preferable to view stupidity as being mistaken. We can make mistakes without labeling ourselves. Stupidity, however, is very relative. Doing stupid things means having regrets, yet everything works out for a reason so there's no sense to having regrets over something that may have been judged stupid. If something is considered stupid but turns out all right in the long run, was it stupid?

People of the land in the West, for example, have done many things that could be termed mistakes, but that doesn't make them stupid. After all, just as we need a smart side, we need to have a stupid side in order to balance us. Stupidity, this way, acts as a measure. It is one side of a two sided coin and we can't have one side without the other. Perhaps this view is different from mainstream thinking as a linguistic tool.

As a linguistic tool, stupidity has historically been used as justification to make other people look less than human, subhuman. Learning is, after all, tied up in the same kinds of processes as stupidity or stupid kinds of acts. It is not necessarily tied to a control mechanism.

Columbus, for example, "may have been stupid but learned a lot. Therefore, stupidity is part of a learning bias. The problem is with 'should'" (reference to 'choosing to be stupid when we should be learning') "which is putting expectations on ourselves of always acting correctly or with foresight. We can't always do that."

Stupidity can happen anytime to anyone. We laugh at stupid things, stupid acts because we lack critical thinking skills. We lack the skills to take the situation apart and look at it so we just laugh at the behavior instead. In situations responses can be negative or positive depending on what the genesis is. Thus, sometimes stupidity is in the eyes of the beholder not the behavior itself.

Sometimes stupidity is "a question of how we look at what we are doing." (Lucinda woke her son to help her with a computer problem in the middle of the night. Instead of thinking about him sleeping she was concentrating on the task at hand.)

Still, "hindsight doesn't always apply. We make decisions at the time based on the best information we have and go with it. If it later seems to be stupid...."

Younger people use "the concept of control with stupidity or being stupid, more than older people. As older people age they gain more perspective and realize things become more relative. So stupidity can be positive or negative depending on the circumstances."

The Philosophic Imperative

"It is not our mellifluous voices that constitute a significant advance but rather our arrangement rules, the meaningful order in which we chain our utterances... ..Talking-to-ourselves consciousness is, among other things, particularly concerned with trying to chain together memory schemata to explain the past and forecast the future. As literary critic Peter Brooks has said:

'Our lives are ceaselessly intertwined with narrative, with the stories we tell and hear told, those we dream or imagine or would like to tell, all of which are reworked in that story of our own lives that we narrate to ourselves in an episodic, sometimes semiconscious, but virtually uninterrupted monologue. We live immersed in narrative, recounting and reassessing the meaning of our past actions, anticipating the outcome of our future projects, situating ourselves at the intersection of several stories not yet completed.'"

(William Calvin, *The Brain as a Darwin Machine*, in *Nature*, 1987)

The Purposes of Philosophy

Mortimer Adler, author of The Four Dimensions of Philosophy: Metaphysical, Moral, Objective, Categorical is a very proficient writer who has authored, since 1927, over 35 books in which he has offered a philosophical perspective on subjects such as war and peace, morals, right and wrong, reading, education, freedom, capitalism, politics, America, language, Western thought, Aristotle, God, learning, intellect, religion, economics, and philosophy itself.

In the *Four Dimensions of Philosophy*, Adler explains the importance of philosophical examination when treating matters external to empirical science and historical research. Adler

believes we can obtain a more pervading analysis and a deeper comprehension of reality through philosophy that we can through science, and this is the First Dimension of philosophy. In the Second Dimension of philosophy, Adler argues science can't provide us with either information about, or comprehension of, what philosophy calls the good life and the good society.

The Third Dimension of philosophy is its capacity to assist in developing a comprehension of intelligent aims of thinking--the great ideas--a capability science simply doesn't have. Adler's Fourth Dimension of philosophy is probably the most condemning of science because it addresses the incapacity of science to help us comprehend history and science itself since understanding these two requires, according to Adler, a philosophical understanding of all intellectual disciplines and subjects of learning. Thus, Adler's call is to the macroscopic view, the perspective the generalist takes in painting the largest possible canvas as not only the initial, but also the exploratory and circumscribing view.

Adler understands we live in a culture dominated by science and technology. In this book he explains why philosophy must be revived in the coming century and what must be done to revive it. For our purposes, his defense of philosophy is extremely relevant to our examination of stupidity because Adler's argument is, the knowledge that is science is distinct and separate from the knowledge that is philosophy. This view enables both the process and the result of the application of scientific intelligence to be stupidity. And, it is inappropriate and harmful to think that scientific knowledge is all encompassing. Moreover, philosophy, especially in its original forms, has the methodology and objectivity to best explore the more

important issues or knowledge, and these are the quintessential questions that man has always dealt with in her quest for wisdom.

He puts it this way:

In the more moderate sense of knowledge as doxa (which is well founded opinion, based on evidence and reason, opinion that is testable, falsifiable, and corrigible) historical research, mathematical reasoning, empirical science, and philosophy are all branches of knowledge each with a distinct method or mode of inquiry. (Adler, 1993, p. 6)

Adler, by including philosophy as one of the four branches of knowledge makes a distinction between knowledge as doxa as opposed to knowledge as episteme. In the first instance knowledge emanates from common sense (meaning it is based in the commonality or universality of the human condition and experience) and has a real quality, while in the second, the idealized sense, knowledge consists only of truths known beyond a shadow of a doubt.

The Philosophic Answer To Science

In providing a long and detailed history of the development of these two distinctions about knowledge, Adler refers to Albert Einstein's statement, "what cannot be measured by the physicist has no significance for physicists," and takes particular issue with Stephen Hawking (A Brief History of Time) who has asserted, "what is not measurable by physicists does not exist in reality" (Adler, 1993, p. 25).

Adler's point now becomes evident. In a scientific culture where truth consists in knowledge only as those things known beyond a shadow of a doubt, dimensions of knowledge represented by metaphysics, the philosophy of nature, the philosophy of mind, philosophical theology, morality, and political philosophy, simply don't exist as truths.

Therefore, while there may be knowledge of these things it is not the knowledge of truth so it is not knowledge that has significance, at least not in either the culture of science or the scientific culture, not to mention the discourse that could be given on the value--or lack of value--of this knowledge in the culture of economics.

We will return to this point later in our investigation when we deal more closely with cultural reproduction. Suffice to say at this time that this view, when joined with ideas about curricula and educational philosophy, imply metaphysics, the philosophy of nature, the philosophy of mind, philosophical theology, morality and political philosophy are insignificant and not worthy of educational consideration. However, since canon suggests these are precisely the epistemological concerns that relate to the search for wisdom, it would seem that a culture that educationally devalues and ignores deliberation of them develops a significant capacity for, and potential to be, stupid.

Admittedly, Adler's views are oppositional, but they are, paradoxically, related. Essentially, he argues there are realities of knowledge that science cannot explore because it is unsuited and therefore incapable of doing so. Likewise, philosophy is not suited to explore the objects of science even though it can provide interpretations. Between the two, however, he points to philosophy as being on the higher plane. Indeed, he reviews the entire history of philosophy in Western thought and demarcates precisely where philosophy took wrong turns after Plato and Aristotle. But Adler does not stake his argument on the weaknesses of science as much as on the strengths of philosophy, even while admitting that philosophy has done great damage to itself.

Until modern times there were no *denials of a knowable reality*, (my italics) except by extreme skeptics who challenged the attainment of truth in science as well as in philosophy. Until modern times no philosopher, certainly none of any eminence, was an idealist, denying the existence of a reality independent of the human mind, a reality that is what it is whether human beings think about it or not and regardless of how they think about it. Until modern times there were no attempts to prove the existence of an eternal world and there was no problem of a discrepancy between appearance and reality. (Adler, 1993, p. 78)

The Demise of Philosophy: the Rise of Stupidity

In his summation of the distinctions that philosophy stopped making, Adler points to two major errors, the first of which is thinking that ideas are what we apprehend rather than that by which we apprehend. The second is the denial of the intellect as a separate cognitive power or faculty that enables us to explore forms of reality beyond the senses. In the absence of these two caveats, the idealist notion that the direct and immediate objects of our minds are our own sensations and perceptions and imagining and memories and concepts and are therefore unreal, would mean the empirical sciences give us all the descriptive knowledge of reality that we can attain. And if that were so, then we would all be subjects of a relativism "so extreme as to verge on nihilism," a shifting sand with no solid soil to put down roots of "notions about truth, morality and reality" (Adler, 1993, p. 77).

But if it is to philosophy that we should turn in order to explore knowledge about the good life and good government, how are these things defined? Once again, Adler turns to Aristotle and his Nicomachean Ethics, as the "only sound, pragmatic and undogmatic work in moral philosophy that has come down to us in the last twenty five hundred years" (Adler, 1993, p.125) which is as enlightening now as it was when it was written because the ethical problems we face haven't changed. Thus, moral virtue and good fortune remain the keys to

living the good life. Moreover, by definition therefore, this is common sense, it is a common sense that is inclusive of notions about truth, morality, and reality, and therefore stupidity exists in the absence of common sense.

In developing a moral philosophy Adler (1993) points to the definition of prescriptive truth, ensuring we seek the right desire, meaning what we ought to desire. And, since what we ought to desire are natural things that are only good for us, then it follows that we know the one controlling self evident principle of all ethical reasoning: "We ought to desire everything that is really good for us" (p. 129). In visiting this point, Adler refers to what he terms Kant's error in thinking that practical reason can construct imperatives in this regard without taking human nature into consideration. According to Adler, it is human nature, not human reasoning, that provides us with the foundations of sound ethics.

The Intelligence of Proactive Morality

So it is in the end of happiness, when it is defined as the goal of a well lived life rather than whimsicalness, intemperance or hedonism, that we can find a guide to making the right choices in life. And, if the morality that is happiness is a goal then the formula of the moral virtue is the single indivisible element comprised of temperance, courage, justice, and prudence. Exercising this moral virtue as a requisite behavior is an obligation we have to ourselves.

The primacy of the good with respect to the right corrects the mistake of thinking that we are acting morally if we do nothing that injures others. Our first moral obligation is to ourselves - to seek all the things that are really good for us, the things all of us need, and only those apparent goods that are innocuous rather than noxious. (Adler, 1993, p. 131)

(Thus the import of the noun that is us fades as the significance of our actions, the

verb, rises).

What are these values then, these things we should seek? Since human nature, to be an underlying component of the knowledge of common sense, must be of a universal character, (even when it is obscured by nurturing under cultural diversity according to Adler) we should all seek what we all need, which includes just treatment, political liberty, the most individual freedom that justice will provide, and as much equality justice can oblige.

But there are two more provisos about living the good life in the good society. First, if happiness is the only goal of a good life and if man is a social and political animal, then it follows that the goal of society and government must be to help man live toward the good of the goal of happiness by arranging for those things to which we are naturally entitled but cannot obtain for ourselves.

In this view Adler sees constitutional government, ensuring universal suffrage and providing rights that include a decent livelihood, as an outcome of democracy and socialism.

Adler believes Marx and Engels erred by becoming Communists in order to achieve their goal of socialism. The point here is that the logical consequence of the knowledge of political philosophy is that democracy and socialism "are the twin, inseparable faces of the same ideal, one in the realm of political institutions, the other in the realm of economic arrangements" (Adler, 1993, p. 136).

At this point we might want to think once again about the relationship between those who are governed and those who govern, especially on this note in which socialism is introduced into the political and economic equation. It seems to me there is considerable

difference between political and economic socialism just as there is between political and economic democracy.

One does not always exist with or without the other and the definitions that can be applied to each are not necessarily what we might generally think they are. That is, while democracy, socialism, and capitalism might be seen from various perspectives as guarantors of freedom, individuality or security, they are in an absolute sense none of these and to understand this paradox we must arrive at an understanding of what freedom is, and isn't.

Excerpts From The Seventh Interview

Jimmy, married, in his mid-fifties, father of two, and grandfather, is a retired elementary and middle school teacher who taught school in the Pacific Northwest, (where he still lives), for 28 years. Jimmy's thoughts are:

There are at least three kinds of stupidity that immediately come to mind. Racial stupidity is the first of these. Having been born and raised in a very small town on the Great Plains, I never had any experiences with people who were different from the people in our community. As a result, ideas about other people were based on pre-judgments. New values, then, had to be learned in order to eradicate the stupidity of the older values, or ideas.

Another stupidity that comes to mind is the idea of criminal stupidity. We're all criminally stupid until we become criminals--even if only in small ways as children or growing up - realizing we can't get away with things, that there are laws and real consequences when it is broken and we are caught.

We also tend to be societally stupid. We have our values and society has its values and when these are in conflict there's plenty of potential for stupidity. City slickers and country bumpkins, for example, caught on the other's ground or circumstance.

Basically, we're all taught values, right and wrong, and we develop our own values from or in opposition to these and we have our own ways of looking at things. When these don't *fit* with things, we're dealing with stupidity. This is very obvious with young school children who choose to be stupid all of the time as a way of finding the right way to be before they commit themselves.

Jimmy doesn't believe in the idea of stupidity as someone who isn't as smart as most other people, outside of people who are handicapped, etc.

"We're all stupid at one time or another, even when we think we're at our best we look back later and realize how stupid we were, sometimes."

As the discussion progressed, the thought occurred to Jimmy that we may not be teaching kids "the right way, because we don't think of things such as awareness and consciousness as instructional methods, because we're spending so much time teaching facts, drills and skills." So, the subject of stupidity should be followed up on as an educational project because its a good way to "get away from the idea as a teacher that we know it all.... and let the kids get into learning , let them do their own learning, let them learn."

Freedom Concepts

"All organisms with complex nervous systems are faced with the moment-by-moment question that is posed by life: What shall I do next?"

(William Calvin, *Book Bites*, Science Surf Column, 96.1)

"We can understand neither ourselves nor our world until we have fully understood what language is and what it has done for our species. For although language made our species and the world we inhabit, the powers it unleashed drove us to understand and control our environment, rather than explore the mainspring of our own being. We have followed that path of control and domination until even the most daring among us have begun to fear where it may lead. Now the engine of our quest for power and knowledge should itself become the object that we seek to know."

(Derek Bickerton, Language and Human Behavior, 1990, quoted by William Calvin in Science Surf, 96.1).

Manipulation of the Freedom Concept

In Harmon's Political Thought we examined the best that Western political philosophers can offer us about the various ways we might organize authority. In Adler's Four Dimensions of Philosophy we're given some insights on how we might choose to think

in ways that are good for us in living our individual lives as well as in maintaining a good society. That is, to live intelligently and not stupidly. In both of these realms freedom is essential to the ideas presented about what it means to be human, and as a consequence freedom is an indispensable part of both governance and individual life. Yet freedom is rarely given any specificity or depth of consideration even in some of the most enduring and widely known treatises in political science and government.

It appears the reason for this is because freedom is both a potent and subtle word. When it is used with specificity it demands negotiation, but when it is used in more expansive and general ways, it allows for mutually honorable acquiescence. In many instances it seems it is also a word that is normally and non-transparently misapplied, misused, abused and never given the serious consideration it deserves. Sadly, this misuse includes arenas such as public schools, governments, print and electronic media as well as politics, where it is usually applied most grievously as part of the self serving institutional chicanery at hand.

Unfortunately, individuals also use freedom concepts as part of a ruse recipe. This is both diabolical and unfortunate because it subjugates the great potential inherent in the inspiration that there are probably very few words that are more meaningful to human beings. For us as individuals, freedom, whether as noun or verb, is an important, vital, elaborate, and dynamic capacity and capability that has a great deal to do with how we see ourselves and what it is we think we are.

The Freedom Concept and Stupidity

This relates to a very fundamental discernment in our general understanding of essential intelligence or stupidity. In the more plural sense, freedom, however loosely we

apply the term and however fuzzy we determine its meaning, has a great deal to do with our view of our society, its institutions, and life itself. I believe Christian Bay's The Structure Of Freedom (1979) rises to the challenge of explicitly defining freedom with remarkable specificity.

By way of one example, it may be helpful to look back upon political philosophy through the lens of freedom instead of looking at freedom through the lens of political theory. In so doing, Bay makes some very extraordinary observations that can serve as guidelines by which we can begin to develop an understanding of the attendant conditions of both modernism and postmodernism in order to bring our examination into a contemporary perspective. For example:

Politics refers to all of the process by which public values are promoted and distributed by means of power and authority. This is a normatively neutral definition, quite properly; it refers to processes that may or may not spring from acceptable motivations or intentions. (Bay, 1979, p. 10)

From this we can properly infer that Bay is giving us a definition that is as inclusive as possible. All of the processes for instance, includes the intended as well as unintended, or the conscious as well as unconscious, and power and authority, includes unofficial, subliminal and cultural forces and sources of power and authority as well as those we more readily identify as formally structured institutions such as church, state, or affiliation associations. In this definition politics actually supersedes society, becoming the verb of the noun society, giving it life with a dynamic capacity that encompasses the unseen as well as the seen and the undiscovered as well as the discovered. In other words, polity is not just the human nature of human behavior, it is also the effect of that behavior.

Elementary Freedom

It is this human nature actualized in human behavior that transcends all conceptual, theoretical postulates that we have constructed, including forms of governing and being governed. It is why, as Bay (1979) puts it:

The rise and development of mass democracies have failed to solve some of the pressing problems of individual freedom. The average person's sphere of freedom has been much extended but in some respects the expression of his individuality has probably become more narrowly controlled and confined.
(1979, p. 3)

This limiting if not counterproductive aspect of the relationship between freedom and governance is designed to ensure freedom lies not only with the power of individual human behavior to manipulate government and social structure, but also with those perceptions that motivate behavior in these regards. For example, after dealing with the realities of behavior, Bay (1979) concludes that "high levels of potential freedom are indicated by the ability to operate autonomous, need-integrated criteria for deciding when to be and when not to be influenced" (p. 366). He then refers to Riesman's definition of the autonomous person as "those capable of conforming to the behavioral norms of their society but are free to choose whether to conform or not" (p.366).

An important point to note here is the juxtaposition that has taken place between ideas about freedom as a concrete definition external to human behavior and a concept of freedom that is contained within and inseparable from individual human behavior and the development of what I think of as human intelligence. I use this terminology because of the fundamental argument inherent in the opposite context, which is: Freedom is diminished to the extent that stupidity is fostered. To help understand this comparison the reader is reminded of Adler's

principle that ideas are not what we perceive but how we perceive. Now the power of the idea comes more fully into focus.

Stupidity Incapacitating Freedom

So this is a most interesting critical development, this personal idea of freedom that Bay (1979) points to when he says:

To achieve a high degree of individual autonomy, then, it is first of all necessary to achieve a good integration between overt behavior or consciousness and the structure of basic individual needs.

If a high level of psychological freedom once has been achieved, then the individual's potential freedom is realized to the extent that his needs and behavior are related realistically to the resources and opportunities open to him in the external world and to the extent that he can and will resist manipulative interference with his realistic vision. The realism of his perceptions depends on his amount of reliable information also, of course. (p.366)

Obviously, with this edict Bay converges with the premise I support which is intelligence is a function of freedom and independence as well as vice versa. Each of these are essential components of the other and to the extent that any of them are diminished so is the capacity of the whole. Bay (1979) says as much when he gives us the following advice:

It is possible and also desirable to raise the levels of potential freedom by political means.

In so far as psychological freedom can be increased, this will improve the outlook for potential freedom as well. But effective political measures toward increasing potential freedom are more probable in matters of social organization, such as improved education, encouragement of political controversy, more freedom for unpopular minorities to present their views, and other factors.... (p. 367)

Self-Esteem as Necessary for Freedom

As I read him, Bay speaks of information in order to educate and education in order to develop intelligence and intelligence in order to develop freedom.⁷ And this is why, by the way, he also agrees with Hume in disposing of Locke's idea of the social contract as fundamental to human rights.

Bay and Hume believe there are some freedoms so basic, so universally axiomatic that no one and no thing should have the authority to interfere with them. That is, they are principles so evidently common and therefore autonomous, they must be held beyond anyone's capacity to effect agreement (or contract) about them. These include freedoms of self expression and the need for growth, for expression of the potential self, or of what the individual is capable of becoming.

And, while Bay understands these freedoms end when they impinge on the exercise of these same freedoms by others, he nevertheless maintains that it is the individual and not the collective that must be held not just sacrosanct, but inviolate and the reason for this is because it is in the individual that freedom, according to Bay's exhaustive analysis, resides.

For example, he understands Alan Barth's declaration that:

the test of a free society is its tolerance of what is deplored or despised by a majority of its members and the argument for such tolerance must be made on the grounds that it is useful to the society. (Bay, 1979, p. 389)

⁷ Bay writes at some length, following Dewey, of the obligations of education in his freedom construct. "In order to maximize an individual's capacity and incentive to develop and live by his own individuality, with maximum perceptiveness and understanding of the full variety of experience that life has to offer, it is above all necessary to provide the preconditions for a maximal psychological freedom. The alternative is a greater degree of confinement behind the partial blinders of all stereotypes, which may give a sense of protection for the anxiety ridden but also limits their vision." (p. 356)

But Bay, turning away from, if not going beyond, this almost universally held Western view that it is the good of the majority society upon which all justification must rest, differs:

My argument is that freedom itself is the ultimate value realizable by political means and that more basic freedoms are inherently more urgently desirable than less basic freedoms.

Thus, tolerance of unpopular minorities is more important than the convenience of the greater number, for these minorities are likely to be the least privileged in freedom, with the most basic freedoms at stake. (p. 389)

The reason this discourse interprets at the level of the individual has to do with the idea that freedom cannot be expressed as a noun, only as a verb. Bay (1979) puts it this way:

No matter whether coercion or manipulation is involved, each of us should stand ready to defend the sovereignty of the individual - of any individual, and regardless of whether he claims his sovereignty or not.

From the point of view of responsibility ethics, those who are satisfied with less than their proper sphere of human rights and autonomy are not only sinned against but also sinning, since in effect they acquiesce in undercutting the rights and autonomy of their neighbors as well as their own. (p. 390)

The implications of this definition of freedom are unavoidable. Bay is saying that freedom is behavior, but not the behavior that could be thought of as a license to do whatever one wants or desires or to simply be left alone. Bay goes much farther down the road that began with the earliest generations of the Greeks. His conclusion:

Let us agree that man is never the proper means of any purpose other than those rooted - actually or potentially - in his own individuality. Man himself is the only end.

As I understand this principle, it should mean that the maximization of every man's and woman's freedom - psychological, social, and potential - is the only proper first priority aim for the joint human efforts that we call political. (p. 390)

Freedom As Praxis

Before leaving Christian Bay's idea about the structure of freedom and my interpretation of the implication of the structure of freedom on intelligence and stupidity, I would like to examine two of his postulates that relate to the central idea that there exists a contextual connection between freedom as individual intelligent behavior, that is as praxis, and the absence of this praxis as stupidity.

First, Bay considers "coercion the supreme political evil. I desire for the individual and for society, first of all, the maximization of freedom from coercion, and consequently I consider all other freedom values second priority goals" (1979, p. 92). Bay subsequently defines coercion as "the application of actual physical violence, or the applications of sanctions sufficiently strong to make the individual abandon a course of action or inaction dictated by his own strong and enduring motives and wishes" (1979, p. 93).⁸

Therefore, Bay considers freedom from coercion the purpose of society:

Let me assert therefore, not only that a maximal freedom of expression for all should be the supreme goal of a civilized society, but also this: among all freedom goals, the goal of maximizing everyone's freedom from coercion should take first priority. (p. 94)

In proffering this assertion Bay traces the understandings of the societally implied as unperceived external restraints on individual behavior.

⁸ It is important to note that this definition, following the work of Lasswell and Kaplan (*Power and Society*, p. 97), includes the coercion effected by a high degree of constraint or inducement. I would emphasize the less understood or recognized (but by far probably the most widespread) power of coercion is gained through inducement.

In turn, Machiavelli observed that "ecclesiastical principalities can endure without much ability or fortune on the part of their princes" (p. 95).⁹ Rousseau explained the origin of political society in the invention by rich men as given in his Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, as the

profoundest plan that ever entered the mind of man: This was to employ in his favour the forces of those who attacked him, to make allies of his adversaries, to inspire them with different maxims, and to give them other institutions as favourable to himself as the law of nature was unfavourable. (p. 95)

Second, Bay's response to the societally implied is both eclectic and exacting:

In liberal democracy on the other hand, in so far as a highly developed individuality and thus a wide diversity among men is hoped for, the problem of political manipulation must be approached from the opposite angle: How can we insure conditions under which men can develop into what they have *in themselves* to become? How can the growth of individuality be sheltered against institutional and reformist pressures - against being pushed into whatever harness is adapted toward the improvement and perfection, in some sense, or preservation, of social and political institutions? (p. 96)

To underline the specificity of the culturalism Bay is speaking about, he points to Tocqueville's observation:

The authority of a king is physical and controls the actions of men without subduing their will. But the majority possesses a power that is physical and moral at the same time, which acts upon the will as much as upon the actions and represses not only all contest but all controversy. I know of no country

⁹ "Their rule is sustained by ancient religious customs, which are so powerful and of such quality, that they keep their princes in power in whatever manner they proceed and live. These princes along have states without defending them, have subjects without governing them, and their states, not being defended, are not taken from them: their subjects not being governed do not resent it, *and neither think nor are capable of alienating themselves from them*. Only these principalities therefore, are secure and happy." (my emphasis) The Prince, in The Prince and the Discourses, (Modern Library) pp. 41-42.)

in which there is so little independence of mind and real freedom as in America. (p.100)¹⁰

Education as Freedom Praxis

However, Bay's response to the implications of coercion is not focused on the idealistically attractive but realistically impossible remedy of changing either the political or the cultural. Instead, he suggests the correct cure is to be found in education. Bay acknowledges, of course, that all educational systems are by nature manipulative and he even defends they should be, at least, but not necessarily, in the earlier or elementary stages. Bay (1979) puts his position this way:

It does not follow from my value position that education ought to approach the ideal type of impartiality, even at the advanced stage. On the contrary, note that I am not posing a reduction in the amounts of manipulation as part of my freedom goal. Manipulation produces restraint only to the extent that it is effective. It is the ability to resist manipulation that I wish to see increased, and this ability can best be developed in institutions in which not impartiality but controversy is fostered. Genuine controversy implies manipulation of the same audience from opposite sides at the same time, and on this general level of analysis I know of no better type of incentive toward autonomous or independent thinking than direct exposure to lively controversy. On this score I swear to the wisdom of Socrates. (pp. 98-99)

From my perspective, Bay is reformulating the basic classic argument that centers on the idea that there is a human potential for political and social intelligence founded on common sense that can be exercised when an open-mindedness is allowed sway. The

¹⁰ Bay's reference is to *Democracy in America* (Vintage), I, 273. He also quotes Tocqueville in his footnote with an interesting observation that sheds light on the depth of his view on this subject: "If I knew for a certainty that a man was coming to my house with the conscious design of doing me good, I should run for my life."

implication for stupidity is, evidently, the greater the closed-mindedness the greater the potential for stupidity and the greater the stupidity, the less freedom will exist.

Excerpts From The Eighth Interview

In his fifties, Jim is an artist and Army veteran. He works with metals, glass, jewels, and other materials in addition to doing design work. Jim was raised in rural suburban New York and owned businesses in Florida. He has taught in adult education and has lived in Arizona before moving to Montana.

Jim believes:

Stupidity is a derisive, derogatory term that is used as a controlling device. As an artist, it has played a big part in my own life and I have tried to use it as a tool to try new things and ways of seeing things or doing things. Stupidity is a method of learning and the degree of stupidity used for learning is a way of learning. There's really no definition of stupidity.

People "laugh at stupidity." He remembers a childhood family experience when he "felt slighted by the word and it only inspired me to work harder," (at building a Huck Finn raft).

The point is, to progress, one must experiment with art and try new approaches. On reflection these approaches may seem stupid to others, but, as an artist, everything must be tried and this includes new approaches. But it's more than process. What is pretty or smart to one person may not be to another, so it is with stupidity.

People also interpret visually. Shyness, for example, reflects and conveys the thought of stupidity for many people. In any event, you can recover and learn from most stupidity, unless damage is done, such as losing body parts. Of course, public acts are hard to get around because the behavior is then categorized.

How do you "measure stupidity? How do you learn what limits are? Basically, if you feel something is really stupid, then you never do that again. Obviously, it's all individual, personal experience."

Multicultural stupidity has to do with categorizing people from the elementary level of derogatory remarks (Dumb Kraut) on up. This has to do with control and gaining power over other people. But, it has both negative and positive sides. Used in a negative way it can have negative results, but it can also empower people through resistance or reaction.

We don't choose to be stupid, but we do choose to learn and sometimes the approach we take, in hindsight, tends to be viewed as stupid. I can't let myself be implicated or influenced by stupidity or what may seem to be stupid. How can we cover uncharted ground if we're worried about being or looking stupid? Mistakes are made by experimentation, and something may not turn out so that other people like it, but I may.

Stupidity can be "achieved by anyone at anytime since acts can be labeled as stupid.

Or, not paying attention to detail and letting the desire to do something overrule common sense can be stupid."

CHAPTER FOUR

SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS IN CRITICAL EDUCATION THEORY

“After I be dead, others will follow. If people be killing killing, there will be no more buffalo, no rhino. If they be cutting cutting, there will be no more trees, no oxygen, no rain. Like a desert. What will my daughters think? They will come and there will be nothing. Our father was stupid, they will say.”

(Renatas, a park ranger in Tanzania, 1985, quoted by William Calvin in *The River That Flows Uphill, a Journey From the Big Bang to the Big Brain*, 1986)

Stupidity and Cultural Production

While cautioning against becoming polarized at either end, many postmodernist educators tend to paint with a rather wide brush from time to time. A case in point is the postmodern view toward, though ostensibly rejecting, theories that are called metanarratives, such as Marxism, because they are all encompassing. Patrick Slattery, (Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era, 1995), said:

“I understand and affirm the postmodern rejection of metanarratives, for I am constantly amazed that the absolute certainty of the ‘truths’ that have been concretized into facts in schooling have all deconstructed over time” (p. 263).

However, it seems to me that postmodernism, if it is anything, is a metanarrative. But my point would be there seems to be a great deal of value to the metanarrative from at least two viewpoints.

First, there must be at least some merit in just the size of the scope of the effort alone. A metanarrative is an attempt to find some order and connectivity in a picture taken with a

360 degree lens. I think we owe it to ourselves to try to attain a macroscopic vantage point and though some may argue the compatibility, it is this attempt to be all encompassing that Marxism and Christianity, for example, have in common. Surely many would agree that at least one of these is of value to the human being.

Second, even if the linkages and connections blueprinted in metanarratives are questionable, the issues raised in metanarrative theory give us plenty to think about. Many have said that Marx, for instance, was wide of the mark with his class struggle postulate. But the important question has become, just how far off the mark was he? Every time we worry about the 'shrinking middle class' or point with alarm at the drift toward a 'two class society' we reconnect with Marx and Engels. Similarly, postmodern education theorists, while rejecting the metanarrative, consistently return to one of its products when they refer to the social and cultural reproductive role and power of knowledge, education, and schooling.

Social Theory and Education

Raymond Morrow (1995), Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Alberta, and Carlos Torres, Professor, Graduate School of Education, UCLA, have compiled an exhaustive critique of social and cultural reproduction theories in the 515 pages that make up Social Theory and Education, a work edited by Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren.

This text has been engineered in both a chronological and functional order. The six parts of the book begin with two chapters on social theory and education, (including a preschool requirement in metatheoretical foundations); includes structural functionalism and systems theories, winds through neo-Marxism and conflict theories, converges with neo-Gramscian and critical theory, (another vital pre-school requirement for our purposes),

continues through to issues of agency and structure including resistance and reproduction, and finally closes with a part titled Education, The State, And The Logic of Reproduction. In short, this text contains much grist for the critical theory, multicultural, postmodern mill. I think it may be fair to say that books that deal with metatheories may not be found to be exciting and especially interesting to many people. It may be that it is only the authors who find, when considering issues such as problems of Parsonian culturalist evolutionism, that "interesting insights on this matter are found in Plumb's thesis, 'The significance of Jurgen Habermas for the Pedagogy of Paulo Freire and the Practice of Adult Education'" (Morrow and Torres, 1995, p.458). Or, how this relates to intriguing questions of parallels and contrasts between Gramsci's theory of hegemony and Weber's theory of domination.

Nevertheless, in term of cultural critique Morrow and Torres forcefully demonstrate there is validity in those theoretical postulates that describe how, "as a part of domination, as a corporate actor who assumes the representation of popular sovereignty, and as the political authority that enforces democratic rule, the state becomes also a terrain for struggle of national and sociopolitical (class) projects. These contradictory functions summarize the contradictory unity and inherent complexity of capitalist states. (Morrow and Torres, 1995, p. 459)

Acceptance of Social Theory

A less formalized, or more common approach to evidence of theoretical implications of domination theory can be found in the informal opinions many people, when viewed as the mass, have of government, education (especially public education), and the tradeoffs between needs of the state and the ideas about education as requisite for employment and a secure future. These common understandings engage Bay's concerns about coercion. I would suggest here that corresponding and resulting implications about stupidity have not so much

to do with the accuracy of commonly held theories or beliefs about domination education and the state, as much as a complete absence of awareness.

One of the problems that arises when considering theory, especially metatheory, is just how far from reality is the concept? Remember, we have read that theory stems from and then goes beyond practice and while it may not be strongly causative in subsequent human behavior, it does play some affecting role. So, if the question has to do with relationships of people, power, the state, the status quo, reproduction, and hegemony, it is important to learn how centuries of experience and thought are all served up in one context on a table where we have all sat. I mean of course the menu called curriculum served up at the table called the school house.

Curricula as Social Theory

Morrow and Torres have done a tremendous job articulating the relationships between theories of social and cultural reproduction and functions of education, particularly in the modern state. While they make a strong, compelling argument that posits education and modern public schools directly in the path of Western political theory and the history of practical experience, their examination of the politics of education remains grounded in theory.

Filling that theory with the relevance of reality is left to those practical theoretical scholars who have lived in the same world that students have lived in. Foremost among these, in my estimation, is Paulo Freire, (1985) author of The Politics of Education, Culture, Power and Liberation.

Part wizened prophet from the far off provinces, part father priest, part revolutionary and part conventional teacher, Paulo Freire has, evidently, borrowed from such diverse compass points as communism and Christianity, capitalism and Marxism, the old world and the new, and flavored each of his own original versions of educating with ingredients from European, African, North American and Latin American cultures.

From an anthropological viewpoint, if there is one focal point that can be used to reference the politics of his educating then I would have to say Freire is an American in the same way that Alexis de Tocqueville was an American, which has nothing to do with nationality or citizenship. Freire's understanding of the potential of emancipatory change for both individuals and the state as well as for the development of a qualitative human culture is, if I can borrow from Giroux, "clearly rooted in a language of possibility that draws extensively from the tradition of liberation theology"(Freire, 1991, p. xiv) that I believe is best expressed in the value and motivation represented by American immigration.

Curricula of Common Political Theory

I would argue that the contemporary immigrant's view of America has the greatest power of clarity and prophecy and it is this view that both Tocqueville and Freire understand. That is to say, they both instinctively understand what the immigrant seeks and by understanding the perception shaped by the world the immigrant wishes to leave, they construct their understanding of what the immigrant sees, which is of course, and this is the whole point of this immigrant metaphor, completely different from the view of the national self that the natural born resident citizen has.

The point here is the importance that I am trying to establish about the concept that there is a relationship between the idea or theory of what it is we think or feel we are perceiving or striving for, and the degree to which reality is or can be shaped to be consistent with that vision (or vice versa). We might even think of this as a factor, or component, that has gradients that ultimately determine degrees of intelligence or stupidity that correspond to the relative effective awareness we possess or can arrive at.

So, Freire's vision of educating becomes something very new, almost a supra-national but surely a trans-national (yet, inclusive) form of educating. In developing this post-modern vision Freire, very much like Dewey before him, deftly avoids the pitfalls of both the current left and right, concentrating instead on the development of a progressive educating designed for at least some aspects of what the world may be like in the next century.¹¹

Postmodern Critical Education Theory

The organization of Freire's vision includes re-visiting the classic progressive ideas that we have covered in our readings, but with a fundamental difference. When Freire studies power and hegemony, theory and practice, literacy and responsibility, consciousness and morality, freedom and intelligence, all of these are linked together in a holistic concept that is shaped by experiences of oppression coerced by institutionalized poverty, media brokered racism, and the power of acculturate schooling. In other words, while focusing on the

¹¹ If a philosophical line of connectivity were to be drawn between Dewey and Friere, (and Giroux as well), it would include the impressions generated by the mathematician Jacob Bronowski, (1908-1974) quoted in Calvin's passages about juvenilization in The River That Flows Uphill: "In a sense all science, all human thought, is a form of play. Abstract thought is the neoteny of the intellect, by which man is able to carry out activities which have no immediate goal (other animals play while young) in order to prepare himself for long-term strategies and plans."

dilemmas of the agrarian poor of Latin America and the urban poor of North America, Freire (1985) looks not at the power of Michals' iron law of oligarchy, but instead at the power of the oppressed to use education as a liberating force in the most practical terms possible.

This means educating for a societal change because

It is not education that molds society to certain standards, but society that forms itself by its own standards and molds education to conform with those values that sustain it. This is the reason why any radical and profound transformation of an educational system can only take place (and even then not automatically or mechanically) when society is also radically transformed. (p. 170)

The postmodern era may usher in the elements necessary for such a radical transformation.

Multiculturalism as Critical Education Theory

Freire alludes to that possibility when he redefines traditional cultural concepts such as the provincial, and even the idea of the boundary itself saying "the concept of the Third World is ideological and political, not geographic" (1985, p. 139). From this perspective Freire recognizes, along with Rosaldo and Slatterey, a changed world where the old canon meets the new representation. A multicultural quilt that covers us all,

Europeans and Americans, with their technological societies, have no need to go to the Third World countries in order to become prophetic. They need only go to the outskirts of their big cities, without naiveté or shrewdness, and there they will find sufficient stimulus to do some fresh thinking for themselves. They will find themselves confronted with various expressions of the Third World. They can begin to understand the concern that gives rise to the prophetic position in Latin America. (Freire, 1985, p. 138)

The fresh thinking that Freire muses about has a relational capacity that enables and values as a universal process. He speaks, for instance, about hidden themes in essays and the burden for the writer in distinguishing between "real issues and deceiving appearances that may blur

our vision" (p. 111). Obviously, this differs from the traditional concern for technique in its phenomenal characteristics.

That is, Freire speaks of the process of writing that is also an act of creating in the perceiving of a theme and this is phenomenal. So much so, that men and women are mediated through this process and this then begs writers to take a gnosiological attitude. In Freire's concept of educating, the same responsibility falls on the reader who must also avoid the "Socratic error of regarding the definition of a concept as knowledge of the thing defined" (p. 112).

Ontology Motion Versus Stupidity of Stasis

Instead, and consistent with the tenant of humanistic education that scientific neutrality doesn't exist, Freire would foster the development of a "committed but non-neutral attitude that sees knowledge as a process involving an action and reflection of man in the world." Thus, by virtue of the "teleological character in the unity of action and reflection (praxis) by which people who transform the world are transformed" they can preserve their "critical spirit and scientism" (Freire, 1985; p 112).

What Freire is striving toward here goes beyond humanistic education which he calls a Utopian project of the dominated and oppressed that is a reaction against dehumanization, which is obviously the expression of alienation and domination. Freire believes these are two sides of the same coin.

Freire's answer is an educating for consciousness, what he calls "cultural action for freedom that is the authentication of knowledge by which learners and educators as consciousness or as ones filled with intention join in the quest for new knowledge as a

consequence of their apprehending existing knowledge" (p. 112). The idea is that we possess the power to know and "to know ourselves in the process of knowing" (p. 115).

This educating to dimensions of consciousness, according to Freire, can destroy the trap we create when we think of consciousness as a receptacle to be filled, which in turn leads us to anaesthetize ourselves to the extent that the degree to which our reflective powers are diminished directly relates to the degree to which we increasingly find obstacles to the process of true liberation (p. 115).

The Idea of an Ideology of Stupidity

When a dehumanizing ideology, of whatever kind, is at work it must above all else, according to Freire, keep people from seeing themselves as reflective, active beings, as creators and transformers of the world. In our time this mission is accomplished extremely efficiently through the use of science and technology which, "since the capacity to think cannot be eliminated, obscures the real world by a conditioned and specious reasoning about people and the world in general." Further, this mystification of reality is comprised of a model of existence that appears different from reality, and by so doing, "and by necessity, an artificial consciousness" is imparted (Freire, 1985, p. 116).

As Freire points out, this does not, of course, keep people from thinking, it just makes the strict employment of their thinking problematic by convincing them they already think appropriately and thus the mass joins in the preservation of the social order. Schools become places where learners are adapted to their environment and good students are never the "restless or intractable, or those who have doubt or those who want to know reasons instead of facts, or those who fail to fit the model, or those who denounce mediocre bureaucracy"

(Freire, 1985, p. 117). Instead, good students are those who are good at repeating what they have read or have been told, they are those good at avoiding and denouncing critical thinking, since everyone knows to criticize is to whine, and they are those who are good at adjusting to models.

Social Reproduction of Stupidity

Ultimately, the good student becomes the good citizen, more convinced than ever of the correctness of the programmed patterns of thought and behavior. The answer that Freire suggests is conscientization, the process of thinking beings in a dialectical relation with an objective reality upon which we act. He believes that this capacity has merit for us in our time and circumstances but he also believes that the complex societies have a distaste for conscientization and, even when it is valued, modern approaches bureaucratize the concept and rob it of its dynamism.

I think it is fair to say that the absence of Freire's conscientization implies, as a product of formal education, the development of a reality in which stupidity, as a form of culture-wide mass think, or mass-group think, becomes extant.

However, education, even mandatory public education, still involves a voluntary commitment on the part of learners.¹² The brain is not a passive receptacle waiting to be filled without any discretionary power on the part of the individual. In a sense it could be said it

¹² Donaldo Macedo, Freire's translator says as much in his preface when he remarks, "A central theme in Paulo Freire's work is his insistence on the need for readers to adopt a critical attitude when reading a text. That is, readers should critically evaluate the text and not passively accept what is said just because the author said it. Readers must always be prepared to question and to doubt what they have read."

is in the application and content of that discretionary power, as it is contextualized through Freire's conscientization, where the battle suggested by the politics of education is joined.

If this is so, then consideration must also be given the other side of the equation. That is, an accurate definition of the dominant culture then, becomes an important issue if the reality of the view being reproduced is to have value as the thesis of the majority, as well as the antithesis of the minority.

Excerpts From The Ninth Interview

In her late 40's, Jennifer is a married college student living in San Antonio, Texas. She has two children, a daughter attending a large, internationally known university located in College Station, Texas, and a son in high school.

Jennifer is a highly energetic person who is normally involved in a wide variety and large number of activities. A recurring experience for her is to fall behind her schedule and ignore the clock (intentionally, half consciously), "almost defiantly." Then, when she does check the time, she realizes it's too late and rationalizes by telling herself she's "overloaded." Jennifer believes this kind of behavior is "typical of stupidity."

By way of another example, Jennifer recently attempted to register for a specific course she needs to complete during a summer term at a local college. The process was "so bureaucratic, and the people at each of the stations I needed to process through were inept, I wasn't able to register for the course in time to get a vacant seat!"

At this particular school, transcripts from all previous schools must be on hand, even for a non-degree seeking student, even for just one student taking one course to transfer to another school. Unfortunately, receipt of my transcripts weren't entered into the computer, even though they were on

hand! Even though they were right there, on someone's desk! Waiting. Waiting, to be entered into the computer!

Institutional stupidity of bureaucracy is stupid. Being sent around to five people to get a schedule straightened out... waiting for the receipt of transcripts to be updated in the computer when they are on-hand... putting the most inexperienced people in front of the public and hiding those with authority... these are very stupid organizational behaviors.

Obviously, because these things "are done by design they are consciously done," and therefore represent a choice to be stupid.

"Stupidity takes everything out of you when you become frustrated," Jennifer says. "The worst part is that you can't defend against it. You are afraid of making a complaint because..." you feel you are going to get "screwed over again later if you do." This adds to the frustration. Besides, "as a woman of Portuguese heritage, you know I was raised in Hawaii, I don't feel I was raised with the capacity to be too forceful, especially against authority."

In general, Jennifer believes people chose to be stupid, but not always consciously.

"Stupidity always hurts the people who are being stupid." She believes:

there are different levels of stupidity. Some we're aware of some we're not. Some motives of choosing to be stupid include avoidance, blocking something out we don't want to be aware of, and being afraid. Sometimes we're stupid just because we think it makes things easier.

As students for example, we know studying is not always fun, so when we avoid it or put it off we're being stupid. We know what the consequences are going to be. So, when we know what the consequences are going to be and we still behave that way we are being stupid. We are also in denial, and being in denial is stupid.

Life is a series of moral choices. You have to be good to yourself and to others as well. Mothers know that doesn't mean it's easy or always pleasant, but we have to try to do the right thing. If we do something that's not the right thing, especially for the wrong reason, such as when we let kids get away with things they shouldn't, we're being stupid.

CHAPTER FIVE

SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS IN MULTICULTURALISM

Beyond Culture and Stupidity

“Information seeking and use are posited as ‘constructing’ activities – as personal creating of sense. It is assumed that all information is simply the sense made by individuals at specific moments in time-space... ..Individuals use the observations of others as well as their own observations to construct their pictures of reality and use these pictures to guide behavior.” (Brenda Dervin, *An Overview of Sense-Making Research: Concepts, Methods, and Results To Date*, 1983)

Another View of Social Analysis

The principle of Dewey's experience of educational learning is based on the exercise of freedom of intelligence. Our conscious interpretations of reality, as philosophically described by Adler, can reconcile the either-or forced choice world view. We can accept instead a concept of knowledge that retains the continuity that must exist between old knowledge and new knowledge, as suggested by the Greeks and chronicled in Western political theory. After all, just because knowledge is socially determined does not mean knowledge thus determined is extant beyond or outside a continuum of evolutionary process.

Renato Rosaldo is an anthropologist. His suggestion in Culture and Truth, The Remaking of Social Analysis, (1993) is that culture itself is not the static and monolithic thing it has always been contextualized as when viewed through detached and objective methodologies. Instead, Rosaldo argues, a more ameliorative and constitutive view can be

obtained when diversity, narration, emotion, and subjectivity, are acknowledged and included in the practice of social science.

Before exploring this argument further, I want to return to the professional implications of this author as an anthropologist. Among many of those of his specialty, he remarks, are some strong feelings about the humanists who have robbed anthropology of its master concept--the study of culture--and positioned that concept in the movement for educational reform that promotes diversity and multiculturalism.

Among the problems caused by this larceny, his associates say, is the loss of a century of intellectual labor because of the failure of the humanists to draw on anthropological expertise. Additionally, many anthropologists feel that multiculturalists are lacking some of the essential guiding principles of Franz Boas, considered by many the father of modern anthropology, especially in terms of cultural relativism and anti-racism.

The Changed Anthropological Landscape

Rosaldo (1993) steps outside these views by pointing out the changes that have been made in the reality of sociology in the past half century, including "factors such as Westernization, media imperialism, invasions of commodity culture, and differences of class, gender, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation" (p. 17). The engines of these factors include de-colonization, the civil rights movement, the fuller emergence of a global economy, and massive interventions of development, and all of these are still fully extant and operative. In other words, Rosaldo is claiming that the very definition of culture as community has changed and is changing, and is ill served by a notion of culture rooted in the historically undiluted idea of separate and equal cultures.

Still, Rosaldo does not call for an either-or decision in which the old order of anthropology would be rejected in favor of a new anthropologic in social science. Instead he calls for the development of plural forms of analysis, a sharing of disciplinary authoritarianism within the academy, in order to address a need to de-center and re-read ethnographic classics, not to dismiss or discard them.

By way of example, he points to the humanities, social sciences and legal studies where canonical lists of classics pose problems, not because of what they include (the books are good) but because of what they exclude (other good books)" (p. 18).

For my purposes, it is in this return to the struggle for inclusion where I re-connect with the idea of a synergistic and interdependent whole of morality, freedom, democracy, multiculturalism, education, and intelligence that, when altered or in absentia in part or in whole, results in varying degrees of stupidity.

For example, Rosaldo, anthropologist though he may be, justifies multiculturalism on the grounds that it is part of the conscious experience of educational democracy.

"Ongoing institutional conflicts over diversity and multiculturalism in higher education are localized symptoms of a broader renegotiating of full citizenship in the United States. And such struggles are the context for explorations in Culture and Truth." (Rosaldo, 1993, p. 19). But his call for an expansion of anthropological methodology and inquiry in the social sciences into issues that deal with and surround culture is far reaching on both horizontal and vertical planes.

Whether in the typical presentation of the industrialized or agrarian society, the fixed idea of what is supposed to be examined hardly exists, so it is both the point of observation as well as the point of what is being observed that has been altered.

The remaking of social analysis has not only re-defined the position of the detached observer but has also brought new objects of study into focus.. human cultures are neither necessarily coherent nor always homogeneous. More often than we care to think, our everyday lives are crisscrossed by border zones, pockets, and eruptions of all kinds.¹³ (p. 207)

The Multicultural Reality

Still, it is not just the blurring of geography, whether it be national boundaries, neighborhoods, ghettos, or barrios that concerns Rosaldo. He also points to social borders, that "frequently become salient around such lines as sexual orientation, gender, class, race, ethnicity, nationality, age, politics, dress, food, or taste" (p. 208). Traditionally, these factors escaped investigation that concentrated on social hierarchies and self-enclosed cultures and this left large gaps that were ignored: "Immigrants and socially mobile individuals appeared culturally invisible because they were no longer what they once were and not yet what they could become... This process produces *post-cultural* (my emphasis) citizens" (p. 209).

In other words as immigrants assimilated, the continuing extension of the gap into the mythical mainstream of American society allowed potentially tens, if not hundreds, of millions of people to disappear, anthropologically speaking, because the idea of the melting pot meant

¹³ It is, partly at least, the spirit of Rosaldo's change in perceiving as well as in what is being perceived, that influenced the way I think an initial examination of stupidity (as this one), may best proceed. I cannot help but agree with him "That a sea change in cultural studies has eroded once-dominant conceptions of truth and objectivity. The truth of objectivism - absolute, universal, and timeless - has lost its monopoly status. It now competes, on more nearly equal terms, with the truths of case studies that are embedded in local contexts, shaped by local interests, and colored by local perceptions."

that people lost, shred, gave up, or otherwise no longer maintained or possessed their cultural identity.

This loss of cultural identity varies in character according to the relationship of a particular cultural identity to the ideal of the culturally transparent American. More of some identities were lost than others, but-- and I think this is a very important point--White people of Northern European descent, for example, also fell into the anthropological gap and lost much of their rich past, including autobiography, history, heritage, language, and more. This may be, by the way, one of the reasons why White people do not think of themselves as *ethnic*. Perhaps this stupidity has its origins in the ignorance that is the absence of the new lens.

The U.S. American view of both American and European history, for example, tends to focus on the history of power brokering classes. In addition to ignoring the fact of Black Americans as well as the tremendous diversity of Native Americans, little is given of the history of Northern European Caucasian minorities, whether they be Jews, Gypsies or other religious, tribal, national, or ethnic peoples that in many instances, when taken in total, represented the majority of the population.

Conversely however, the effects of a subliminal but salient national racism resulted in a different aftermath for the other, non-Northern European, immigrants who similarly lost as much of their past with one important exception. They never lost their racial or ethnic labels--even when these no longer applied--and the result is a population that has a relationship to the mainstream that both complies and deviates.

"Bobbing and weaving between assimilation and resistance. They neither remain what they once were nor become fully absorbed into the culturally transparent Anglo-American middle class" (Rosaldo, 1993, p. 211). To a lesser extent perhaps, neither does a significant portion of that culturally transparent class who still see themselves as Bohemian, Javanese, Polish, Japanese, Armenian, Samoan, Montanan, Hawaiian, Country, Catholic or working class, in addition to distinctions of profession, skill, trade, specialty or even the absence of all of these, such as in the bland and bleached subculture of a Sun City retirement community.

Ambiguity as Multicultural Ambivalence

There exists then a complexity of multiculturalism in the modern state that defies classification by traditional postulates. The problem here is that even the seemingly most appropriate contexts are ambiguous. For instance, it is said that California's population in less than twenty years will be 40 percent Mexican origin, 20 percent other non-White, and 40 percent White. The context here is the state's majority will become its minority, numerically, and seemingly if not racially then ethnically.

However, in a more exacting sense these figures are meaningless since we can all understand *Mexican origin* as applied to people living in the United States identifies neither race nor ethnicity nor religion nor gender, nor anything else really, since even many Mexican surnames aren't of Spanish origin. The same can be said, with even greater impact, of the nonsense of terminology such as *non-White* or even *other non-White*.

To be sure, there certainly are people of Mexican origin and many of these people--but not all by any means--identify themselves in relational racial and ethnic terms either wholly or in part. (And it is how each of these communities of people view themselves that is

becoming increasingly important to the greater society, just as how that greater society views *them* is correspondingly becoming less important). Yet, even when this identity occurs, there is a complex interplay of a number of very especial elements that must be accounted for.

After all, a U.S. American of Cuban descent is as much a Cuban in Cuba as a U.S. American of Irish descent is an Irishman (or Irishwoman) in Ireland or a U.S. American of Gambian descent is a Gambian in Gambia. That is to say, not much in all three cases.

Thus, American ethnicity, as Rosaldo (1993) puts it,

Demand study more as complex sites of cultural production than as representatives of a self contained homogeneous culture... A renewed concept of culture thus refers less to a unified entity (a culture) than to the mundane practices of everyday life. Our inquiry now seeks meanings that are more pragmatic than formal; it models itself more on semantics than syntax and grammar... In the present post-colonial world the notion of an authentic culture as an autonomous internally coherent universe no longer seems tenable, except perhaps as a useful fiction or a revealing distortion... Rapidly increasing global interdependence has made it more and more clear that neither 'we' nor 'they' are as neatly bounded and homogeneous as once seemed to be the case. (p. 217)

In other words, culture now represents a multiplicity of things (in which the multiplicity of race and ethnicity are not necessarily, of and by themselves, defining characteristics any more than religious identification or political affiliations are) and it is in this sense that multiculturalism needs to be understood. A telling quote here would be Rosaldo's idea about defining the non-order that change the ambient factors of human living, many times in ways that are not anticipated:

Insofar as it is concerned with how people's actions alter their forms of life, social analysis must attend to improvisation, muddling through, and contingent events. In this context, the study of consciousness becomes central because people always act (however imperfectly) relative to their desires, plans, whims, strategies, moods, goals, fantasies, intentions, impulses,

purposes, visions, or gut feelings. *No analysis of human action is complete unless it attends to peoples own notions of what they are doing. Even when they appear most subjective, thought and feeling are always culturally shaped and influenced by one's biography, social situation, and historical context.* (p. 103) (Emphasis added).

Rosaldo's reference to an individually originated postulate of a theory of meaning is associated with views in natural history that categorize long term transformation, especially and specifically as classification systems, that relate change to climatic sequence. The view through this lens of connectivity leads Rosaldo to conclude "from a processual perspective, change rather than structure becomes society's enduring state, and time rather than space becomes it's most encompassing medium" (p. 103).

Given this new human condition, this new idea of what culture is and isn't with respect to traditional anthropological canon, Rosaldo believes multiculturalism has profound implications:

The current battle about how best to prepare students for life in the twenty first century revolves around questions of the degree and significance of human differences, whether change or stasis is the natural state of society, and to what extent struggle shapes the course of human events... The choice of what we want to know is primarily political and ethical, hence the intensity of feelings brought to and aroused by the conflict. (p. 224)

Of course, What we want to know isn't always what we are told we need to know.

Excerpts From the Tenth Interview

Ed, a father of five and grandfather, is a retired 64-year-old police chief living in Florida. He retired with over 40 years of experience in police work at the federal, state, local, and private corporate levels. Beginning as a patrolman and working his way up through the ranks, Ed has worked at many different locations in the United States and overseas as well.

Ed believes stupidity exists:

We are consciously stupid and decidedly so, and this happens most often according to situations we are in.... We know something is stupid, but we go ahead and do it because of the situation we are in. For example, parents and politicians do it all the time, giving in to, or going along with something, because they don't want to say no to their children or their constituents.

"Emotions cause a lot of stupid decisions, especially when family members are concerned." He feels people will let their children, for example, do "something they think is stupid because they feel it will give them satisfaction so parents wind up giving up standards and discipline."

In police work, stupidity results too many times because of power and authority. Because of these, policeman rely on their authority and the power that goes with it and act stupidly or make stupid mistakes because they were blinded to other, better ways of resolving issues. This stupidity is particularly dangerous because it can get you killed or in jail.

Stupidity has bad consequences and is therefore not good for you. The right thing is the intelligent thing. Making the right decision is intelligent and you don't have to be intelligent to make a right decision. Life experience intelligence, true intelligence, is not being stupid.

While consequences can determine whether a risk was stupid, bad luck can often defeat good planning, so not being stupid doesn't guarantee successful results. And many times we learn from having done pretty stupid things. But it may be that we're all pretty stupid and people really know that, that's why people pray. They do it all the time, even if it is informal and they don't even realize their doing it...Boy! I pray I get through this storm without having an accident, etc.

Everyone is lawless to an extent--is that stupid? There isn't a perfectly honest person around. We take home ball point pens from the office, we speed, we park in handicapped spaces--maybe we're in a state of stupidity because we can't obey our own laws. But, stupidity does decrease as morality grows. By the way, stupidity is a horrible thing. It kills people and has them winding up in jail. It robs people of many things and ruins their lives.

Intelligence never hurt anyone. But, we flock around our stupidity groups--perpetual *stupid*s on the beat who repeat stupid behavior and keep going to jail are doing the same thing as businessmen cheating on their taxes and working shady fast-buck deals who live in the same neighborhoods and play on the same golf courses, or the college kids who do stupid things in their dorms. They're all in their stupidity communities repeating the same stupid behavior.

Yes, we choose to be stupid--we take unnecessary risks, drinking too much, trying to impress people, trying to appear brave in a bad situation--we take unnecessary risks and do it consciously. And! Stupidity has a comical connotation-- it shouldn't have that because its not funny! Any policeman can tell you that. Every policeman would say that.

This is a good thing you're doing because looking at stupidity is a way to deal with the foundation and keystone of education--learning in the broadest sense. But it takes courage to make a change, to be more intelligent and less stupid.

Freedom Concepts and the Decline of Stupidity

"Five principles capture the essence of what social psychologists have learned about mental representation thus far. The first principle – that there are multiple forms of cognitive representation – is so central that once it is acknowledged, the need for the remaining four principles seems obvious. That is, if multiple forms of representation exists, this raises general issues regarding their origin (Principle II: they are by-products of different cognitive processes), their interrelationships (Principle III: they are interconnected), their influence (Principle IV: accessibility plays a key role), and the manner in which they are used and experienced by perceivers (Principle V: they blend together inseparably in a kind of mental mush). In a sense, then, these five principles constitute a coherent statement about the multifaceted nature of people's cognitive representations."

(D.E. Carlston, E.R. Smith, *Principles of Mental Representation*, 1996)

Freedom as Intelligence Struggle

I think there is theoretical significance to Rosaldo's suggestion that analysis of human action requires an investigation into people's own notions of what they are doing. The degree to which behavior is related to both the content and context of theoretical concepts that are constructed when "desires, plans, whims, strategies, moods, goals, fantasies, intentions, impulses, purposes, visions, or gut feelings" (Rosaldo, 1993, p. 103) must also have a functional relationship to social and political paradigms that evidently include conceptualizations about freedom as a continuing dialectic.

Maxine Greene, author of The Dialectic of Freedom, (1988) argues for freedom in a more contemporary voice than Christian Bay, and she speaks from a more dynamic platform. While she agrees with Bay that freedom is a verb (it is something activated, if not achieved, by "resisting forces that limit, condition, determine, and too frequently oppress," (book jacket, Teacher's College Press, 1988) she also sees that verb as part of a continual dialectic where the quality of freedom (negative versus positive) interacts synergistically with the quality of the human effort that gives it life.¹⁴

This view of freedom, though we have explored at least some small part of its heritage in the preceding selections, is very different from the contemporary generality that freedom probably represents for most people. For one thing, Greene's definition of freedom takes away its geography and boundaries and places it more proximate where I think is its proper place, which is in the conscience and consciousness of the individual.

While she acknowledges there are places where freedom is more easily exercised than others, she apparently believes the power of the potential for freedom is far more circumstantial than territorial. That is to say, it matters not so much whether one is in a totalitarian or democratic state as much as the particular state of affairs of the individuals and communities concerned.

¹⁴ I would like to point out the genesis of this book was as a John Dewey lecture. Indeed, it is a segment of the John Dewey Lecture Series published by the Teachers College (Columbia University) Press. So there should be no doubt, author Greene believes in the power of education to effect a progressive civilizing and humanizing. What is more uncommon and unique about Maxine Greene, I think, is her view that a person is not living in freedom if they are not exercising freedom, and there is a harmonic parallel in this with Dewey's education as experience corollary.

The second important implication of Greene's definition is that it assigns the responsibility for the existence and quality (the content and character) of freedom to those same individuals as well. This is a most significant statement because it means that we are responsible for effecting our freedom.

While we have read of the premise that government is tasked to secure and defend those things that we as individuals cannot secure for ourselves, Greene does not separate those efforts of government from the foremost responsibility of individuals, especially since government is comprised of people, and therefore there is a potential at least, for those people to act as individuals.

Moreover, her concern here is especially for those individuals collectivized in community, and going even beyond this, she clearly tasks oppressed individuals to create and foster a freedom association through community. For our purposes, we will think of this as solidarity. More specifically, the cohesion that comes from effecting freedom through togetherness is a process we can think of as liberation through solidarity.

Freedom as Andragogical Responsibility

Greene, is also an educator with concerns that extend far beyond pedagogy. She believes, for example, that the "power of educating to change the meaning of human experience is seldom found in the public places we call our schools," (p. x) though there is no doubt that she also believes in the traditional Western political and social ethic that "learning, and learning how to learn, give us freedom from oppression. Meaning, and controlling meaning, is the key to oppression" (Greene, 1988, p. x).

It is through history, philosophy, literature and the other arts that Greene makes her argument and voices her concerns. She centers the context of her voice in the commitment of John Dewey to the intelligence that can be attained in an articulate public, a freedom that comes to be in "a certain kind of growth," (p. 3) a freedom actualized only when individuals develop intelligence (p. 4).

She sees that intelligence extant in an environment in which imagination and experience are challenged by the risks of a venture into the unknown, which is the only way to escape the greater dangers of "recurrence, complete uniformity, the routine and mechanical" (p. 125). Joining with Dewey in the demand for a human ethic she brings timeliness with her tidings in a number of examples of the relationship between freedom, intelligence, democracy, multiculturalism, and meaning.¹⁵

The examples of communities and associations formed in more repressive countries are especially meaningful to our American (U.S.) idea of education since it is through education that individuals can be aggravated to grasp past themselves through challenging thought about their time and circumstances and what is meaningful and possible and requires defense and commitment.

This is central to the idea of the dialectic:

¹⁵ Primary generational differences between Bay and Greene are not so much in the ideas they perceive as much as in the lenses they look through. Greene says her book "Seeks an audience of the incomplete and the discontented, those who educate with untapped possibility in mind, with hope for the attainment of freedom in a difficult and resistant world. My hope is to reawaken concern for and belief in a humane framework for the kinds of education required in a technological society. It is to recall those who read to some lost spontaneity, some forgotten hunger for becoming different, becoming new. My hope is to remind people of what it means to be alive among others, to achieve freedom in dialogue with others for the sake of personal fulfillment and the emergence of a democracy dedicated to life and decency."

There is, after all, a dialectical relation marking every human situation: the relation between subject and object, individual and environment, self and society, outsider and community, living consciousness and phenomenal world. This relation exists between two different, apparently opposite poles; but it presupposes a mediation between them. (Greene, 1988, p. 8)

The antithesis of this reality is the current dilemma where the form of meaningfulness is mandated while the substance of intelligence is never articulated: "I do not need to say again how seldom this occurs today in our technicized, privatized, consumerist, time. The dominant watchwords remain effectiveness, proficiency, efficiency, and an ill-defined, one-dimensional excellence..." (p. 12).

Instead, Greene (1988) argues, it is in the pursuit of a moral freedom where intelligence and education become holistic.

A teacher in search of his/her own freedom may be the only kind of teacher who can arouse young persons to go in search of their own.. children who have been provoked to reach beyond themselves, to wonder, to imagine, to pose their own questions are the ones most likely to learn. (p. 14)

Stupidity as Selective Unawareness

For Greene, the substance of intelligence includes a recognition, if not an understanding, of those problems of our time that appear to be tolerated for no good reason, including, "homelessness, hunger, pollution, crime, censorship, and arms proliferation" (p. 12). Along with these, Greene also points to media manipulation of the young into "ardent and credulous consumers of sensation, violence, criminality and things"(p. 12). She labels this manipulation as "a form of daily instruction that teaches them that human worth depends on the possession of commodities, community status, a flippant way of talking, and good

looks" (Greene, 1988, p. 12). And I would add an arrogant disdain for any subject that even hints at having an intelligent content.¹⁶

In place of intelligence, Greene suggests, the appearance of intelligent behavior is enacted as a kind of national role play. Pointing to Michael Ignatieff's society of strangers, "a society where material needs are satisfied, but where the need for consolation, solidarity, and love, remain unmet," (p. 19). she points to how we work, play, read, listen, study, learn and even carry on a certain amount and level of political discourse, all intoned in a familiar chorus, a voluminous dirge where the same words are used for the same occasions, ad infinitum.

One of those reflex action words is freedom. Most Americans believe they are free because they are not captives or slaves, they assemble at will-- mostly to be entertained-- and they know by now "they can have babies out of wedlock, take to the roads, sample cocaine, run as long and as far as they please, read all the trash they want to," (Greene, 1988, p. 19) and own and carry all kinds of weapons.

Quoting Robert Bellah, she explains:

Freedom is the most deeply held value in this country, yet it turns out to mean being left alone by others, not having other peoples values, ideas, or styles of life forced on them, being free of arbitrary authority to work, family and political life. (p. 20).

¹⁶ Quoting from the fable, *The Grand Inquisitor*, in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, (1879-80/1945, p. 292 ff.), Greene points to "The promise of freedom which men in their simplicity and their natural unruliness cannot even understand, which they fear and dread," and the guarantee of bread, peace of mind, and happiness to those who acquiesce. Human beings, he says, do not have the strength to tolerate the "vague and enigmatic"; they want something they can all believe in together; they want a shared certainty. In a peculiar fashion, the promise implicit in the proposals of a government that withholds support, that stresses individual responsibility, is a promise of wealth, security, and happiness. Below the surfaces there is a whispered reminder that, if an individual plays the game, smiles, and works hard, he/she will be rewarded.

The result of this ill formed and superficially understood but deeply held belief, is we will not admit there are potent and interdependent systems at play in a technologically complex society "dominated by giant corporations and an increasingly powerful state" (Greene, 1988, pp. 19-20).

Freedom as Awareness of Choosing to be Stupid

Perhaps because Americans have been told over and over again that they are so much better off than the rest of the world, they are afraid to rock the boat and see the obstacles in their way. The first of these is an incapacity to exercise responsibility through a quintessential, non-technological, intelligence. Admittedly however, everyone does not choose to be stupid.

Greene believes there are differences between those who "unquestioningly accede to the given and those who find refuge that way," and the difference has to do with consciousness, and that "involves a capacity to pose questions to the world, to reflect on what is presented in experience"¹⁷ (pp. 20-21).

Again, Greene's idea of freedom, education, and intelligence as a holistic dialectic is framed by a highly specified consciousness: "Human consciousness, moreover, is always situated; and the situated person, inevitably engaged with others, reaches out and grasps the phenomena surrounding him/her from a particular vantage point and against a particular

¹⁷ Referring to both Sartre's "Mysterious psychism," and Dewey's "Separation of the inner from the outer," Greene condemns the idea of freedom that distances the self from social reality because it "Frequently involves misconceptions of what consciousness means, and mind and self as well. These misconceptions lead people to identify personal liberation with an abandonment of social involvement and concern. Cynical about reform, despairing of bringing about change in the world, they are no longer able to imagine alternative possibilities.

background consciousness" (p. 21) (That background consciousness represent perceptions constructed in the earlier stages of life).

On these grounds, individuals develop or learn to take a variety of perspectives on the world. The perspectives are always partial. The individual sees profiles, aspects of the building entered into in the morning, the school or the agency. He/she similarly grasps aspects of the novel being read, the painting being looked at; there is always more to be discovered, each time he/she focuses attention. As important, each time he/she is with others-in dialogue, in teaching-learning situations, in mutual pursuit of a project - additional new perspectives open; language opens possibilities of seeing, hearing, understanding. Multiple interpretations constitute multiple realities; the "common" itself becomes multiplex and endlessly challenging, as each person reaches out from his/her own ground toward what might be, should be, is not yet. (p. 21)

Of course, this idea of consciousness is clearly centered in the Dewey school of education as experience and Greene readily agrees that it is:

"Dewey did not believe the self was ready-made or pre-existent; it was, he said, 'Something in continuous formation through choice of action'" (pp. 21-22).

Awareness as Antidote to Stupidity

When Maxine Greene arrives at the issue of consciousness she returns to Dewey and existential thought: The self as a process of growth continually created by choosing to be something more than that which currently exists, such choices being based on an awareness of something lacking in a situation, as Dewey said. Awareness then, joins in as requisite to the recipe of education that includes, and is dependent on, the relationship between freedom, intelligence, democracy and multiculturalism. In a sense, awareness can be thought of as the first level antithesis of stupidity.

This is because awareness, (not another word for consciousness as much as perhaps a component or category of consciousness) has as much to do with intelligence as to be unaware has to do with stupidity. And stupidity has as much to do with the absence of freedom as the absence of multiculturalism has to do with the absence of democracy.

Moreover, awareness may also suggest that the greater arena that is education is andragogical far more than pedagogical since adulthood offers the greater opportunity for both freedom in consciousness as well as freedom in behavior.

In a sense, I imagine Greene herself for example, to be an andragogist, or adult educator, and not just because she works in higher education. More accurately, I think, she is an adult educator because her orientation almost consistently and wholly, is focused on art and literature that is of adults, for adults.

However, as Greene very wisely points out, in many ways it could be said that adults are children at later stages of their lives. For now I base this concept on the idea that the background of consciousness is the primordial landscape, laid down and patterned by perception in the early days of life, and also described as the foundation for the meanings that are layered or sedimented once human beings move into the life of language and begin thematizing or symbolizing their worlds.¹⁸

¹⁸ Greene is actually quoting Merleau-Ponty (1964, pp13-27) here and also makes reference to Polanyi's "tacit awareness" (1964, pp. 95-100) as well as Hans-Georg Gadamer's "understanding," (1977, pp. 18-58) all of which relate to what Greene calls "primordial way of being in the world."

In our formalized educating societies that institutionalize through compulsory education, then, we need to examine schooling, particularly curriculum development, before we can look more deeply into ideas about consciousness.

Defining The Postmodern

Curricula are the places where we discover which choices of what we want to know have been made for us, and in Patrick Slattery's Curriculum Development in the Post Modern Era, (1995), we find a comprehensive review of the development of postmodern curricula especially as it applies to the last thirty years or so.

One of three books in the Critical Education Practice Series of the Garland Reference Library of Social Science, Slattery's text is clearly an expression of the humanistic vision of the hermeneutic process and should be read accordingly since there should be no doubt we are firmly entrenched on the boulevard of progressive tradition we have been traveling down in this search for answers from Aristotle through Dewey to Rosaldo.

Two landscapes of context must be painted before we can enter into Slattery's work since they are central to his argument. The first is the definition of postmodern and the second is the constitution of the new paradigm. Slattery (1995) provides us a number of views of the postmodern. These include:

- An emerging historical period that transcends the modern industrial, technological age

- A contemporary aesthetic style in art and architecture that is eclectic, allegorical, kaleidoscopic, and ironic

- A social criticism of unified systems of economic and political organization such as liberalism and communism

- A philosophical movement seeking to expose internal contradictions of metanarratives by deconstructing modern notions of truth, language, knowledge and power

A cultural analysis that critiques the negative impact of modern technology on the human psyche and the environment while promoting the construction of a holistic and ecologically sustainable global community

A radical eclecticism (not compromise or consensus) and double voiced discourse that accepts and criticizes at the same time because the past and the future are both honored and subverted, embraced and limited, constructed and deconstructed.

A movement that attempts to go beyond the materialist philosophy of modernity

An acknowledgment and celebration of otherness, particularly from racial and gendered perspectives

A momentous historical period marked by a revolutionary paradigm change that transcends the basic assumptions, patterns of operation, and cosmology of the previous modern age

An ecological and ecumenical world view beyond the modern obsession with dominance and control

or, a post-structural movement toward de-centering where there is an absence of anything at the center or any overriding embedded truth at the core, thus necessitating a concentration on the margins and a shift in emphasis to the borders. (pp. 15-16)

CHAPTER SIX

SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS IN THE POSTMODERN

The Postmodern Qualified

It seems to me many who argue for postmodernism brand opposing argument or criticism as stemming from "cartesian binary and dualistic thinking framed in rational and structural" (Slattery, 1995, p. 16) boundaries that prevent people from seeing and recognizing the revolutionary new conceptions of life and reality. For these postmodernists the uncontested dominance of the modern world view has ended and in its place we suddenly have a global plurality of competing subcultures and movements where no one ideology and episteme dominates because there is no cultural consensus.

Perhaps. I will go so far as to agree that postmodernism can be reduced to a single concept and it may be found in the idea that a major era change is in process as the modern period, basically from 1450 through 1950, comes to an end. This period is over because of a hallmark shift in the paradigms that constitute our views of politics, art, science, theology, economics, psychology, culture and education.¹⁹

¹⁹ I agree with Slattery's concurrence with Jencks' (1992) notion of a new world view taking shape, and that "there is a burgeoning belief in scientific, philosophical, political, artistic, literary and educational circles that a radically new global conception of life on the planet and existence in the cosmos is under way" (p.16).

To illustrate the dimension of these shifts in paradigm the postmodernists point to two previous transformations. One was the move from isolated nomadic communities of hunters and gatherers to feudal societies with city states and agrarian support systems, and the other was from this socio-economic form to the capitalist-industrial-scientific form.

The Postmodern Ideal

According to the most hopeful postmodernist seers, the new era, the postmodern era, is characterized by a paradigm shift to:

A post-anthropocentric view of living in harmony with nature; cooperative human relationships; belief in peaceful negotiation; a social order based on gender equity; respect for the wisdom of all cultures; recognition of the wisdom of not only scientific, but moral, religious, and aesthetic intuitions as well; a rise of an ecologically interdependent view of the cosmos rather than a mechanistic perspective; and finally, a post nationalistic view in which the individualism of nationalism is transcended and replaced by a planetary consciousness concerned with the welfare of the Earth first. (Slattery, 1995, p. 19)

In other words, the post-modern view sees the world as a living entity rather than a mechanical device; the planet as our home, rather than a frontier to be exploited; and people as interrelated rather than separate and independent.

In my opinion this new order is more a rushed mythical hope than reality and before it becomes a reality a war about power will have to be won on the battlefields of curriculum, (on both sides of the school house fence) if any of the points of previous authors are valid to any extent.

Nevertheless, I think I can subscribe to the general ideas about postmodernism pretty readily simply because I believe the historical imperative communicated by the idea of a major paradigm shift is evident and consistent as well with Rosaldo's primacy of change and time

as predominant envelopes of process. The challenge now of course is to apply John Dewey's metaphorical view of concept building.

Reconciling Modern and Postmodern Thought

As I read him, Slattery comes around to agreeing with this conclusion and expanding on it through references to new, contemporary (read living) voices. For example, in working to establish the fundamental reality of the postmodern in the historic, or fact of history, he points to the reality of change by quoting Vaclav Havel, President of the Czech Republic:

The end of Communism is, first and foremost, a message to the human race that a major era in human history has come to an end. It has brought an end not just to the 19th and 20th centuries, but to the modern age as a whole. (p. 24)

Havel believes the modern era has been dictated by a conviction that the world is an entirely knowable complex ruled by a limited number of universal laws that are understandable through strict examination. These laws can then be rationally exploited for our personal benefit.

Communism then, was the contumacious excess of this view because it tried to constitute all life by way of a single archetype and to subordinate people to central scheming and domination unmindful of whether it was life affirming. (And by this account, as Slattery suggests, an enlightening comparison can be made with modern curriculum development). However, from our previous freedom constructs we can assume ascribed forms and methods of governance and distribution, whether democratic or not, or socialist or not, do not by themselves constitute freedom. Thus, the defeat of communism does not by itself result in a state of freedom. Freedom, as we have defined it, is part of as well as the exercise of, moral

and intelligent individual behavior, requiring an educating learning and this means a war is still to be fought with the processes by which reproduction is brought to bear when what is being reproduced is antithetical. Whether that antithetical mentality is designed to serve a communist state or capitalist economy is not the issue. I think, with respect to this distinction, postmodernists need to be very careful: An educating learning is the goal.

Domains of Learning

I believe there are other cautions that need to be voiced about the postmodern metanarrative. Many times descriptions of postmodern curricula grow from a jungle garden of flowery recitals that seem incredible in their unending capacity to wax poetic. If postmodern writers do not carefully ground their theses in well thought out connections between theory, practice, concept, and context, they will invite their opposition to accuse them of pollyannaish naiveté. Among Slattery's responses to this challenge is a carefully constructed referral to each of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning.

Quoting Caine and Caine (1991), for instance, he leans on research indicating:

The brain does not separate emotions from cognition, either anatomically or perceptually.... Cognitive theorists are exploring the concept of the intuitive and non- rational dimensions of learning, contending that learning is not a logical progressive sequence. This research supports the post-modern understanding of curriculum as multidimensional, ironic, autobiographical, and kaleidoscopic. (Slattery, 1995. p. 48)

Slattery has joined many others in the conclusion that educators, "by being too specific about facts to be remembered and outcomes to be produced, may prohibit students' genuine understanding and transfer of learning" (Slattery, 1995, p. 49).

In place of this narrowness, Slattery borrows much from Dewey, Greene, and especially Giroux, by centering learning as an experience generated by multifarious human beings during elaborate intercommunication. The other side of this coin, the attendant condition or personality of the environment in which experience is occurring, is a curriculum characterized by "complexity, ambiguity, uncertainty, and authentic situated assessment" (p. 49).

Now it is here, in the educational environment, where many who align themselves against postmodernism center their argument that postmodernism stands for nothing. In denying precise certainty, they argue, the postmodern educator denies the possibility of arriving, ultimately, at a definitive (read proven or provable) truth.

Morality in the Postmodern

On the other hand, Postmodern scholars, especially the likes of Giroux and Freire, have reconceptualized school curriculum as a form of theological text that does exactly what modernism has failed to do. They have succeeded in not only putting spirituality and morality back into curricula, but by assigning them an indispensable role in the schema of learning, instruction and curriculum.

For the postmodern educator the phenomenological view of curriculum, theology, and text, means emphasizing subjective consciousness and its intentional objects in their pure essences rather than emphasizing them ontologically, as concrete natural objects, studied in the abstract.

Curriculum as a Dynamic

In this milieu a curriculum loses its value as a program, a sequential course of study, or docket. Instead, it takes on the meaning of enacting passage and exercising process as in a journey or voyage made not by an inert and passive passenger, but by an involved explorer whose engagement is so much a part of the process that the curriculum does not exist unless it is activated by, and thus becomes, human experience.²⁰

Similarly, theology is not restricted to the study of objective creed, code, and canon. Instead, theology is an autobiographical process, a cosmological dialogue, and a search for personal and universal harmony, not too dissimilar from the view of theology held by Anselm of Canterbury, who saw theology as faith seeking understanding. (Slattery, 1995, p. 77) This invocation of theology, well charted by Slattery, also serves to address the caution voiced by John Dewey, who believed that the church had lost its prophetic voice and this was important to the academy because it addressed the need for social justice.

Reading the Text as Process

Therefore, text in postmodern curriculum is a theological term that reveals process. Reading of the text is a phenomenological encounter between word and reader in which the reader is called on to ruminate and think, so that, as Madeleine Grumet writes, "meaning is something we make out of what we find when we look at texts, it is not in the text. Unfortunately, the myth of the meaningful text still flourishes in the classroom" (Slattery,

²⁰ Seen as re-conceptualization theory, Slattery makes the point that existentialist thinking by those such as Sartre, Nietzsche, Buber, and Kierkegaard, framed by Freud and Jung, and expressed by Joyce, Proust, Woolf, and Faulkner, and revealed by artists such as Pollock, had a major influence on Pinar and Grumet's ideas about this kind of a change in curriculum studies.

1995, p. 78). (This may explain why we keep books we have already read. Unconsciously perhaps, we realize that in reading and re-reading them we can experience more and more and even more because of the dialectic that is occurring).

Destupefying Schooling

From this perspective the modern process (that is accepted as intelligence) of formal schooling is both infelicitous and stupefying when the content of textual knowledge is delivered through the context of unquestionable authority empowered by coercion. Conversely, "the challenge of postmodern schooling is to recover a fuller meaning of wisdom" (Slattery, 1995, p. 78). It is in this postmodern education genre then, that we find a return to the search for wisdom in intelligence and Slattery is very intentional and direct in his centering assignment of theology in the postmodern curriculum.

Along with this postmodern return to the Socratic tradition of common sense, Slattery includes contemporary discourses on race, gender, ethnicity, philosophy, ecology, politics, aesthetics, autobiography and science, especially for the purpose of developing understandings of wisdom literature.²¹

He makes it very clear that there really is no choice in this inclusionary curriculum strategy, since, as Toni Morrison has written, "the trauma of racism is, for the racist and the victim, the severe fragmentation of the self;" besides, "we are not, in fact, 'other,'" (p.121) even though there is a wonderfully varied wellspring of perspective and perception that adds,

²¹ Quoting from The Teachings of Silvanus (Robinson, 1977), Slattery points to an ignorance easily identifiable as stupidity that can be acquired: "Wisdom summons you in her goodness, come to me all of you... that you may receive a gift of understanding which is good and excellent...what else is evil death except ignorance?...do not flee from education and the teaching, but when you are taught, accept it with joy...do not lose my teaching, and do not *acquire* ignorance, lest you lead your people astray." (My emphasis)

enriches, and enlivens when we consider the different ways of knowing and learning that an inclusionary multicultural democracy can provide.²²

Logically, the compulsory requirement for this mandated inclusiveness is similar to the imperative of multiculturalism for democracy. Slattery puts it this way:

The warning of postmodern theology that the death of God is also the death of self can also be applied to modern schooling as an admonition that ignorance of curriculum as theological text is educational suicide. Curriculum development in the postmodern era will understand that the *theological curriculum is the self in dialogue with eternal communal wisdom. The absence of this dialogue in modern schooling is a nihilism* to be resisted.
(p.81) (Emphasis added)

Curricula, World Views and the Self

The paradox here becomes evident in recognizing it is in the contemporary multiplicity of difference that is holistically mankind in which the singular and quintessential identity of the specie can be found in the individual. The attainment of this perspective is, as I read Slattery, dependent on the development of an awareness that enables interpretive inquiry, or hermeneutics, as the art of interpretation (Slattery, 1995, p. 103). However, interpretive inquiry, it is suggested, is best attained through the development of a multicultural lens.

For the postmodern educator, curriculum is about enabling and liberating. In this phylum racial, gender, and cultural dimensions of the postmodern curriculum are also occupied with the politics of power. Slattery vividly explores the works of Apple, Aronowitz,

²² In Slattery's project, a theological text imbedded in curriculum results in a holistic and synergistic wisdom. The equity of Chief Seattle's contemplation of the sale of Indian lands to the government, "If we sell you our land, you must keep it apart and sacred as a place where even whites can go to taste the wind." (p. 79) is positioned with Biblical references in addition to quotes from the Tao Te Ching of Loa Tsu (Needleman, 1989) that elucidate the essence of wisdom: "The highest good is like water, water gives life to ten thousand things and does not strive."

Giroux, Collins, et al, in constructing these connections. Essential in the designs of these architectures however, is the idea that multicultural debates recognize that people look at the world through different lenses. Our metaphysics, coupled with the social milieu in which we live, influences the creation of our world view and sense of self. We are also influenced by cultural norms and social constructions of others, both consciously and unconsciously.

So it is that even in defining through philosophy a theory of postmodern education, great care must be taken to heed Dewey's caution about avoiding the either/or. Slattery, for example, speaks of the

long standing and almost perennial philosophical debate between those who argue, like Mortimer Adler and Robert Hutchins, that education is a universal process that reflects a monolithic conception of human nature and those, like George Counts, who insist that education must be culturally relevant to particular situations and societies can be instructive to our discussion of the transformation of curriculum development in the postmodern era. We must be careful not to become polarized at either end of this debate. The more appropriate position recognizes the interdependence of the global condition and the local context. (p. 251)²³

The Stupidity of Inaction

In each of the selections we have reviewed thus far there are many thematic continuums. One of these most essential to all of the related theoretical propositions is the

²³ Which may be another way of saying that both views are valid: It is in this continuing dilemma of paradox - of natural opposition - we continually face in efforts to interpret ourselves. The idea of opposition itself may be so rooted in us that a genetically commanded propensity for a constant praxis of 'pecking order' may not only answer for oppositional behavior in both thought and action, but for all power struggle, including the worst of bigotry, bias and prejudice. Unfortunately, this question, while significantly relevant to my project, is too immense to be included here. My point is that a reality may be mankind as continually in conflict. Surely then it is possible that an imperative for the specie is to change the opposition that is conflict into an opposition that is complementary.

idea of action. By this I mean an enabling energy that comes to life in human performance, thus making it possible for theory, or thought, to become practice, or behavior.

Put another way, ethics and morality for example, simply do not exist unless human beings act ethically and morally. And, if they do not behave in ways that give action and therefore life to these principles, then the inimical theses come to life in their stead. In this argument the same is true of the freedom construct as well as that of the master narrative of democracy, curricula, and educational processes.

I sense there is in contemporary society a practice in which we assign principles to a categorical box of beliefs that is deposited for storage in our memory. Then, when the time is right to demonstrate our beliefs, we do exactly that. We recall the belief from memory and celebrate it on the appropriate national holiday.

Obviously, this is a form of living vicariously, similar to fantasy engagement practiced with movies and television. This behavior provides us with all of the appearance of principled action, and therefore intelligence, but there really isn't any action, and therefore it is stupid.

In Henry Giroux's (1991) work, Postmodernism, Feminism, and Cultural Politics, Redrawing Educational Boundaries, (1991) he argues that modernism, postmodernism, and feminism represent "three of the most important discourses for developing a cultural politics and the pedagogical practice capable of extending and theoretically advancing a radical politics of democracy" (p. 5). Surely these discourses may (and therefore may not) be as critical as Giroux forcefully remonstrates.

His argument is compelling, however, and not just because of the skill employed to overcome the complications inherent in using theorem that are concentrically incompatible,

conceptually dissimilar and conjecturally insufficient. Instead, it is in Giroux's discovery of new and relevant demands for social change that reawaken, in the classic sense, a purposive and corporeal end for political activity.

Emancipation Tradition

Taking each in their turn, Giroux takes a very close look at Habermas' view that the modern is commemorative as an era of emancipation.

In general terms, the political project of modernism is rooted in the capacity of individuals to be moved by human suffering so as to remove its causes, to give meaning to the principles of quality, liberty, and justice, and to increase those social forms that enable human beings to develop those capacities needed to overcome ideologies and material forms that legitimate and are embedded in relations of domination. (p. 11)

By building a bridge from this foundation of the modern across to the evolving landscape of the postmodern, Giroux selectively applies a Deweyesque stroke in pitting the positive with the possible. For Giroux, one must "adequately engage the relationship between discourse and power and the messy material relations of class, race and gender. Postmodern and feminist critiques... cannot be dismissed simply because they might be labeled as anti-modern or anti-rationalist" (Giroux, 1991, p. 16).

In effect, Giroux is calling for a renewed quest for emancipation while cautioning against the need to establish a defined time, place, or circumstance of that liberation. This, because the postmodern politic and polemic is resistant to categorization as Left or Right in large part because of its forming but unformed definition but also because the definitive capacity of these terms are inherently partial, temporary and periodic.

The Postmodern as Perspective Struggle

Giroux, rightly I think, sees the postmodern as struggle.

Its widespread appeal and conflict ridden terrain indicate that something important is being fought over, that new forms of social discourse are being constructed at a time when the intellectual, political and cultural boundaries of the age are being refigured amidst significant historical shifts, changing power structures, and emergent alternative forms of political struggle (Giroux, 1991, p.17).

Giroux also, wrongly I think, pre-supposes the relationship between discourse and reality.

"Of course, whether these new postmodernist discourses adequately articulate rather than reflect these changes is the important question" (p. 17).

If the change referred to as the transition from modern to post-modern is even a small part of what most scholars think it is, then I think one of the most important central and essential changes taking place is in what constitutes intelligence, and even more important, what constitutes stupidity.

As Giroux points out, Gary Peller, (1987) puts it this way:

What has been presented in our social-political and our intellectual traditions as knowledge, truth, objectivity, and reason are actually merely the effects of a particular form of social power, the victory of a particular way of representing the world that then presents itself as beyond mere interpretation, as truth itself. (Giroux, 1991, p. 21)

As positivism recedes then, the place of discourse in the new era is constant. It is both the articulation and the reflection of change. The precise interpretation of this change is up for grabs. Emily Hicks, (1988) for one, has shaped the challenge as one "framed within the contexts of shifting identities, the re-mapping of borders, and non-synchronous memories" (Giroux, 1991, p.22). Thus, postmodernism constitutes a general "attempt to transgress the

borders sealed by modernism, to proclaim the arbitrariness of all boundaries and to call attention to sphere of culture as a shifting social and historical construction" (p. 22).

Giroux, for one, is a little more specific:

By problematizing the dominant notion of tradition, postmodernism has developed a power sensitive discourse that helps subordinated and excluded groups to make sense out of their own social worlds and histories while...
...offering new opportunities to produce political and cultural vocabularies by which to define and shape their individual and collective identities. (p. 24)

Subjectivity in the Postmodern

Central to anyone's discourse that bespeaks the postmodern, then, is the conclusive content of subjectivity.²⁴ As Teresa Ebert (1988) has said, "subjectivity is the effect of a set of ideologically organized signifying practices through which the individual is situated in the world and in terms of which the world and one's self are made intelligible." (Giroux, 1991, p. 30).

Given this definition and its proximity to the centrality of that which is postmodern, Giroux and Hall, speak of a subjectivity that is now "read as multiple, layered and non-unitary; no longer viewed as merely the repository of consciousness and creativity, the self is constructed as terrain of conflict and struggle, and subjectivity is seen as site of both

²⁴ Well, perhaps *both* subjectivity and objectivity. Macroscopic environmental issues such as ozone depletion, for example, may well re-align boundaries and power alliances - including the cultural and political as well as individuals and the masses - as no other issue has yet. My point is agreement with basic premises referenced here that the interplay between man shaping environs and environs shaping man also include interplay between man shaping man and environs shaping environs. Ultimately then, the postmodern period may see changes in subjectivity that are so radical in their scope, content and the quickness with which they arise and become the standard, that contrasts with the unchanged infrastructures of the extant politic based on obsolete subjectivity, may be too stark to overcome through customary change. The results may include revolution or chaos, but for our purposes we may want to reflect on the possibility that the degree and extent to which large parts of the population will become stupid may be phenomenal, and most probably, incredible.

liberation and subjugation" (Giroux, 1991, p. 30). In my sense of them, there is in these views a kind of militaristic flair or accent. A sense of the battlefield fray where the terrain of conflict and struggle seems to be more comparable to the arena of a bullfight than the synergistic contest between say, lichen moss and arctic winter.

Perhaps it is a preference for a more epochal terrain that gives Giroux an appreciation for the feminist response to the question of the postmodern that is offered by people such as Bell Hooks (1989). Hooks seeks to go beyond the distinctions of separatist thought by appealing to a meaningful differentiation between the character of feminism as a liberation of women and the purpose of feminism as a liberating force for both women and men.

Domination Stupidity Revealed By Feminist Theory

She says as much quite directly:

Feminism, as liberation struggle, must exist apart from and as part of the larger struggle to eradicate domination in all its forms... This effort at revision is perhaps most evident in the current widespread acknowledgment that sexism, racism, and class exploitation constitute interlocking systems of domination - that sex, race and class, and not sex alone, determine the nature of any female's identity, status and circumstance, the degree to which she will or will not be dominated, the extent to which she will have the power to dominate. (Giroux, 1991, p. 33)

Hooks clearly understands domination cannot be diminished to a solitary source, form, style or intent, and while the differences that gender consciousness brings to bear on the subjective must be clearly understood, there are other power relationships that must not be forgotten or eclipsed. These other relationships center on issues about power and go beyond even race and class and these are the directions that Giroux points to when he celebrates the importance of feminine theory to the construction of a new dynamic and radical democracy.

From Linda Alcoff's (1988) appeal for positive discourse to Jane Flax's (1988) expansion of the locus of meaning beyond confines of reason, the feminist search for theory that recognizes the requisite function of difference while encompassing a capacity for inclusive solidarity brings a refreshing renewal to modern ideas about democratic possibilities. Joan Wallach Scott (1988), for one, has given us a wide range of possibility by reconciling difference and equality not as mutually exclusive but instead as factors that represent democratic plausibility.²⁵

For Scott, the opposite of equality is not difference but inequality. This simple return to more precise thinking removes entirely the popular corollary between difference and inequality. The possibilities, now, provide for visions of equalities that are founded on differences--"differences that confound, disrupt, and render ambiguous the meaning of any fixed binary opposition" (Giroux, 1991, p. 42). This automatically disqualifies the political polemic that sameness is a prerequisite of equality (an obvious tactic designed to further domination since power is always constructed from the basis of difference rather than sameness).

²⁵ In arguing that the solitary view of power as oppression always runs the risk of being too cynical, Giroux quotes Alcoff's argument, "You cannot mobilize a movement that is only and always against; you must have a positive alternative, a vision of a better future that can motivate people to sacrifice their time and energy toward its realization." Flax provides many examples of Alcoff's premise: "I cannot agree...that liberation, stable meaning, insight, self understanding, and justice depend above all on the "Primacy of reason and intelligence." There are many ways on which such qualities may be attained - for example, political practices, economic, racial and gender equality; good childrearing; empathy, fantasy; feelings; imagination; and embodiment. On what grounds can we claim reason is privileged or primary for the self or justice? Joan Scott's contribution to this uncontentious polemic is arguing "The issue of inequality is not at odds with notions of difference, but depends on an acknowledgment of differences that promote inequality and those that do not." This, in this sense at least, "The category of difference is central as a political construct to the notion of equality itself."

The Stupidity Threat to Democracy

Giroux's idea of a encompassing pedagogical response to the best of the modern, postmodern and feminism is an educating that produces not only information, but also political enlightenment. That is, schools must become "places of education in the service of creating a public sphere of citizens who are able to exercise power of their own lives and especially over the conditions of knowledge production and acquisition" (p. 46). Within this public spirited philosophy, educators must concentrate on "ethics and politics as a relationship between the self and others" (p. 47). And, borrowing from Sharon Welch, Giroux would have critical pedagogy center also on difference as a challenge to transform traditional politics by "educating on the ways groups are formed in ways that are integral to the functioning of democratic societies" (p. 49).²⁶

Likewise, Giroux would dispense with canon by "constructing a discourse of textual authority that is power sensitive and developed as part of a wider analysis of the struggle over culture" (p. 49). Consistent with this revolution of curricula, Giroux would have critical pedagogy create new forms of knowledge enabling citizens to gain power over their lives "By reformulating the enlightenment notion of reason" (p. 52) so that its bias becomes evident and its limitations known. To do these things, Giroux resurrects the progressive idea of teachers as "transformative intellectuals, as cultural workers engaged in the production of ideologies and social practices" (p. 53).

²⁶ Sharon Welch authored a chapter in Giroux's book that highlights two ideas about difference. First, difference in critical education as a part of understanding how "Identities and subjectivities are constructed in multiple and contradictory ways," and second, by understanding how differences are sustained we can then understand "How social groups are constituted in ways that are integral to the functioning of any democratic society."

In exploring the premise of a radical politics of democracy, Giroux has edited a book that features a number of essays written by authors such as Douglas Kellner, (*Reading Images Critically: Toward a Postmodern Pedagogy*), Sharon Welch, (*An Ethic of Solidarity and Difference*), Linda Brodkey and Michelle Fine, (*Presence of Mind in the Absence of Body*), Mariamne H. Watley, (*Raging Hormones and Powerful Cars: The Construction of Men's Sexuality in School Sex Education and Popular Adolescent Films*), Peter L. McLaren, (*Schooling the Postmodern Body: Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Enfleshment*), Leslie Gotfrit, (*Women Dancing Back: Disruption and the Politics of Pleasure*), and Phillip Corrigan, (*The Making of the Boy: Meditations on What Grammar School Did With, To, and For My Body*).

But, the thrust of this book is Giroux's message and he spares no effort in declaring in very plain fashion his concern about the challenge facing American democracy. He does this both in the Introduction (*Modernism, Postmodernism and Feminism: Rethinking the Boundaries of Educational Discourse*), and also in his own contribution, *Postmodernism as Border Pedagogy: Redefining the Boundaries of Race and Ethnicity*.

New Modernist Stupidity

While taking a very real risk of over-simplifying his thesis, Giroux's view is that great cultural pressures are being exerted on a capitalist republic that has constructed the appearance of an empowered (and shrinking) majority who have been schooled in a technocentric system designed for an extended industrial era.

While this schooling has served the interests of capitalism and consumerism, the advent of mass media has dangerously clouded reality with fantasy myth and thus impaired the capacity of the citizenry to think and act critically, and therefore democratically.

Given that increasing cultural pressures will continue to expand, the question is whether the democracy will recapture and expand its inclusive capacities or, whether stupidity's tactical reactionary forces of racism, sexism, and religious intolerance, to name a few, create a more problematic and destructive future.

Finally, a third element is at play in the technology of computerism and it is too soon to deliberate about the potential impact of this factor, beyond the obvious conclusion that it is a force and there will indeed be an effect.

Sophisticated Cause-Effect Stupidity

However, irrespective of the degree of change that will mark the environment, it appears the degree of intelligence or stupidity that can be assigned to mankind lies in the capacity of the specie to either effect proper or compatible changes to the environment or respond properly or compatibly, or, to do both, or to do some of these, or none of these. My interpretation of the literature thus far indicates to me this imperative is mandated by the circumstances of man, defined by an existence that is surely subjective, if not in its external universe, then certainly in the interpretation of that universe.

However, I think it is difficult to state this problem forcefully enough because the dimension of the problem is far greater than our capacity to effectively perceive it. Perhaps I can hint at it by alluding to the relationship between mankind and the environment as also meaning the constantly recurring reaction of the effected environment as a relationship between the

environment and mankind. The specie uses tools to shape the environment, for example, and now an environment of tools shapes the specie.

Teresa Ebert, defined subjectivity as "the effect of a set of ideologically organized signifying practices through which the individual is situated in the world and one's self are made intelligible" (Giroux, 1991, p. 30). Subjectivity, therefore, is the result of certain awareness' brought to mind through consciousness. A critically important issues now becomes the degree to which consciousness is or can be voluntarily intentional. By voluntarily intentional, I mean the capacity to develop and exercise both the content and the context of awareness(es) so the capability to reflect through an unlimited inventory of accurate situational awareness is extant and spontaneous.²⁷ I think we assume this capacity, and I suggest that may be a fundamental stupidity.

Excerpts From The Eleventh Interview

Danesha is a 9-year-old fourth grader living in south Texas. She recently moved to Texas with her parents, who are in the Air Force, from Fairbanks, Alaska, which is a place she remembers vividly.

"There's plenty of things that are stupid," Danesha says:

Clowns are stupid because they are always laughing but they aren't funny. Instead, they are scary, with all that paint on and those costumes.

²⁷ Reading the essays that Giroux has sculpted as sinew on the marrow postmodernism, feminism and cultural politics in his effort to "Redraw educational boundaries," I'm becoming increasingly agitated by the idea that the battle against stupidity, as a state of being that seems to have capacities that are horrid, may be the only ultimately legitimate role for the educator. If stupidity is what it seems to be, then what educators do is most important to the praxis and survival of mankind. An educator can give mankind reasons for living. Therefore, educators can define not only mankind but life itself.

Splash town does some stupid things. They have some small tubes that are too small for large people. But they give them to them. That's stupid.

Jeeps are stupid. The ones with no tops or those raggedy tops. They're not covered well and people can get wet when it rains. That's really stupid.

Danesh's friend ("She's not stupid, but she sure does stupid things") in Alaska, in kindergarten, stuck her tongue on an icicle and it froze to it. She was hurt. Part of her tongue came off. That was stupid because "she wasn't thinking--she should have known better."

In school, being stupid is "when you daydream, forget, or think you're ready when you're not. Sometimes kids do these things, act stupid, on purpose."

Now Danesh's has a best friend who "knows she'll get in trouble but does it anyway. She acts stupid on purpose. In computer class she always acts stupid so she can do other things on the computer besides what she is supposed to be doing. She acts stupid as an excuse so she can be sneaky. But it's all stupid....Know what I mean?" She (her friend) "gets stupid about reading all the time. She doesn't get good grades because she acts stupid but she's smart. I think she's just bored," Said Danesh's.

Also, "America's funniest videos is really stupid. They get stupid on purpose all the time. They must think we're stupid and don't notice."

Stupidity As Choice

"Penrose contends thinking is not an algorithmic activity involving computational processes... ..He contends consciousness did not emerge as a result of increased complexity, as Edelman contends, but required new infinitesimal but incredible sophisticated biological structures to sustain it. Penrose leads us through the paradoxical world of quantum events to suggest mind and consciousness do not obey

**the laws of classical physics nor do they square with general relativity...
...Consciousness is an elusive target of neuroscience because it is a holistic phenomenon
of mind in body seemingly indeterminate with respect to locality and time."**

(Review by Thomas C. Dalton of Roger Penrose, *Shadows of the Mind: A Search for the Missing Science of Consciousness*, 1994)

Consciousness

To me, consciousness is when the mind's eye and the eye's mind meet. This is not the place where they meet, it is the meeting itself, the happening, the thing of it all, the when we are being human. The living moment. And, I think it is the most original aspect about us there is. It is why each of us are artists above all other things. We can create. But it is even more than originality, I think, it is the mechanism by which each of us are endowed (sooner or later in either the contemporary manifestation or somewhere in the genealogy of genetic experience) with a unique talent, the unique talent that I think all good teachers believe every child has. It is the magic moment when we humanize both ourselves and the world.

In The Conscious Mind, In Search of a Fundamental Theory, David Chalmers (1996), defines consciousness as the subjective quality of experience (Chalmers, p. 6). But, do not think for one moment the paucity of this definition means Chalmers is not bothered, if not captured, by the essence of consciousness as the possibility of understanding humanity and perhaps also of understanding all existence as well.

You will remember Adler argued that science and philosophy were not suited to answer the same questions. He set out to demonstrate that one of the unrecognized capacities of philosophy was its capability to explore issues that science was not suited to. In reading Chalmers, it is important to keep Adler's work in mind as a defining reference since Chalmers' dilemma, as I read his text, is not in recognizing this stance, but in adopting it:

David Chalmers, while an undergraduate in his native Australia, majored in mathematics. However, he became intrigued by questions about consciousness and he decided, in order to pursue these questions, to change his major to philosophy. He then attended Indiana University where he studied at the Center for Research on Concepts and Cognition and he also studied for two years at Washington University through a fellowship in philosophy, neuroscience and psychology.

As was the case with Wood, I find myself fighting some bias when reading Chalmers' work. In this case it is a reaction to what I sense is a scientist seeking to discover an existential content, through the context of philosophical inquiry, being applied as science. This is how I perceive Chalmers' search for a fundamental theory of consciousness. While I think his work is an important accomplishment that highlights the significance of consciousness, I also think Chalmers' effort is permeated with the frustration of his inability to dispense with the rationalism demanded by the scientific method.

Trying to Theorize Consciousness

Here, for example, is his approach to the study of consciousness: Constraints he attempted to obey include the taking of consciousness seriously, which is to say that he accepts it exists, it is not an illusion, even if he cannot prove (Chalmers, 1996, p. 12) it exists, even though at the same time his search for a fundamental theory is intended to find that proof. A second constraint is to take science seriously by not disputing scientific theory "in those domains where they have authority," but at the same time refusing to accept the suggestion of a physicist or cognitive scientist that consciousness can be explained in physical

terms. This he calls a "hope ungrounded in current theory" so the "question remains open" (p. 13).

But, Chalmers believes consciousness is a natural phenomenon governed by natural laws so it should be covered by some "correct scientific theory whether or not we can arrive at such a theory," and since this author seems ready to admit that this might be too much equivocation and positivism at the same time, Chalmers works through the massive limitations facing him by postulating an orientation: "This is not to say that the natural laws concerning consciousness will be just like the laws in other domains, or even that they will be physical laws. They may be quite different in kind" (p. 13).

While arguing that "reductive explanation of consciousness is impossible," and even arguing for "a form of dualism," (p.14) Chalmers strictly adheres to the idea of science as truism and law that he will not abandon: "Everything I say here is compatible with the results of contemporary science." This, even in the face of a reference to the applicability of a naturalistic theory of consciousness. Thus, he articulates quite clearly that he intends to eschew the philosophical notions of identity, between physical and mental states, because, as is widely agreed, "consciousness supervenes on the physical in some sense, so the real question is how tight the connection is" (p.14).

Chalmers reserves this approach as the only avenue for serious inquiry about consciousness since, in his estimation, "discussions that ignore these modal issues generally avoid the hardest questions about consciousness" (p. 14). and while he admits those who are skeptical of modal notions will be skeptical of his entire work, there is no other way to satisfactorily frame the issue, according to his thinking.

The Subjectivity of Consciousness

My own view of consciousness clashes with that of Chalmers not so much because we would probably disagree with the final view of it as much as I disagree that scientific methodology will result in what I think would be an adequate appreciation of consciousness any more than it would provide an adequate appreciation of the Mona Lisa. By this I mean that Chalmers' use or misuse of scientific methodology, no matter how naturalistic he attempts to be, depends on uncovering physiological methodology (that is, methods as mechanisms) while ignoring the magic of human intelligence itself.

What this leaves of course, and as I read him he recognizes this fully, is the possibility of magic because of the implausibility of all other explanations. However, I think Chalmers is deeply disturbed by the plausibility and possibility of life (or some aspect of it) that may be without explanation.

In fact, because Chalmers is such a hybrid philosopher, or hybrid scientist, take your pick, he recognizes this potential for 'magic' almost apologetically, and he even goes out of his way to point out he is not a religious man since "temperamentally, I am strongly inclined toward materialist reductive explanation, and I have no strong spiritual or religious inclinations" (p.14).

Mind Concepts

Still, Chalmers' work has much to give us in developing some contexts about awareness and experience that also relate well to the potential for the development of stupidity theory as well as parenthetically, Dewey's idea of educating.

This is because Chalmers, while never arriving at a fundamental theory about consciousness, does a great job reviewing every other exploration of consciousness that modern (read scientific--meaning since Descartes and Freud) philosophy and psychology can provide on the subject of the mental state, if not consciousness. Chalmers first takes us through the two concepts of mind, the psychological and the phenomenal, which might be simplistically thought of as the experiential (if not conscious) and the other than conscious (essentially subconscious and unconscious).

Chalmers insists there are no other mental states though I might argue a possibility exists, in the genetic potential, of a third mental state existing beyond even the unconscious. A gene brain or mentality, if you will, where all of the processing of individual human life in terms of inclinations, possibilities, and capacities, are fabricated and processed, (in a purely biological world perhaps?) and while that work is being done, a consciousness exists.

As well, I might argue there exists a supra conscious where awareness is being constructed at such speed that it is more than unconscious or subconscious, it is instinctual, as best demonstrated in some of the mental gymnastics of lightning quick minds as well as the physical behavior of superstar athletes; even though these examples are too negligible to capture the potency of the idea. It probably has more to do with something along the way of little birds flying or little fish swimming. Suffice to say at this point, there are times when we do not think, but act.

But I am quibbling with an important piece of work. The Oxford University Press wrote on Chalmer's book jacket,

Chalmers convincingly establishes that contemporary cognitive science and neuroscience do not begin to explain how subjective experience emerges from neural processes in the brain. He proposes that conscious experience must instead be understood in a new light – as an irreducible entity (like physical properties as time, mass, and space) that exists at a fundamental level and cannot be understood as the sum of simpler parts (reductionism). In the second part of the book he sets out on a quest for a fundamental theory, a theory of the basic laws governing the structure and character of conscious experience – and shows how this re-conception of the mind could lead us to a new science of consciousness.

The Challenge to Materialism

As I have mentioned, Chalmers does this with exceptional adherence to scientific principle and modern philosophy and in so doing provides us with a prodigious challenge to contemporary ideas about what it may mean to be human and to think and learn and perhaps even to choose not to. This is because Chalmers gives us convincing arguments about what consciousness isn't, and principally it isn't logically supervenient on the physical and, if there are phenomena that aren't logically supervenient on the physical facts, then "materialism is false" (p. 123).

Obviously, any finding that materialism--the ascendancy of the higher order of the physical--is false opens up the possibility of a nonphysical world. As I interpret Chalmers, there is a great potential for epiphenomenalism, in that experience, albeit consciousness, can be epiphenomenal, or independent, of the physical world. This has to do with a variety of criteria that include those ideas that define and relate experience, awareness, phenomenal judgments, and consciousness.

For my purposes, I find one of the most important contributions that Chalmers provides us in his views that about naturalistic dualism. For example, in reviewing the argument that materialism is false, Chalmers outlines the contention in this way:

- In our world, there are conscious experiences.
- There is a logically possible world physically identical to ours, in which the positive facts about consciousness in our world do not hold.
- Therefore, facts about consciousness are further facts about our world, over and above the physical facts.
- So, materialism is false. (p. 123)

Quoting Lewis (1990), "consciousness carries phenomenal information. The physical facts incompletely constrain the way the world is; the facts about consciousness constrain it further" (Chalmers, 1996, p. 123). This provides the inherent dualism (that is also paradoxical) in that there are both physical and nonphysical features of the world.

For Chalmers, this dualism is naturalistic because of the plausibility that consciousness supervenes naturally (as opposed to logically) on the physical.²⁸ He isn't sure whether this (consciousness) is a substance or a property and puts the issue this way:

This is not to say it is a separate substance; the issue of what it would take to constitute a dualism of substances seems quite unclear to me. All we know is there are properties of individuals in this world, the phenomenal properties, that are ontologically independent of physical properties. (p. 125).

²⁸ Chalmers earnestly and thoroughly distinguishes his view from that of Cartesian dualism. He does not view consciousness as a "Separate realm of mental substance exerting its own influence on physical processes." Rather, it may be a separate property, but it is dependent on physical properties. I agree, but I think more attention should be given the impact of the potentially immense capacity of consciousness as a factor that has much to do with the degree of "dependence" on physical properties. For example, surely the possibility exists the physical may supervene on consciousness. This plausibility, I think, increases with the rate of revelation resulting from an examination of the scope and depth of consciousness.

Experience Reality and the Judgment Caveat

Of course, any scientist would find it difficult to leave it at that, and Chalmers, I think, is no different in this regard. Interestingly, he offers a view, (in pursuit of views that would be compatible with a contemporary scientific world view), that I think is exceptionally plausible, which is to take "experience itself as a fundamental feature of the world, alongside space-time, spin, charge, and the like. That is, certain phenomenal properties will have to be taken as basic properties" (p. 126).

However, I think the difficulty, conceptually speaking, that science will always have with consciousness is that it is fundamentally and essentially, a word use to describe the arriving at of judgments, or the process of making judgments. In my view, this is the magic moment, or more precisely, the moment of magic, that Chalmers acknowledges as possibility but also confesses he will not accept the idea of magic because of its unscientific character.

In any event, I am going to assume, and accept this assumption as a premise, that consciousness is the moment of judgment, and judgment is the process that develops awareness. Awareness, in turn, is the lens that we choose to use to perceive, interpret, and select a reality from the experience we are having. I realize there is a significant difference between this premise about consciousness and those that Chalmers deliberates.

Chalmers puts the idea by suggesting,

As a basic principle that information (in the actual world) has two aspects, a physical and a phenomenal aspect. Whenever there is a phenomenal state it realizes an informational state that is also realized in the cognitive system of the brain. Conversely, for at least some physically realized information spaces, whenever an information state in that space is realized physically, it is also realized phenomenally. (p. 286)

The problem, for both Chalmers' view, and mine, is the defining of the physical reality. I avoid the issue by using the term 'experience' while Chalmers thinks in terms of 'information.' I think there is agreement however, this is the fundamental problem and Chalmers, to his credit, deliberates at length on the importance of the ontological issue of information.

However, for my purposes I think it is best at this point to agree that judgment is arrived at. When Chalmers says "a conscious experience is the realization of an information state; a phenomenal judgment is explained by another realization of the same information state," (p. 292) I don't think the difference between is so great when I would phrase the issues as a conscious state exists when a judgment is made from an experience. (And, I see this as the germination moment that is either the basis of stupidity or intelligence).

The Reality Caveat

I disagree with Chalmers over the constitution of reality, which he terms, if I understand him accurately, an information state, that exists in the universe irrespective of human existence. That may be, but I am not so concerned about reality as an information state as I am about the realities that people conjure, or interpret, or judge, from their experience, and consequently use to shape their behavior or behavioral responses.

Chalmers and I come close to seeing consciousness as the same thing:

The view that there is experience wherever there is causal interaction is counterintuitive. But it is a view that can grow surprisingly satisfying with reflection, making consciousness better integrated into the natural order. If the view is correct, consciousness does not come in sudden jagged spikes, with isolated complex systems arbitrarily producing rich conscious experiences. Rather, it is a more uniform property of the universe with very simple systems having very simple phenomenology, and complex systems having complex phenomenology. This makes consciousness less "special" in some ways and so more reasonable. (p. 298)

Here our disagreement is over the definitions of simple and complex systems, which I would transpose, and his choice not to include at this point the treatment that he previously provided in ideas about awareness. In my view, awareness is a range of imagination, or possibilities, (as in possible scenarios or paradigms) that is developed and generated when judgments are made from experience. I believe that they are based on the character or properties of the experiences. Therefore, the more the individual has been challenged by experience(s) the more awareness(es) they have.

The Likelihood of the Unknowable

However, because I cannot conclude, or even agree with other conclusions, about the irrefutable and absolute character of the reality of what the information state, or physical world, is, even in the most abstract sense, I must believe reality is what we guess it is. I simply find it too great a leap in logic to suppose we know--absolutely--what and why the universe is.

Therefore, I agree with Chalmers when he says "it is clear by now that all interpretations of quantum mechanics are to some extent crazy" (p. 356). However, I also agree with Everett's (1957, 1973) interpretation of quantum mechanics that Chalmers opines, "is almost impossible to believe (because) it postulates there is vastly more in the world than we are ever aware of" (p. 356). Nevertheless, I agree with Everett precisely because "on this interpretation, the world is really in a giant superposition of states that have been evolving in different ways since the beginning of time, and we are experiencing only the smallest substate of the world" (Chalmers, 1996, p. 356).

Thus, to simplify, consciousness is when we arrive at our best guess about reality. And evidently, if in the shortest term, the guess seems to be a shared view in our most elementary and common approach to the sociology that is our behavioral interaction with other humans, we're considered smart. If not, we're considered stupid.

Excerpts From the Twelfth Interview

Cal is a fifty-eight year old married counseling psychologist who privately practices Adlerian Therapy and specializes in adjustment disorders, sex abuse issues, depression, grieving, and anxiety disorders. In addition, Cal teaches graduate courses in counseling psychology as a psychology department head and writes articles for both general readership and professional journals. A former Air Force officer during the Vietnam Era, Cal has completed post doctoral studies at the Alfred Adler Institute, the Institute for Studies of The Person, and others. He currently resides in the desert southwest.

Cal says he is very excited about the idea of theory development in stupidity. He believes there is a lack of willingness to talk about stupidity on the part of most people because it is a haunted house and a taboo in our society. Cal believes we will one day realize we have been very stupid to avoid the topic of stupidity for so long. He agrees with the idea that stupidity theory could lead to forms of conceptualizing learning theory.

From a family counseling therapy perspective, Cal believes there are a number of reasons why people behave stupidly, predominantly because the "family system plays a major role in setting up stupefying rules." He has numerically listed them as follows:

1. The first rule is don't rise above the system. Children receive messages over time through modeling and the things they hear. They will be stupid at times to hide their talents because they want a place in the family.

2. The family system has role assignments--the stupid one, the scapegoat, the outcast, the clown--and family members generally feel rather than having no identity, they take the role assigned them in order to have a place within the system.

3. Birth order expectations play a role in the stupefying process as children work to live up to the expectations according to birth order that the parents and then rest of the family impose.

4. Self-fulfilling prophecy. Families condition through the Pygmalion effect (number 1-3 above) and develop extremely strong conditioning that is rarely grown out of broken in many cases.

5. Other stupidity observations include the appearance of stupidity which in many cases is a reflection of the trance state of deep thought that is particularly focused in certain awareness not related to the general environment.

6. The choice of being stupid is probably mostly an unconscious one--as people sense out the rules of the game so they can then play by the rules.

7. Organizational stupidity is extremely evident. In employment, for example, First-raters hire second-raters, second-raters hire third-raters, etc. Authoritarian personality syndrome relates to this competition avoidance. In addition to hiring yes men. The subsequent behavior becomes extremely stupid.

8. Schools stupefy people in very large measure through the pass-fail, graded and competitive paradigms. This, schooling, is one of the major reasons why stupid behavioral patterns are developed and the ideas of stupidity become tainted with the haunted house and taboo representations.

9. Following on schooling, the idea of intelligence lends itself to the development of stupidity because it is so completely wide of the mark in defining intelligence as a global or aggregate thing.

10. Staying with education in general, As we gain new things, we often have to give up other awareness, ideas, facts, capacities or talents and thus processes of our life styles can have stupefying effects. For example, children who have 'photographic mind' capacities who then are steeped in language use eventually give up or lose their photographic mind capabilities.

11. Some of the most evidently voluntary stupid behaviors are the mini-suicidal behaviors people experience as they lose interest in life and participate in self destructive or otherwise harmful behavior consistent with their increasing lack of self esteem.

12. There's a ghetto, POW, and school child stupidity system or strategy for survival. In these behaviors, being stupid evokes certain responses from authority or agents of the dominant cultural power that provide enough emotional, psychological, and physical relief to allow survival, but not enough to provide for nourishment and growth.

13. Lack of meaning. Stupidity arises when people don't know how to orient themselves in ways that result in enough meaningfulness to give them motivation and inspiration.

14. Common sense is uncommon sense because it is in such limited supply, however it is a way of thinking that can probably be taught and we should do so. Not having common sense or teaching it, is stupid.

15. Identity confusion. Adolescents as well as some adults have this. You lose orientation and appear stupid because the core of what you are is lost. It is stupid not to track down the social sources of this phenomenon and change the processes involved. Cal believes that have to do with institutional identity conflicts between family, school, peer group, work, etc.

16. Rape, family system violence, war, etc., are self defeating behavior that is stupid. A higher, wider, deeper and more serious reinforcement of these behaviors as stupid can do a lot to remove justification and rationalization of them. A related issue is illusion of control as among battered women, that results in them staying in a situation, stupidly.

17. The grossest stupidity is the continuing slow destruction of the planet. The capacity to choose to be unaware of the ways and degrees to which we pollute is incredible. We cannot keep blundering around, stupidly, on a day to day basis, only worrying about things when they hit us on the head.

18. We tend to laugh about things we fear. Certain punch lines have issues with notions about stupidity. Why do we fear stupidity so much? A counseling technique is to imagine standing on a corner holding a placard describing yourself. The one thing I would want people to never see on that placard is: I am stupid.

19. Stupefication can be a real advance as the beginning of wisdom. Through it we can understand how Indians give life to inanimate objects. We need to learn how to recognize the reality of a situation versus what we think about it. Stupidity lies between the two too many times.

20. Anyone operating through the philosophy of win-lose is being stupid. Win-lose is lose-lose in disguise. Unfortunately, win-lose is probably a predominant trait of our culture. Perhaps then, stupidity is too?

21. Stupidity is a many factored thing. Can it be categorized, type I, type II? How would we organize it?

22. A personal belief: we can choose to be stupid as a badge of belonging as in a family--don't get too high or too wise--stay dumbed down in order to fit in, everywhere. In gangs it is a badge of belonging. Isn't it just about everywhere else too in society?

23. Some more stupidity reactions: Bumper sticker, American My Country Love It Or Leave It (think without analyzing), my family: love it or leave it; my idea: love it or leave it; abusive people, (my rules): love it or leave it.

24. In schools stupefaction occurs when they move from internal to external control, such as an (cited a study) art teacher drawing a tree, but allowing it to be drawn only as she wants it. So we succeed in school only by giving up our own versions of the tree, views of the world, and become stupefied by doing so.

25. In family, father-son modeling bypasses conscious mind and goes into behavior and becomes ingrained. Dad smoked himself to death, so does the son. This is stupidity-in-process.

26. An Adlerian notion: as we move through life we make less and less mistakes as we grow older, thus Cal feels his whole life has been involved with stupidity, but he realizes that is what makes him human and understandable. When we sin we miss the mark (Latin meaning of the word) and when we are stupid, maybe it is a missing of the mark.

27. Keep working this project. It will have a great deal of application in education and counseling, and just about everything else too! This is a very powerful project you are doing because in opening up the topic of stupidity you will allow human behavior to be looked at in a new way, yet one everyone can relate to.

Stupidity Samples From Cyberspace

"...Moderns constitute a new species of human with a markedly enhanced ability to innovate and to create variations in way of life. This enhanced ability apparently enabled groups of modern humans to penetrate and occupy a greater range of habitat types than could any group of archaics, though ostensibly they were living in much the same was as had all the archaics before them."

(Norman Sides, *Adaptive Niche of Archaic Humans*, The Internet, 1995)

Researching The Electronic Habitat

In much of the contemporary philosophical academic debate centering on the disciplines of the Social Sciences, especially in Sociology and Anthropology, and particularly as these relate to ethnographic presentations, a concern with the impact of the postmodern is in progress. Many identify a tendency, resulting from the impact of postmodern paradigms, to widen the range of exploration in declaring and asserting the sociologic or the cultural:

"The once stable category of ethnography, a well established approach to social research in anthropology and some schools of sociology, (such as symbolic interactionism), has recently undergone a process of fragmentation. Centrifugal forces

have given rise to a multiplicity of standpoints. One can now identify an almost carnivalesque variety of approaches, sometimes inspired by a departure from former analytic traditions... ..One can recognize the interplay of poststructuralism, postmodernism, feminism, and postcolonialism."

"...The weakening of cultural and disciplinary boundaries has been spurred by a movement which we might usefully call the rediscovery of rhetoric. Rhetoric is no longer consigned to the margins of legitimate scholarship. It has more recently been recognized as central to scholarly work and production."
(Coffey, Holbrook, Atkinson, 1996).

To specifically respond to the above, this narrative or rhetorical work is indeed quite contemporary as I have chosen a particular school of research methodology (Phenomenological Phenomenographic) that is only a couple of decades old and ethnogeographically speaking, a Scandinavian practice applied in adult education.

More generally however, I selected the Internet as an integral component in this project because it is an approach that has:

exciting possibilities for qualitative researchers. Many people working with qualitative data, whether they use field notes, interviews, oral history, or documentary sources, feel frustrated by the necessity of imposing a single linear order on those materials. It is after all, part of the rationale of ethnographic and similar approaches that the anthropologist, sociologist, historian, psychologist or whoever, recognizes the complexity of social inter-relatedness. (Coffey, Holbrook, Atkinson, 1996).

As an on-line resource the Internet functions as a kaleidoscopic response to a great many different perceptions of demand. In completing this work the Internet has functioned as the soul provider, if not source, of research including by way of illustration, the foregoing passage taken from Sociological Research Online Vol. 1, no. 1, which can be found at the address: (<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/1/14.html>.)²⁹

²⁹ Although many books have been purchased in support of this project, all of them have been ordered through the on-line services of national booksellers.

Procedures

In order to survey ideas, paradigms and philosophies that constitute shared views in our most elementary and common approach to the sociology that is our behavioral interaction with other humans, I selected the electronic resource termed the Internet as both a process and sample source of information.

Before proceeding, I would like to refer to Onar Am's (1994) article about *Cyberspace and the Structure of Knowledge*, in which he points out two free dimensions of hypertext:

The first is dimension along the text. I will regard a text as horizontal, and reading as horizontal motion. The other is the dimension along the nodes in the hierarchy. I regard the hierarchy as vertical....We know that most of our knowledge is hidden at any time, and to "see" a landscape of knowledge which is much, much greater than our mental view field we have to wander around.

In its wandering around and interpreting text the computer and the operator must match concepts through words. Accordingly, the following results represents a widely varied thematic representation.

In designing this effort, I am using the following meanings: Loosely defined, ideas are those motifs, arguments, or propositions that construct a conceptual representation of a circumstance or scenario. Paradigms, on the other hand, are models that have extensive and highly defined contextual properties sufficient to combine or pattern, common idealized criteria into classic standards or prototypical paragons. In a sense they are manifested realities, but for the purposes of this dissertation, they should be considered more as realized myth than determined truth.

Philosophies should be seen in, and understood as, their most common and informal states. Also, they should be interpreted as related to their reflection of not only what is constituted as popular or trended thought, but also related to what is constituted as popular thought communicated on the informal avenues of the information highway (i.e., informal Internet thought).

By our most elementary and common approach to sociology, I mean the conceptualizations of our almost instinctive mental, emotional and verbal interaction that is conscious and automatic and represents our first level, unexamined, and spontaneous social intercourse. However, I also include in this description technical palaver and the use of specialized jargon as well as references to literature and narratives taken from a historic context. Still, it is not so much the degree of formality of the communication that I mean to examine as much as the state of consciousness and type and level of awareness that envelops the interaction. In other words, what context are people responding to and why are they providing the content of their response?

The Internet Process

Finally, when I refer to the Internet as both a process and sample source of information, I refer to its capacity to be both of these, holistically and inseparably. As a process, the Internet is an electronic system that one participates through, in my case, a computer located in my home. As a subscriber to an Internet provider, I access, through my telephone service, a 'search' program that allows me to request information by accessing an unknown amount of other computers, computer systems, and electronic computerized databases.

As a research method there is little I can do to manipulate this process. For example, I can select one from about a half dozen different search engines or programs that will search throughout the available systems to either locate a specific computer coded address, or collect any number of data that corresponds to a word, name, or phrase that I ask the program to search for. Otherwise, the process reflects the logic of the engineered software and the protocol is consistent and invariant.

In my estimation, as a sample source of information, the Internet serves as window into, or mirror image, of the U.S. American culture (and increasingly, of other cultures as well) because of two predominant characteristics. First, the size of the Internet in terms of the width and depth of the scope of information and data available is too immense to be anything but a reflection of society. And, because that information and data is dynamic and experiencing constant change, it is also a window into the culture. In a sense, considering the dynamic property of the Internet, it could also be said that one can engage or join or participate in the culture through the Internet.

Second, the range or degree of diversity of thought as an eclectic portraiture of the different and uncommon and independent that is found on the Internet is simply not accessible, I think, elsewhere. I have heard the argument that home pages, forums, chat boxes, and similar sources represent the views of hosts and participants who are evidently owners of computers and are therefore representative of an economic class, if nothing else. Perhaps there may be some minor validity to this view but I don't believe it is sufficient to conclude the Internet is not representative of the society at large.

My experience is the accessibility of on line computers in the school, the library, the workplace, and the home, should be viewed not only in terms of ownership, but also in light of those who borrow or otherwise obtain access, along with those who influence the system (and are represented by it if only in terms of data). Many who do not own computers, especially those such as students, children and grandchildren, have some forms of limited access. Also, there is a significant community who represent, (even if they are not necessarily representative of) the full, albeit compartmentalized, range of our socially and culturally diverse populace. I would argue practically everyone, (as phylum), is in some form or fashion, represented on the Internet.

Finally, when one accesses the Internet through a single word search the sources and responses that arrive are, as far as the operator is concerned, random selections. In my attempts to generate responses in this manner, however, very few were obtained. Therefore, while the responses I have included in this study many were obtained using the command to research the words *stupid* and *stupidity*, others represented more sophisticated searches, such as *stupidity in education*, and the like. Almost all responses pinpointed words or phrases imbedded in larger narratives, such as articles in published works or posted on the Net by the authors, but for the most part they were gained through the use of the Electric Library, an on-line service.

The Sample

In the following sample each response is prefaced with information about source and circumstance. Selection reflects the contextual criteria provided under the foregoing Procedure paragraph.

Stupidity of Reality

Neimeyer and Mahoney, Constructivism in Psychology, Contemporary Psychology, 1995, quoting Lily Tomlin as Trudy, the Bag Lady, reviewed by C. R. Snyder:

I refuse to be intimidated by reality anymore. After all, what is reality anyway? 'Nothin' but a collective hunch...I made some studies, and reality is the leading cause of stress amongst those in touch with it...Now, since I put reality on a back burner, my days are jam-packed and fun filled...when I think of the fun I missed, I try not to be bitter.

Stupidity of High Intelligence

Ethnic NewsWatch, Softline Information, Inc., Stamford, CT. Kathy Nash, Can Intelligence Hurt You?, EEO BiMonthly, Equal Employment Opportunity Career Journal, 31 Dec 1996. This article reviews the book, Why Smart People Do Dumb Things, by Mortimer Feinberg, Ph.D., and John Tarrant:

Using examples such as Jesse Jackson's use of an ethnic slur; Stephen Chao's (whiz kid of the Rupert Murdoch empire) hiring a male stripper to perform during his remarks to his boss and a collection of ultra conservatives; Ed Rollins' confession of bribery and tricks to secure Christine Whitman's 1993 New Jersey gubernatorial win; Nixon, Haldeman, and Erlichman's third person detachment to insulate consciousness from reality; and Gary Hart's challenge to the media, Feinberg and Tarrant characterize various "states of mind" that can trigger what they term "Self Destructive Intelligence Syndrome," or "SIDS." This is defined as a "virus" that causes people with high intelligence to self-destruct. This occurs, they say, because brilliant but immature people fall victim to the Feinberg Factor, which is when strong intelligence tends to subvert itself.

Apparently, the Feinberg Factor occurs because extraordinary mental dexterity often impedes emotional growth. Therefore, the very strength of your IQ could put you at risk to

suddenly say or do something that damages a relationship, ruins a career, or destroys a dream. Then, you can blame it on hubris, the arrogant pride that is the dark side of high intelligence.

States of mind that can trigger SIDS include the following:

- The Disconnect Effect. This occurs when people engineer a detachment that insulates consciousness from reality, thus impeding healthy self examination. An example is the attitude, "It can't happen to me."
- Unconscious Need to Fail. Feinberg points to the need to fail as the dark side of hubris and intelligence.
- The Arrogance of Entitlement. According to Feinberg, Senator Bob Packwood, Jim Bakker, and Jimmy Swaggert, and Gary Hart fell victim to this state of mind.

Other observations made by the authors include the attractiveness of seemingly good ideas that allow or enable people to rationalize acts that lead to big trouble, leading Feinberg and Tarrant to say, "it takes real brains to do something that dumb."

This last premise is restated as a conclusion that:

God might have given some people dazzling intelligence but that IG advantage was often accompanied by potentially destructive personality quirks. Much of this, apparently, has its beginning in the early stages of social life as kids of above average intelligence breeze through school and are continually praised....

Because of this high IQ kids can develop that sense of entitlement early. Thus, the truth is, outstanding intelligence, good looks and wealth can actually work against people.

To fight against SIDS, the authors recommend people admit their mistakes, change reactions to mistakes by learning from them, understand failure is part of success, so keep

trying, and, when you see someone smart doing something dumb, ask yourself, "how do I know something like this can't happen to me?"

Stupidity of Surrendering Intelligence

Hearst Corporation, Hamill, Pete, End Game. (Social Breakdown in the U.S.), Esquire, 1 Dec 1994.

This ten and one half page article covers so much ground its difficult to reduce to synopsis. Essentially, this is a critique of U.S. American civil society, a culture in which "boneheaded vulgarians are honored for their stupidity." The theme is that American society, both socially and politically, is in decline and "approaching Endgame, the moment when the chessboard is clear and victory is certain. Victory over everybody. The reduction of the opposition to rubble."

American civil society, long founded on the notion of e pluribus unum, is being swept away by a poisonous flood tide of negation, sectarianism, self pity, confrontation, vulgarity and flat-out old fashioned hatred. Politics is an ice jam of accusation and obstruction..., ...Pop culture... has no room for lyricism, melody, or wit. The only acceptable human emotion is rage....

Specific social and political targets of this indictment include mass entertainment In all its forms, electronic and print media, where there:

spews forth a relentless message of contempt for democratic institutions...
...Anyone with compassion is a target, anyone with a sense of complexity is scorned... ..accents are jeered. Complicated issues are reduced to cartoons. The drumbeat... ..is ominous: Hate Washington, hate the media, hate the liberals, hate the blacks, hate the dark-skinned and their babies, hate democracy, all disguised, of course, as a love for America.

Among the results of honoring of stupidity, or reduction of the American elan to the "complexity of a T-shirt," is the ascendancy of the phony, the deception, the show, as exemplified by Beavis and Butt-head, to Roseanne, to Reggie Miller and Neon Deion. The

effect of this "tide of simpleminded stupidity," is the loss of capacities to examine; judge objectively; develop a capacity for civilizing through the arts; develop an appreciation for conflict resolution outside of violence; and go beyond a narrow parochialism.

Part of the division of society fostered by opposition and violent conflict is the separation cultivated by a refinement of American identities "not shaped by will, choice, reason, intelligence, and desire but instead, by adjectives of race, religion, ethnicity, and gender." This because "The existential philosophers of my youth insisted existence preceded essence, that you were born and then you forged your identity; the philosophers of gender and ethnicity insist that essence precedes existence."

Associated with this malaise are two more major deficiencies that lend themselves to the stupefying of America and its dream. These include the

overriding educational goal to make students--in particular minority students--feel better about themselves...unless they feel better...and have greater self esteem...they can't learn. The need to think better, with greater subtlety and lucidity, is seldom mentioned. And of course, nobody should be forced to work very hard.

The second great malady is the:

Endless energy sapping debate over multiculturalism... ..an oxymoron. Every bookshelf is multicultural. Every library is multicultural. Every educated man and woman is multicultural. Culture is multicultural. But the rigid advocates aren't talking about the multiple, the plural, or the natural human movement toward synthesis. They don't want to add to the fund of individual knowledge. They are insisting upon indoctrination or the replacement of the many with the singular.

The answer to the stupidities is to "ostracize the sectarian swine who, in Yeats' phrase, multiply through division. Its time to honor good taste, hard work, and all those men and women who cherish human decency."

Stupidity as Disease

Some Signs of the Times, by Dell Poncet, Philadelphia Business Journal, 7 Apr 1995.

Part of this article derides the finding of a "new health problem or syndrome" by a Scot psychologist, Robert Hunter, that he terms lottery stress disorder. Symptoms include "deflation of mood and feelings of hopelessness," that some lottery players experience when they lose. According to Dr. Hunter, the cause is because some gamblers "experience the delusional belief that great riches are about to befall" them. The author believes the term 'stupidity' used to be applied to this kind of behavior as the expectation is "as much a symptom of a genetic disorder called stupidity than any medical condition..."

Stupidity as Historic Epoch

Glen Atkinson, Mike Read, The Individual in a Going Concern, Journal of Economic Issues, 1 Jun 1992.

These authors postulate, along with John R. Commons, (1934, 244) and Malthus, that the age of reason ended with the French Revolution. At that point human reason and rationality, while not necessarily absent from the scene, are not the only processes that humans use to engage in their social behavior. Instead, more predominantly, "Man is a being of stupidity, passion and ignorance, as Malthus thought." (Commons, 1934, p.682).

The authors wish to point out to institutional economists that Commons' view "that real insight into individual conduct could be located in the rich variety of personal interactions permitted by a culture." The idea, borrowed from Malthus, that people are "governed by more than their logic," explains for economists that:

Reason differs from Reasonableness. Man is not a rational being, as the Eighteenth Century thought: He is a being of stupidity, passion, and

ignorance, as Malthus thought. Hence Reasonable Value (the economic idea that reasonable value arises from the cooperative, mediated activity of individuals acting in concert) contains a large amount of stupidity, passion and mistake.

This perspective also enjoins the idea of human life as process.

Roy Bhaskar recently argued for a philosophy for the social sciences that recognizes people, in their conscious human activity, for the most part unconsciously reproduce, or occasionally transform) the structures that govern their substantive activities of production. Thus, people do not marry to reproduce the nuclear family, or work to reproduce the capitalist economy. But these are the consequences and conditions for those activities.

Building on these perspectives, the authors discuss institutional contributions to rationality as well as psychological perspectives of the transaction as the specific method by which people interact. In summarizing the discussion, the authors conclude that institutional economies requires a theory of the social individual. Presumably, based on the discussion in this article, the theory would postulate man as a non-primarily-rational being.

Stupidity of Technology

Thomas L. Magliozzi, Technology Review, 1 Oct 1992. If It Ain't Broke, Don't Fix It, Note: This author, along with his brother Ray, is host of the National Public Radio show, "Car Talk." He also teaches marketing at Suffolk University School of Management in Boston, MA.

This article chronicles a number of instances in which the manufacturing industry, particularly automobile manufacturers, commit blatant ergonomic errors. He uses a seven point scale of increasing stupidity in order to categorize these errors:

1. Using a technology because its there rather than appropriate.
2. Being different at any cost.
3. Reinventing whenever possible.
4. Failure to copy good ideas.
5. Just plain stupidity. (He quotes Ted Williams, "If you don't think too good, then don't think too much.")

6. Too many cooks.
7. Oops! Where the hell are we going to put this?

The author outlines the proliferation of buttons, controls and inaccessible or inconvenient positioning for heaters, radios, seats, etc., that he terms "technology run amok," and "technological overkill."

Stupidity of War

Reading McNamara: Vietnam and Kent State, Todd Gitlin, Vol 21, Peace and Change, 04-01-96, pp 182.

This articles reviews some of the anti war movement, using the Kent State shooting of students by the National Guard as a centerpiece. The authors point of view is that anti-war protesters were patriots and democracy was ill served not only by "the stupidity of the war," but also because part of the stupidity of the war led to a greater, voluntary stupidity among the intelligentsia:

"Plenty of sage Americans knew just what was going on in Vietnam, knew the stupidity and futility of the war, and here is the point: American leadership had a need not to know. They had a need not to know what the world was like, because if they had known, they could not so blithely have assumed that they could get away with running so much of it. Their incompetence, or stupidity was so tenacious, so protracted, that it ranged beyond simple incompetence. It was willful blindness."

Stupidity as True Principle

By Humor Defused, Tad Simons, Twin Cities Reader, Vol 21, 08-16-95, pp 32.

Apparently Tad Simons is a theater critic and this article is a review of a production of Max Frisch's play The Firebugs. According to Simons, one of the main themes of the work is "that human beings have countless ways of blinding themselves to the obvious, even if the obvious is about to kill them."

The primary character in the work is a businessman who knows that local arsonists are operating in his neighborhood, gain access into peoples homes, and then load up their homes with explosives. When they make him their prey he finds all kinds of reasons to rationalize their behavior, as well as his own. Simon points out the play was written after WWII when the threat of nuclear annihilation arose. But, "the firebugs themselves can stand for any potentially destabilizing threat to society, including environmental degradation, racism, classism, terrorism, technology, drugs, skinheads, unwed mothers, Republicans, cable television or carpenter ants."

In this review, Simons does not treat the subject production very kindly. One of his most obvious complaints is his feeling that the director has missed the whole (and very serious) point of the play, which is "made redundantly that stupidity is the world's true guiding principle."

Stupidity as Bigotry

Sheer Stupidity, Amotz Asa-El, Jerusalem Post, 03-12-1996, pp 6.

In this newspaper article, evidently from a continuing column in the Jerusalem Post, the author refers to a number of instances that took place over a few weeks and that he believes epitomizes "unprecedented stupidity." These included the return of Saddam Hussein's son-in-law, Lieutenant General Kamel Hassa, to Iraq. Though the General had negotiated a safe return, he was promptly murdered. The author also referred in this passage to the "failure" of Operation Desert Storm, presumably because the Iraqi dictator remains alive and in power.

The author also points to stupidity by association: "Anyone who publicly stands beside Louis Farrakhan and expresses support for his views is, at best, stupid. The man is a Nazi." Also, "if you stand beside Farrakhan, endorse his views, or remain silent when he speaks, you are an accomplice to bigotry, period."

Associated with Farrakhan, though at another point on the scale, is Pat Buchanan, who may not "be a Nazi, though he has spoken out on behalf of accused Nazis, but he is certainly an extremist."

The word 'stupid' doesn't seem quite strong enough to describe Hamas terrorists, but it is still applicable. If all they are interested in is murdering innocent Jews, then they are simply bloodthirsty fanatics. But if, as we are constantly being told, they are interested in sabotaging the peace process, they are just plain stupid.

The author also includes passivity as stupidity, as well as an interesting contrasting of intelligence and courage as the antonym of stupidity:

The antonym of stupid is smart, but it is not intelligence that is lacking at the moment. The response to the type of stupidity described here is courage. Courage to stand up to bigots and terrorists. There is no shortage of stupid people at the moment, but we are suffering from a severe dearth of courageous ones.

Stupidity as Revolutionary Spirit

Beavis and Butt-head, Social Critics or the End of Civilization as We Know It?, Wayne Barrett, USA Today Magazine, 1 Sep 1994, Society for the Advancement of Education.

This article gives an account of some of the adventures of Beavis and Butt-head, two nationally known cartoon characters, as it defends, on the basis of the First Amendment, and as art, the television cartoon show that is the "ultimate idiot's delight, the perfect prototypes

for today's Age of Stupid; know-nothing nitwits thriving amidst another generation of TV addicts."

Quoting Newsday television critic Marvin Kitman, "Beavis and Butt-head can be looked at two ways, either this is the end of civilization or its a satirical masterpiece, a parody of a certain segment of the American population, the total jerks, the 14-year-olds." Profiling this representation of stupidity,

they burn and torture small animals and flunk almost every course in school. They steal, they cheat, they're bored. ...They also spend a lot of time picking their noses, dropping their trousers... and, in a supremely self-reflective gesture, sit around watching music videos.

However, as a defense of the duo, this author points to their social role as:

It is during their video dialogue with each other that the show's brilliance (Or utter stupidity, depending on one's point of view) comes to the fore. Beavis and Butt-head, if nothing else, are dead-on-accurate social critics. Put simple, they are as stupid as the society that spawned them. They are metal heads who also are into rap, hip-hop, and grunge. They hate college music, videos with printed words, and stuff that "sucks."

Hinting that a right exists to be stupid, the author points to Beavis and Butt-head as satirical "bona fide morons (who) are the latest in a long line of stupid humor comedy acts," thus, "maintaining the tradition of stupidity." The author points to Wayne and Garth, Cheech and Chong, Bill and Ted, and a number of others, again quoting Kitman, who asks, "since when is being stupid on TV a crime? Beverly Hillbillies' wasn't stupid? Lenny and Squiggy on Laverne and Shirley weren't stupid?" Kurt Anderson in Time magazine: "Beavis and Butt-head may be the bravest show ever run on television."

Barrett's bottom line on Beavis and Butt-head:

More important, perhaps, is the revolutionary spirit that long has marked America's youth, especially when morality is being crammed down their throat. Also, political correctness is choking the country's communication process, and Beavis and Butt-head is a resounding retort to that movement.

Egalitarian Stupidity

From: dsew@packrat.aml.arizona.edu (David Sewell) Subject: Usenet Stupidity, Talk Shows, Class, and Huck Finn Date: 2 Nov 1995 05:46:11 GMT Summary: An excursion on Usenet wars, with cast by Mark Twain

This Internet contributor points to an elitist reaction among Usenetters (an Internet communication forum) to the increasing presence on the net of those who do not share what he calls, quoting John Erskine, "the moral obligation to be intelligent."

What astounds and appalls long-time Usenetters and their spiritual allies among the newcomers is not just the invasion of stupidity, but of aggressive stupidity, stupidity that brays out its right to exist, stupidity that sees its swelling ranks as the prophecy of its ultimate victory in a war against a doomed elite, a war that it casts explicitly as class warfare.

Using characters from Twain's Huck Finn and one of Walter Goodman's articles (New York Times, 1 Nov. 95), "Daytime TV Talk: The Issue of Class," in which he labels the subjects of daytime television talk shows "an American underclass in all its ignorance and tastelessness..." Sewell draws parallels with those who he calls the Usenetters in order to demonstrate that stupid behavior "doesn't follow traditional socioeconomic lines. So far as I can tell, there are as many spoiled rich kids in the Stupid Army as there are members of any conventional underclass."

Economic Stupidity Stigmata

Wealth of Nations, Chapter X, Section II, Adam Smith, Great Works of Literature, 1 Jan 1992

In discussing relationships between wages and labor and types of occupations, Smith describes the general European economic policy and differences between wage values of producers in a natural economic environment and those arrived at when economic policy manipulates the marketplace.

...The condition of the materials which he works upon too is as variable as that of the instruments which he works with, and both require to be managed with much judgment and discretion. The common ploughman, though generally regarded as the pattern of stupidity and ignorance, is seldom defective in this judgment and discretion. He is less accustomed, indeed, to social intercourse than the mechanic who lives in a town. His voice and language are more uncouth and more difficult to be understood by those who are not used to them. His understanding, however, being accustomed to a greater variety of objects, is generally much superior to that of the other whose whole attention from morning till night is commonly occupied in performing one or two simple operations. How much the lower ranks of people in the country are superior to those of the town is well known to every man whom either business or curiosity has led to converse with both.

Natural Stupidity as Human Intelligence

Artificial Stupidity, by Nicholas Russell, *Economist*, 1 Aug 1992.

The author of this article believes "creating machines that think like people is a bad idea." Machines that can be programmed to duplicate human error wind up as "without such artificial stupidity, clever machines that are not just people with the bugs worked out. They are different and profoundly alien."

While challenging the idea of artificial intelligence as impractical (why bother creating a machine that can err? We humans do that quite well), the author urges that we "leave aside the things on which people and machines cannot yet be compared – bodies, sex, a social life or a childhood--and consider only reasoning."

Even on something as basic as assigning things to categories – tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor – people and machines do things differently. For a person, it is natural to conceive of something that is ‘sort of like’ a fire engine, say; it is often hard to define precisely what a fire engine is. For a computer, the opposite is true. Precision comes naturally, and ‘sort of like’ is difficult for machines to grasp.

People and machines bring quite different capabilities to the task of reasoning. Human reasoning is limited by the brains that nature evolved; machines are better engineered... The real challenge then, is not to recreate people but to recognize the uniqueness of machine intelligence and learn to work with it.

Stupidity as The Most Dangerous Power

The Power of Stupidity, by Giancarlo Livraghi, (gian@oceas.es) June 1996, a special report for Entropy Gradient Reversals.

This article, what I have to take as a tongue-in-cheek piece, provides some compelling insights into stupidity as part of human nature. According to Livraghi, two pieces he found on stupidity include a 300 page book, A Short Introduction to the History of Human Stupidity, by Walter B. Pitkin, of Colombia University, published in 1934 in which the author opined four out of five people are stupid enough to be called “stupid.” (Livraghi points out this population would now number about six million people). Pitkin observed one of the problems with stupidity was that no one had:

a really good definition of what it is. In fact, geniuses are often considered stupid by a stupid majority (though nobody has a good definition of genius either). But stupidity is definitely there, and there is much more of it than our wildest nightmares might suggest. In fact, it runs the world – which is clearly proven by the way the world is run.

The other source Livraghi refers to is Carlo M. Cipolla, Professor Emeritus of Economic History at Berkeley, who has written an essay titled The Basic Laws of Human Stupidity, in which the following *laws* are enumerated:

We always underestimate the number of stupid people: This occurs because people we had thought to be rational and intelligent suddenly turn out to be unquestionably stupid; and, day after day we are hampered in whatever we do by stupid people who invariably turn up in the least appropriate places. (He also observes it is impossible to set a percentage, because any number we choose will be too small. Ergo, "they" are all of "us"?)

The probability of a person being stupid is independent of any other characteristic of that person: In other words, stupidity is completely equitable and egalitarian, no difference in the sigma factor can be found by race, gender, ethnic heritage, education, religion, wealth, power, etc.

A stupid person is someone who causes damage to another person, or a group of people, without any advantage accruing to himself (or herself) – or even with some resultant self damage.

Non-stupid people always underestimate the damaging power of stupid people: They constantly forget that at any moment, and in any circumstance, associating with stupid people invariably constitutes an expensive mistake. (Livraghi suggests this law indicates that non-stupid people are a bit stupid).

A stupid person is the most dangerous person in existence: This is probably the most widely understood of the Laws, according to Livraghi, if only because it is common knowledge that intelligent people, hostile as they might be, are predictable, while stupid people are not. Moreover, its basic corollary: A stupid person is more dangerous than a bandit.

Leads us to the heart of the Cipolla Theory. There are four types of people, he says, depending on their behavior in a transaction:

Hapless--Someone whose actions tend to generate self-damage, but also to create advantage for someone else.

Intelligent--Someone whose actions tend to generate self-advantage, as well as advantage for others.

Bandit--Someone whose actions tend to generate self-advantage while causing damage to others.

Stupid--Defined in the third law.

Professor Cipolla, according to Livraghi, uses a matrix in order to postulate the relative advantage gained from one's actions, on one axis, and the advantage gained by another person (or group) on the other axis. Depending where they fall in the matrix people have a greater or lesser degree of stupidity, intelligence, banditry, etc.

Conclusions that Livraghi points to are that intelligent people make the biggest contributions to society as a whole. But, intelligent bandits also contribute to an improvement by causing more advantage overall than harm. Hapless-intelligent people, though they lose individuality, can also have socially positive effects. However, when stupidity gets into the act, the damage is greater than the benefit to anyone. This proves the original point: The single most dangerous factor in any human society is stupidity.

Finally, Cipolla also observes that intelligent people generally know they are, bandits are well aware of their attitude, and even hapless people have a sneaking suspicion that all is not right. But stupid people don't know they are stupid and that is one more reason why they are extremely dangerous. This all causes concern for Livraghi who has asked himself the question:

Am I stupid? I have passed several IQ tests with good marks. Unfortunately, I know how these tests work and that they don't prove anything. Several people have told me I am intelligent, but that doesn't prove anything either. They may simply be too kind to tell me the truth. Conversely, they may be attempting to use my stupidity for their own advantage. Or they could be just as stupid as I am.

I am left with one little glimmer of hope; quite often I am intensely aware of how stupid I am (or have been), and that indicates that I am not completely stupid.

Livraghi's Corollary to Cipolla's First Law: "In each of us there is a factor of stupidity, which is always larger than we suppose."

Stupidity as Consequence

The Stupidity of Safety, published in *Marines*, by R.A. Smith, Safety Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington D.C.

Accessed through the Internet, this safety column enumerates a number of mishaps in the interests of reducing accidents. In this column, titled *The Stupidity of Safety*, the author provides the following examples of accidents caused by "poor judgment or stupidity," after a telling quote: "Life is tough, but its tougher if you're stupid." --John Wayne as Sgt John M. Stryker in *The Sands of Iwo Jima*.

A Marine was riding an off road motorcycle without a helmet or vest and attempted to cross a four lane without stopping. A van hit him at 55 mph.

A Marine was hit by a car while reserving a parking space by sitting in it.

During a night ambush, a Marine placed two illumination simulators in his pocket with six 5.56 blank rounds. As he reached into his pocket to retrieve an illumination simulator, it ignited, which in turn ignited the other simulator, which in turn ignited the six 5.56 rounds, causing second degree burns.

The answer the Marine Corps Safety Office gives for the prevention of accidents caused by stupidity, is accountability, *awareness*, (Emphasis mine) and leadership.

Stupidity as First Level Consciousness

The Aesthetic Education of Man: Part V, J.C. Friedrich Von Schiller, *Great Works of Literature*, 1 Jan 1992. Schiller thesis, in Part V, Letters XXIII, XXIV, XXV, and XVI, takes up the issue of how man transforms from the purely natural state, or state of sensuousness, to the state of thinking and reason.

In this thesis the state of sensuousness is akin to the state of savagery, "sensuousness knows no other end than its interest, and is determined by nothing except blind chance, it makes the former the motive of its actions, and the latter the master of the world." For Schiller there is an intermediate state which is the state that functions as the transmission state and effects the change from one to the other. This transmission state he terms the state of aesthetic liberty: "In a word, there is no other way to make a

reasonable being out of a sensuous man than by making him first aesthetic" (1992, p.)

As I understand Schiller, once the states of thinking, will, and reason are obtained the independently functioning forces of truth and duty, as well as beauty, can be realized by man. When this realization occurs, as it must for individual man as well as the specie if they are to realize their "determination," man can then be considered to be ruling the power of nature as she has entered the moral state.

My conception of Schiller's idea of stupidity as the first level of consciousness is arrived at by interpretation of the following passage:

What phenomenon accompanies the initiation of the savage into humanity? However far we look back into the history the phenomenon is identical among all people who have shaken off the slavery of the animal state, the love of appearance, the inclination for dress and for games.

Extreme stupidity and extreme intelligence have a certain affinity in only seeking the real and being completely insensible to mere appearance. The former is only drawn forth by the immediate presence of an object in the senses, and the second is reduced to a quiescent state only by referring conceptions to the facts of experience. In short, stupidity cannot rise above reality, nor intelligence descend below truth.

Absurd, Dull, Foolish, Insulting Stupidity

Stupidity, Picturesque Expressions, A Thematic Dictionary, 1 Jan 1994.

Brains like mashed potatoes--Anon

Dumb as a beetle (the beetle has been linked to dullness and stupidity since the sixteenth century)--Anon

Isn't very intelligent...he's like a hound following the scent (Henri Roche)

Look stupid as a poet in search of a simile (Thomas Holcroft)

The man is so stupid it sits on him like a halo (Williams)

Stupid as jugs without handles (Balzac)

To serve an unintelligent man is like crying in the wilderness, massaging the body of a dead man, planting water lillies on dry land, whispering in the ears of the deaf (Panchatantra)

While he was not dumber than an ox, he was not any smarter either--
(James Thurber)

Stupidity of Immoderation

Tragedies of William Shakespeare and Sonnets: Romeo and Juliet: Act 3, Scenes 3-5, William Shakespeare, Monarch Notes, 1 Jan 1963, critiqued by Leonard Jenkin, Department of English, Colombia University.

Act III - Scene 5 - Romeo disappears into the growing morning. Juliet speaks of fortune, and hopes it will be as fickle as men say it is, for then it will turn the misfortune of this parting back to good fortune, and the lovers will be together again. Just then, Lady Capulet enters, and Julie, wondering what unusual happening causes her mother to be up this late or to have arisen this early, goes to her. Seeing her daughter's tear stained face, Lady Capulet expresses surprise. Juliet says she is not feeling well, but the Lady, assuming the tears have been shed over Tybalt's death, chides her daughter. Even if she washed her cousin's grave with tears she could not make him alive, and while much grief indicates great love, too much grieving is a sign of stupidity.

Stupidity of Law

The Death of Common Sense, Goerge Gendron, Making Sense, 1 May 1995.

This article argues the legal system, by substituting rules for common sense and by allowing special interest groups to dominate the legal system through litigation (i.e., because of suits by parents of handicapped children, school systems spend 25 percent of their budget on 10 percent of their students), "hasn't protected us from stupidity and caprice but has made stupidity and caprice dominant features of our society."

Stupidity of Institutions

Candide, The Works of Voltaire, Voltaire, Character Analysis, Essay Questions and Bibliography, Monarch Notes, 1 Jan 1963.

The character, Brother Giroflee: The name means wallflower. Voltaire may have used it because it goes well with his companion, Pacquette (Daisy). One scholar has noted that it may also be interpreted as a slap which leaves a mark

on the face, and certainly Giroflee's life was ample testimony for the choice of the name if this interpretation is accepted. He is introduced into the story to carry it along, and also as a symbol of the stupidity of such feudal institutions as primogeniture and the nature of vocations in the church.

Also... Voltaire indicates that work is the universal solvent of human despair. When Pangloss attempts to justify the events of Candide's life, our hero almost ignores him. The best of all possible worlds for him is a place where each tends his own garden. There, one can mind his own business, and most important, have business to mind. The active life, separated in part from the maddening crowd and the stupidities of European society, are the answers for Voltaire. Yet, he is not an anti-intellectual, as is Rousseau. His garden is one of reason, and not of emotion and irrationalism.

Again... Is this a satisfactory answer? Is there nothing better for mankind than enjoyment and work? Although Voltaire never says so directly, he seems to imply as much in his writings, including *Candide*.

How did Voltaire arrive at this conclusion? One might note that there are only three ways to meet an unsatisfactory situation. One may resign oneself to it, the conditions may be fought, or the individual may leave his society. Voltaire considers all these possibilities. As for the last, leaving the stupidities of Europe was no answer; there are stupidities everywhere, although each society produces its own version. As we have seen, the utopias of America are no more satisfactory to Candide than the problems of Europe.

Stupidity of Mass Culture

Cultural Suicide II, by Vroon, American Record Guide, 1 May 1995.

This author supports the idea that Homo Sapiens are a flawed specie, quoting Henry James:

Life is in fact, a battle. Evil is insolent and strong; beauty enchanting but rare; goodness very apt to be weak, folly very apt to be defiant; wickedness to carry the day; imbeciles to be in great places, people of sense in small, and mankind generally unhappy.

Referring to Calvinist doctrine ("total depravity") and "the Augustinian idea that that we are all born sinful" the author portrays civilization as something that must be constantly upheld or "people turn back to the animal." Of course, past cultures realized this and always exerted

a mass will to maintain morality through a disciplined appeal to those uplifting things that made people better and more noble.

Classical music was one of the most valuable of these uplifting, noble things, as it helped people because it would:

Sensitize them to the needs and sufferings of others, make their hearts tender toward their fellow man. It was one of the noble things that the apostle Paul would have approved to occupy our minds with. In Phillippians 4:8 he suggests occupying our minds with everything true, honorable, just, pure, gracious, excellent, worthy of praise, and encouraging love and friendship among human beings.

Unfortunately, "just about everything in American popular culture contradicts the apostle's very Greek sensibilities." Among these maladies, the author points to popular music, movies, television, racial integration:

When the old fogies said that the integration of a race that was culturally advanced with one that was backward could only hurt the overall cultural level of our society....It is very clear now they were right, though obviously the decline has many causes (and the main culture has in some ways suffered less than the other culture, which is in tatters).

According to Vroon, "We are a dumber, stupider, crasser, more violent society because we refused to declare certain attitudes and behavior benighted and depraved." Apparently, stupidity is omnipresent:

Not only do we have to face the incredible dullness and willful stupidity of most of our neighbors in everyday life, but we are forced to accept it in our reading, our television, our movies and our music... ..And, since the masses are increasingly stupid and uneducated, the music and art and entertainment that is popular is all the lowest possible kind.

Vroon's response, in addition to establishing a counter-culture movement, is identified as:

The only noble human being left is the one who resists mass culture in every way possible. Or, as Jacques Ellul put it, the only kind of human being who

offers hope is the individual who does not lend himself to society's game, who disputes what everyone else accepts as self-evident, (like the consumer society), who finds an autonomous style of life and questions the very movement of this society.

Stupidity as the Unknowable

The Inferno, Dante, Cantos 24-34, Monarch Notes, 1 Jan 1963.

Canto 31:

The poets now leave the eighth circle, Malabolge. As they move toward the central well, the air is so dark that Dante can hardly see. He seems to discern some towers, but Virgil informs him that they are the upper halves of the bodies of giants who stand around the edge of the central well. They are the Titans who fought against the gods; among them is Nimrod, the reputed builder of the tower of Babel. He is the embodiment of stupidity, and speaks a language all his own which no one understands.

The comments provided by the Monarch Notes writer, not identified by my server, expand on the meaning of the representation of stupidity provided by Dante in this passage:

Nimrod, an example of human pride and arrogance, since he sought to scale the heavens and conquer God, is here revealed as bestially stupid - only abysmal stupidity could lead man to attempt to conquest of God. Since, according to Genesis, it was the tower of Babel that prompted God to give man different languages to replace the one universal language they all spoke, Nimrod is punished by having a language all his own, which no one understands. As he understands no other language, he is effectively isolated, unable to communicate or receive knowledge. He is thus reduced to a state of stupidity which reflects his spiritual ignorance on earth.

Sin of Stupidity/Stupidity of Sin

The Inferno, Dante, Cantos 24-34, Monarch Notes, 1 Jan 1963.

Canto 34. Here Virgil and Dante reach the frozen lake of hell and observe Satan at the center. The Monarch writer's interpretation:

Dante's picture of hell departs from popular tradition, which would see it as a place of fire and brimstone presided over by a malicious and clever devil. Instead, Dante demonstrates once again the inherent stupidity of evil: All that Lucifer has accomplished by his rebellion against God is to render himself impotent.

Far from being the active, clever Devil whom we secretly admire, he is completely passive, totally incapacitated as he stands forever frozen in the lake which is of his own making. The only motion he is capable of is the mechanical flapping of his bat-like wings and the champing of his three mouths; the wings set in motion the chilly winds of evil, but it is these winds which keep the lake frozen and Lucifer imprisoned. Evil is not only stupid, but self-destructive as well.

Stupidity of Group Thinking

'Tis The Season To Be Stupid--Collectively, we Acted Really Dumb Last Year. Repeats?
Jeremy Young, Electronic Buyer News, 11 Nov 1996.

Evidently written by a buyer of electronic products, this article clearly bemoans the group behavior, based on group thought, that led to an overestimation of demand for certain electronic products in the marketplace:

We took what amounted to a mild moderation in the growth of the personal computer market and turned it into an inventory debacle that the industry is only now pulling out of, and which caused some real harm to suppliers and distributors of memory chips - not to mention OEMs that were holding inventory.

"There is no insurance for stupidity," somebody said to me the other day. People, we got grossly overconfident last year, and as a whole we have no one to blame except our own lousy forecasting. Our own hype and hope tainted the objective task of measuring demand...

It was a classical case of mob behavior, and some of the smartest of us got caught up in it. Mobs are inherently stupid. A rumor passes through there's something worth seeing over to the left, and 50 people get crushed against a wall because they had the bad luck to be standing on the left.

Stupidity of Testing for Intelligence

What's IQ Got 2 Do With It?, Kirk A. Johnson, Heart and Soul, 30 Sept 1995, Ethnic NewsWatch, Softline Information, Inc., Stamford, CT.

When Forrest Gump, a borderline dunce with an IQ of 75, becomes wealthy beyond belief...

Americans have always confused success with brains, and mistaken IQ for intelligence. Just as Forrest Gump's success doesn't mean he was smart, there's no way our often criticized performance on standardized intelligence tests means we were dumb.

As I understand this article, the author is arguing against the validity of IQ tests on the basis of their failure to show the intelligence of Black people in particular, and also, forms of intelligence other than that presupposed by the construct of IQ tests: "If these tests scores suggest anything at all, it is that there are unresolved questions about what intelligence really is."

Referring to George W. Hynd, Ed.D, University of Georgia, and W. Grant Willis, Ph.D, University of Rhode Island, and David Wechsler, the author points to the definition of intelligence as a component of all behavior, as the "capacity of the individual to act purposefully, to think rationally, and to deal effectively with her or her environment." Thus, the capacity to effect favorable resolution, whatever the challenge, is a more accurate way to view intelligence than "performance on highly abstract problems," as stated by Paul Erlich, Ph.D.

Presumably, the discretionary character of problems used in IQ tests are predictive of "other knowledge and skills and mainstream society values," according to Sandra Scarr, Ph.D., University of Virginia. Therefore, despite a developing tradition of critique against IQ tests that obviously "measure experience and opportunity" determined by the dominant culture educational system "rather than intelligence," the idea of IQ prowess persists as the standard of intelligence.

In order to perform equally on unequal academic ground, it becomes even more vital for some students to labor in a nurturing environment and to be encouraged by high expectations. Similarly, reality must be clearly perceived for what it is:

The bottom line on IQ tests is simple. They don't measure intelligence, so test scores can't say much about how smart we are, how well we reason, or how well we think. They do test what we know. And a high IQ suggests a Black person may have the skills to make it big in the 'White world,' which selects people for its most prestigious and highly paid occupations – law, medicine, engineering – based on their mastery of the abstract skills measured on IQ tests. But as a gauge for anything else, IQ tests flunk.

CHAPTER 7

PROCESSING THE PHENOMENAL THROUGH PHENOMENOLOGY

The Phenomenological Subject

“The first sign that a baby is going to be a human being and not a noisy pet comes when he begins naming the world and demanding the stories that connect its parts. Once he knows the first of these he will instruct his teddy bear, enforce his world view on victims in the sand lot, tell himself stories of what he is doing as he plays and forecast stories of what he will do when he grows up. He will keep track of the actions of others and relate deviations to the person in charge. He will want a story at bedtime.”

(William Calvin, *The Emergence of Intelligence*, Scientific American 1994)

Context of the Cultural Critique

A study of stupidity is a work of cultural critique because it challenges a socially and culturally determined definition of existential phenomena. In this case it is as well a journey of cultural discovery across a very wide and deep landscape of meaning. To effect this critique and exploration as effectively as possible, procedural elements of three major methodologies are used. These are the qualitative, (including some of the anthropologically based case study processes); naturalistic; and phenomenological traditions of inquiry.

The specific application of these methods is to collect ideas and from those ideas, descriptively arrange contextually thematic concepts of stupidity in order to determine whether, in the adulthood that is andragogy, we choose to be stupid.

As an ethical consideration, a first person narrative form has been used to reinforce the continuing validation of the critical perspectives of the study as an exploration in progress, yet one that was originally and fundamentally based on a personal, and therefore biased, idea.

The Qualitative Statement

This is a qualitative study consistent with Spatig's definition:

Although not mutually exclusive, research methods are commonly divided into two camps: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative methods are of the positivist tradition, depending highly on experimental design and statistical correlation. Qualitative methods argue for naturalistic design and the emergence of important attributes through in-depth study of a few. Quantitative research frequently tests hypotheses while qualitative research generates them. (Spatig, 1995, Internet)

Likewise, this study is contextually centered in the philosophy of qualitative research specifically because the purpose here is to focus on "understanding, explanation, and interpretation, rather than measurement" (Thiesse, 1996, Internet).

Additionally, in using the Internet in order to obtain, in the words of Dr. Trudy A. Campbell, of Kansas State University's Department of Educational Administration and Leadership, "access to almost unlimited sources of information," the capacity to complete research containing "deep, rich description, more concerned with process than specifying outcomes..." is best realized through these processes since "qualitative approaches to research seek to show causality, predict or to generalize findings to other populations" (Campbell, 1996, Internet).

Naturalistic Inquiry

The application of naturalistic methodology serves those principles of naturalistic inquiry described by Wolf and Tymitz in Guba (1978, p. 3), where naturalistic inquiry is:

Aimed at understanding actualities, social realities, and human perceptions that exist untainted by the obtrusiveness of formal measurement or preconceived questions. It is a process geared to the uncovering of many idiosyncratic, but nonetheless important stories told by real people, about real events, in real and natural ways.

Naturalistic inquiry attempts to present 'slice of life' episodes documented through natural language and representing as closely as possible how people feel, what they know, how they know it, and what their concerns, beliefs, perceptions and understandings are. (p. 3)

Additionally, naturalistic inquiry provides for what Donald Campbell (Guba, 1978, p. 66) terms participant evaluation, a "concept that seems closely related to the use of participants for providing credibility checks."

In this study, naturalistic inquiry will include open ended discussion interviews with non-professional informants, while an extended participant evaluation will include structured questioning of authoritative, professional sources.

The Phenomenological Tradition

Following the lead of the father of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl (University of Freiburg), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) developed existential phenomenology. Influenced by pre-Socratic conceptualizations as well as those of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, Heidegger's believed the fundamental philosophical question is "what is it, to be?" Expanded, this interprets as "what kind of Being do humans have?"

This view was also consistent with the ideas of another Husserl disciple, Max Scheler (Logical Investigations, 1900), who claimed the task of phenomenology is to study essences, such as the essence of emotions (albeit, he later held only the essences of certain special conscious structures are the proper object of phenomenology.) Heidegger also agreed with the later construct of Husserl (after 1910) in which he said, (I'm quoting from the Phenomenology Page, the Webmaster, 4/3/97): "Phenomenology is the study of the structures of consciousness that enable consciousness to refer to objects outside itself. This study requires reflection on the content of the mind to the exclusion of everything else," (Phenomenological Reduction).

It is this distinction that uniquely defines Phenomenology as a "20th century philosophical movement dedicated to describing the structures of experience as they present themselves to consciousness without recourse to theory, deduction, or assumptions from other disciplines such as the natural sciences. (Webmaster, Phenomenology.htm, The Phenomenology Page, 4/3/97)

In order words, because the mind can be directed toward nonexistent as well as real objects, Husserl noted Phenomenological reflection does not presuppose that anything exists,

but rather amounts to a 'bracketing of existence,' that is, setting aside the question of the real existence of the contemplated object. (Webmaster, 4/3/97)

Heidegger's critique of his colleague Husserl clarified the distinctions of Phenomenology by claiming its purpose is to make manifest what is hidden in everyday experience. Heidegger generated the idea of a basic association between the nature of the essence of objects and humanity and the construct of time (Being and Time, 1927). He concluded the individual is perennially at risk of being immersed in the universe of things (as objects), daily habit, and the common, superficial social discourses of the masses.

Thus, he believed the classic idea of Being beloved by the Greeks was destroyed by the advent of modern technological civilization which has given us instead an absolute manipulative attitude that has taken away Being and the meaning of human life. Heidegger called this latter condition nihilism. Other phenomenological scholars include Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur, Gadamer and Schutz.

Jean Paul Sartre, the French existentialist, disagreed with Husserl's idea that consciousness is always directed at objects and this is possible only by means of special mental entities called meanings, which is of course, the position we have also ascribed in Chapter 2. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, idealized the dynamically involved body in all human knowledge, building from Heidegger to include the analysis of perception. Of course, the distinction of existentialism in phenomenology centers on the denial of the possibility of bracketing existence.

Phenomenography

First actualized as a methodology used in the early 1970's by students at the University of Goteborg, Sweden, this method was applied to the issue of why "some people are better at learning than others." (The answer, incidentally, was because "people differ in their approach to learning tasks," Marton, Hounsell, Entwistle, 1984). Internet

The psychologist Ulrich Sonnemann (1954) began using the word 'Phenomenography' in order to separate schools of thought in existential research and also because the word better describes the chronicling of subjective experience. Ference Marton's definition of Phenomenography in The International Encyclopedia of Education (1994) states it:

Is the empirical study of the limited number of qualitatively different ways in which we experience, conceptualize, understand, perceive, apprehend, etc. various phenomena in and aspects of the world around us.

These different experiences, understandings, etc, are characterized in terms of categorical description, logically related to each another, and forming hierarchies in relation to given criteria (internet)

The Goteborg version of this methodology provides this procedural model:

compilation of statements -> analysis -> conceptions

Primarily, phenomenography involves analyzing and categorizing different ways of understanding or conceiving of a certain phenomenon, as this manifests itself in different discourses. The Goteborg mode of this form of research uses five contextual categories.

These are:

- Discursive Phenomenography
- Experimental Phenomenography
- Naturalistic Phenomenography
- Hermeneutic Phenomenography
- Phenomenological Phenomenography

The Discursive label relates to conceptions in a general and context free discourse to be understood non-hermenutically:

conversation->transcript->compile statement->analysis->conception

Experimental methodology is probably the method most closely resembling quantitative processes as it uses a manipulative environment in which measurement of outcomes is made.

The Naturalistic term is used to describe research which is "not about producing data in experiments or *extracting* data from speech events, but about collecting data about what actually happens in particular situations without direct involvement from researchers" (Webmaster, 3/24/97).

Hermeneutic Phenomenography is modeled on the processes used by the Swedish researchers Bengt Johansson, Ference Marton, and Lennart Svensson in An Approach to Describing Learning as a Change Between Qualitatively Different Conceptions, Pines and

West, red.: *Cognitive Structure and Conceptual Change*, New Your, Academic Press, 1985.

This method is:

more or less neutral from the point of view of specific research methods. It represents, however, a distinctive perspective in which findings may be re-interpreted in ways that do not accord with their original meaning....Here, phenomenographic analysis is geared to interpreting texts or statements not originally made for the purpose of a phenomenographic analysis. And it is this quality which fundamentally distinguishes the hermeneutic mode from the other four categories which are each based on material gathered specifically for phenomenographic analysis. (Webmaster, 3/4/97)

Phenomenological Phenomenography has arisen as a process predominantly in the 1980's and 1990's through Swedish researchers including Jan Theman's work (Conceptions of Political Power, 1983), in addition to Tomas Kroksmark's study on didactics (Phenomenographic Didactics, 1987), and Michael Uljen's Phenomenological Features of Phenomenography, (1992). These works are distinguished by searching for conceptions in an abstract fashion, by asking for example, what is going on in a subject's mind during an interview.

Basis for a Phenomenological Study

As indicated in Chapter 1, we determined there are two fundamental ideas about stupidity. The first, a positivist definition, is stupidity defined as a diminished physiological or cognitive capacity that involuntarily results in an individual possessing comparatively less capability to act wisely, think intelligently, conceptualize intellectually, or acquire and refine effective skills.

As a definitive and explicit statement of cultural critique, I do not believe this definition applies to anyone outside of some of those whose mental states have been impaired, physiologically or psychologically.

Therefore, the second fundamental idea about stupidity is the non-positivist definition that I am pursuing in this work:

I believe stupidity is a phenomenon in which we consciously or other than consciously choose (or have chosen) an inappropriate response to a situation we are experiencing (or have experienced). Fundamentally related to this choice is the idea that

we could have or should have chosen otherwise because we could have or should have known better.

I believe therefore, stupidity is to be found in or results from confused thinking, and/or a misinterpretation of reality, and/or it is an inevitable reality resulting from humankind's incapacity to live a moral existence.

In order to explore the potential for the latter possibility it is necessary to select a potentially efficacious methodology. The following is the basis for choosing the Phenomenological Phenomenographical methodology.

The Phenomenological Phenomenographic Method

"It has turned out to be much harder to study personality than ever expected. It has proved hard to discern what variables are most important, it has proved hard to measure them adequately, it has proved hard to study their effects, and it has proved hard to agree on the number of variables needed to constitute a life system."

Joel Aronoff, *Contemporary Psychology*, 1996)

The Inquisitorial Hierarchy

There are a wide variety of ways phenomena is experienced and correspondingly communicated. Generally we will either interpret it as it has been experienced, or we will otherwise characterize it, or we will categorize the phenomenon as we think it lends itself to being understood. For example, a scream in the first instance is a shock in the second interpretation and an electric charge in the third determination.

Obviously, some modes of interpretation are going to be more effective than others and some method, such as the foregoing form of triangulation, needs to be applied so we can ontologically verify the phenomenon. I have arrived at a hierarchy of inquiry.

The hierarchy of inquiry used in this study is as follows:

- 1st - Find an existing appropriate philosophical implication
- 2nd - Locate a tradition of that implication in canon
- 3rd - Find evidence of the implication in contemporary theory
- 4th - Locate evidence of the implication in popular culture
- 5th - Determine consensus among professional observers

6th - Find evidence of the implication among informants

Finding an Existing Philosophical Implication

We understand things according to our awareness of them. In my view of awareness it is the lens we select as most appropriate for the category of the theme we believe is presented by the environment. Fighter pilots, for example, speak of developing situational awareness in order to understand their state by being aware of their circumstances. For the human being then, awareness is an individual's focused experience of the world at a given moment. Using Gurwitsch's view (1964), awareness is not the dichotomy of being aware or unaware, conscious or subconscious, but is instead an interpretation of a perpetually diversified figure-ground organization.

Certain definite and categorized images are in the foreground while at the same time there are implications of endless variations of categorized themes in the background. However there is no dichotomy between foreground and background and their representations, instead there is a continuing variation in the degree to which they are in focus and given attention.

Inevitably we view the world from the point of view of specific situations and every scenario has its own characteristics. At the locus of the intent of this study is the requirement to find differences in structures of awareness and the corresponding meanings of stupidity, in order to determine how the experience of stupidity is represented in many different ways. I am using the term 'philosophical implication' to represent the finding of differences in structures of awareness and the corresponding meanings of stupidity.

Locating Philosophical Implication in Canon

Because stupidity can be experienced in so many ways, and correspondingly, since behavior is also an expression of how stupidity appears to people, I have discounted the personal interview as the most valid source or foremost target of inquiry and assigned it the sixth position in the hierarchy of inquiry. In that position the function of the personal interview is to validate the findings of the previous five levels of inquiry.

Studies in the phenomenographic tradition have included observations, drawings, written responses, and historical documents as the main source of information. (Marton,

1994) In phenomenology the philosophical methodology of the form, with human experience as its object of research, mandates it is the philosophers themselves who reflect on their way of experiencing the world (or more appropriately, the phenomenon being researched). Therefore, it is an enterprise in the first person singular.

Unfortunately, it is not possible for me to interview the various philosophers, theorists, researchers and writers I have selected in Chapter 2. Alternatively, it has been possible to canonize their texts as a way of "making that which is unthematized into the object of awareness." (Marton, 1994) I believe this form of research is as close to an andragogical situation as I can get with the subject philosophers and it therefore substitutes for dialogue.

I believe it is unassailable, however, that there is sufficient evidence of a continuum of specific philosophical implications of stupidity concepts, thematized, that can be interpreted as the antitheses of the wisdom idea in the historic Western traditional canon of the liberal arts, which is the tradition I have selected.

Finding Implication in Contemporary Theory

It is axiomatic to say a definition of an existential phenomenon has to be of a quintessential nature, at least in its relation to human existence. Therefore, it is not sufficient to determine evidence of the continual reference to the phenomenon in canon, it must also be prevalent in the most contemporary forms of representations of the social reality (of habitus) at two levels.

Determining information from these levels of habitus is consistent with phenomenological research principles of Everyday Life Information Seeking Theory (ELIS), informed by the ideas of Bourdieu's Theory of Habitus (1984, pp 170-173) and applied by Reijo Savolainen, of the University of Tampere, Finland (1994). In this conception, as defined by Savolainen, "Habitus is a socially and culturally determined system of thinking, perception and evaluation, internalized by the individual....As a system of socially and culturally determined dispositions, habitus forms the base on which one's way of life is organized." (Internet)

The first level is the contemporary generation of the tradition of social theory that has been under examination. In this study that generation is represented by theory that is categorized as modern, postmodern, and critical education theory.

Locating Implication in Popular Culture

The second level of social reality at which evidence of continual references to the phenomenon must be found is the contemporary popular culture represented by interpretations taken from the Internet sample.

Consensus Among Professional Observers

Using six diverse and disparate professionals involved in liberal arts fields such as psychology, teaching, and the arts, reactions to the purposes of the study will be assessed through individual interviews. In addition, they will be surveyed to assess their experiences or observations with the specific question of choosing to be stupid.

Finding Implications Among Informants

The category of non-professional informants is intended to describe a random sample of people with diverse viewpoints. More specifically, this group of six people have been selected in order to provide representations of backgrounds that include both genders, different life experiences, a range of ages, and a variety of educational backgrounds and family styles. Non-professional informants will be interviewed thematically, using the methodology outlined by Pentti Routio (Arteology, 1997).

The Interviews

As I have indicated previously, stupidity is being treated here as a phenomenon that is a philosophical context and behavioral content. Research therefore, has to follow along two primary interweaving paths, one being ontological and the other being behavioral. In completing the research necessary to select an appropriate methodology, a functionally driven

selection has been made of qualitative processes that, in addition to foregoing methodological processes, also includes elements of case study.

Case study methodology has been selected as the framework for the interviews because of its particularistic (capacity to focus on phenomenon), descriptive (capacity for thick description), hueristic (capacity for discovery), and inductive (capacity to generalize), characteristics as defined by Sharan B. Merriam (1988).

CHAPTER 8

POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The Philosophical Implications of Stupidity

Beginning with the Greeks and extending down through the present time Western philosophy is framed by a limited number of interrelated predicates. These are, man is a being in search of meaning, meaning is represented by a search for the good, the good is an ideal that represents a framework of practical issues. Practical issues that philosophy contends with include the thought and behavior of the individual, the individual as a member of the group defined as society, and the relationships and organization of groups as society defined as polity.

Structuring each of the preceding inquiries, Western philosophy also postulates existential issues that deal with ideas and questions about God(s) and an intelligible universe, the various possibilities of existence, reality, consciousness and awareness.

Taken in its totality and as a presentation of the exercise of mankind's intelligence, the implication of philosophy is that it is meaningless (and I interpreted this as synonymous with stupidity) for a person *not* to inquire about practical issues of meaning, the individual, society, and governance, *and* existential issues that include questions about God, reality and consciousness.

In order to interpret this implication into a more explicit and definitive representation, I would say it is *necessary* to develop certain essential philosophical contextual constructs in order to achieve a minimal level of human intelligence. Such constructs include functionally approximate ideas about what it is and means to be human, to live in a social world, and to live in polity.

Finally, I believe the greater the correlation achieved between meaningful and effective philosophical constructs and the achievement of a worthwhile, satisfying, harmonious life in Being, the greater the degree of intelligence being attained and exercised. Conversely, the less worthwhile, satisfying, and harmonious life in Being is achieved, the greater the degree of stupidity is being attained and exercised.

Stupidity and the Responsibility of Andragogy

The ideas about consciousness, awareness, experience, freedom, and education that have been researched both reinforce and complicate implications of stupidity. First, it is apparent that we *as a culture* strongly believe human beings have a capacity to choose and change.

Second, we believe determination is also exercised by dynamic processes that can be thought of as genetic and environmental. While we have concluded these determinants are reinforced during physiological and socio-cultural stages and circumstances of life, we also profess it is in the state of responsibility we call adulthood when we are mostly and morally responsible for making effective and accurate choices and changes despite genetic or environmental determinations.

The research indicates this can be put in even stronger terms and we can say, in our culture adulthood is the period when we are *obligated* to exercise choice and make change. Commonly, when we evaluate choices and changes that are most evident we readily and apparently assign them degrees and categories of success.

However, more complicated implications of choice and change are represented by our decisions to structure awareness and match these with contextual belief schemes. (It appears this complication is a consequence of our capacity to develop so many varied, complex, inconsistent, perplexing and tangled representations of reality or our environment or behavior, or relationship, or society or whatever it is we choose to see as the locus of our existence).

Here, choice and change is harder to discern because of the degree of complication that we associate with the issue. Correspondingly, the degree to which we effect intelligence or stupidity is determined by our capacity to generate moral attributes such as courage, will, and a reservoir or inventory of successful past experience that produced awareness that can serve as prototypes.

Years ago a motion picture titled *Guess Who's Coming To Dinner?* typified the implication of stupidity (and/or intelligence) in complicated experience. In the movie a White daughter of avowedly liberal parents brought her Black fiancée, home to introduce to her parents, who were unaware of his race. The plot was about the challenge facing the parents as they worked to develop an intelligent response to the situation. Ultimately, they decided (they *chose*) they needed to alter (*change*) their awareness scenario (or philosophical construct) of race and equity from one of theory to one of praxis. As a result, they effected intelligence.

Research indicates then, it is possible the challenge of these two components, *developing an effective philosophical construct and determining an appropriate behavioral response*, determine the degree to which we stupidly or intelligently interact with the challenges presented by our existence and our environment.

The implication of stupidity in Andragogy then, becomes evident in the extent to which the interaction is inappropriate because of either an ineffective philosophical construct (a faulty freedom concept for example) or a inappropriate behavioral response (spouse abuse for instance) as a statement of choice by an adult who either knows better (because of an adequate experience inventory) or because the individual could/should have known better (because of the opportunity to choose to grow that is inherent in adulthood).

Connections of Paradox, Canon, and the Multicultural

The idea of paradox is related to the culturally conditioned way we develop awarenesses. In general, the conclusion of the research is our tendency is to develop awarenesses based on mental construction designs and methods that involve sequence, linearity, horizontal and vertical planes, color absence, and density.

As a result we perceive our environment in terms of distinctions which leads us to believe in the ideas of separateness and parts and construction. The problem of course, is we then invent artificial realities. Time, as constructed of past and future is an example. In reality, some say, there is only the moment. Unfortunately some of these artificial realities can become problematic when we try to imagine holism and relatedness if not inseparability.

Paradox is the antilogy otherwise known, I think, as the seeming incongruity of functionally required contradiction, or interdependent counteraction. Yin and yang, the

confluence of gears moving in opposite directions. The idea of mass composed of non-mass (when viewed microscopically). As a way of thinking, paradox enables us to develop an awareness of irony and other forms of multiple meaning and multifarious perspective that are both in opposition and in harmony.

The research indicates a capacity for paradox enables the understanding of stupidity as compatible with intelligence as contrast, complement, source, and yield, for example. This capacity make paradox vital to the idea *There is no such thing as a stupid person or an intelligent person* even though both stupidity and intelligence exist.

Evidence suggests it may be plausible to realize a continuous representation as an ontology representing skills and knowledge and for the purpose of this study I have considered canon as that representation. Canon then becomes any one 'body of knowledge' of an infinite number of bodies of knowledge that we have chosen to see as separate parts of an empyrean whole.

In this view canon must also be appreciated paradoxically. It may, for example, be interpreted as a cultural interpretation, even a dominant cultural representation. At the same time however, the application of paradox as a rule of observation means it can also be interpreted as a universal representation. This connectivity, I believe, serves the idea of intelligence by enabling the capacity to develop a diverse inventory of awareness and empowers canon, therefore, with educational value.

Similarly, multiculturalism as a mandatory prerequisite licensing not only scope and depth but circularity, color and fluidity as well, allows the symbolic contravention necessary to idealize the imagination of humanness. Without multiculturalism there is no capacity to

hear or see or feel the anthropologic and therefore, no emotional authorization of the other and the other(s) place(s).

I think the research clearly suggests therefore, the absence of multiple-cultural-awareness and the understanding of its import, especially in the postmodern epoch, is, at least as a thoughtful objective, a significant risk of stupidity or of being stupid. Dimensions of communication, media and transport combine with other factors to render the new anthropologic, multiculturalism, as a constitutive element in the repertoire of awarenesses that are the potential for effecting intelligence.

The Response of Critical Education to Stupidity

We can accept as historical fact major changes in the existence that is the sociology of man lead to changes in the methodologies, processes and procedures by which mankind orients and re-orientes herself to the phenomenological dimensions of the changed environment.

This tradition I titled The Heroic Antecedent in Chapter 2, because it represents a search for an appropriate awareness or ontology. Hallmark changes of paradigm in that historic evolution included changes in ideas about the nature of man, the relationship of the individual to society, ideas about government and how it was best constituted and what its purposes and place is, and changes about the constitution of intelligence.

It is very plausible, considering the magnitude of change suggested by the postmodern, that the implication of the heroic antecedent in our time is a need to suggest the basic fundamental changes in education and learning suggested by the philosophy of critical education theory.

These include an alignment of teaching that is directed at coalescing with the amalgamate that is the individual, a re-assessment of the dynamic of both lecture and text based on the experience of awareness and the awareness of education as experience.

To be sure, many positivist ideas must continue to be employed in order to maintain the architecture and infrastructure of our ways of living. We can make modifications however, and still achieve the new orientations necessary to refine an intelligence suitable for the postmodern era.

For example, information can be arranged and used as fact without necessarily being seen as unassailable; the idea of certainty as a recognizable process and utilitarian concept does not have to mean it is unchangeable; and the development of skills, must continue.

Skill development cannot, however, continue to be thought of, stupidity I think, as philosophical truth or as a body of knowledge that has no relationship to all other things. We cannot live in the postmodern as representations of our occupation that is independent or insulated from all else.

Finally, the philosophy of critical education theory has most to contribute as an alternative process and picture of ideas of contemporary and quintessential intelligence that can escape the trap that modern intelligence falls into when it is defined as a level of skill development and achievement that has nothing to do with an individual's capacity to develop effective concepts, contexts, awarenesses and experiences.

To summarize, modern intelligence represented by the best and the brightest who produce holocausts, epic weapons of mass destruction, Vietnam Wars, environmental degradation and runaway explosions in population, is an intelligence that cannot divorce itself

from the capacity to produce and effect stupidity. In the philosophy of critical education theory we can, alternatively, find ways to alter our cultural and social reproduction to an educational awareness that includes the dialogue and dialectic of stupidity in addition to intelligence so we can more clearly identify that which is not smart.

Views From Cyberspace and Interviews

The implication of ideas and conceptualizations of stupidity provided by informants reinforce and support the implications of stupidity found in the literature of canon, multiculturalism, and the philosophy of critical education theory. There are of course, viewpoints and ideas that are unfocused, blurred, or representative of oppositional perspectives, but there is no evidence of substantive denial.

Conceptions generally included the idea that stupidity is conditional or circumstantially related. It is not an exclusive human deficiency as in being relatively less smart than other people. Thus, put in the popular context, intelligent people can be stupid (ergo, stupid people can be intelligent). That there is a moral value, even if only as applied to societal connotations and contentions, is also evident.

Finally, the research into constructs found on the Internet and among those who were interviewed support the idea that stupidity has, as a concept, the potential of sophisticated composition that includes ranges of idea, paradigm and philosophy awaiting the revelation and research of those who would explore the development of stupidity theory.

A Digest, Some Conclusions and Recommendations

As phenomenal, explosive, and revolutionary change continues to impact and dominate, the need to more closely and precisely evaluate our behavior increases

exponentially. This behavioral evaluation is especially demanded in the subjects of human quality and education. As a specie we can no longer afford the mediocrity of human behavior and narrow indoctrination that pass as quality and education. Our extraordinary capability and capacity to produce and use tools has reached the point where it threatens, as a behavior, our survival.

The purpose of this research was to suggest the plausibility of the idea that we choose to be stupid and in the tradition of research to position this postulate as an answer. In the absence of theory development and research, it has been necessary to ground this theory by orienting it to the historic (canon) and the contemporary (multiculturalism and the postmodern), while centering it as a disciplinary objective (Andragogy) and giving it a utilitarian purpose as an educational tool (critical education theory).

As research, the suggestion has employed methods of the phenomenological school of qualitative inquiry and determined from its findings the suggestion that we choose to be stupid has validity as an implication in our civilization that originated in the both the common and serious thought of the Greeks and has continued to this day.

Therefore, the relevance of this suggestion to education is especially applicable to the current period in which a major paradigm shift is said to be occurring.

Using the ideas in this study, theory development into more precise definitions of stupidity and the development of schemata and categories of stupidity can be generated by further research. Educationally, the idea of this study supports and encourages changes in learning and teaching process, procedure and theory that represent the universe non-holistically. As an application in andragogy, it is recommended this study be applied as the

basis for the generation of methodology that encourages awareness development as an educational process.

Notes About Possible Stupidity Contexts

Stupidity can be described in these interrelated contexts:

1. Conceptually, as a paradox or antilogy that can be behaviorally chronicled in a number of ways including something that is extant as well as nonexistent, and absolute as well as inadequate.
2. Culturally, as an (unacknowledged) concept in philosophy that has consistently been instrumental in shaping Western ideas of intelligence.
3. Educationally, especially andragogically, as voluntary behavior that may be conscious and/or unconscious, but is manifestly anti-moral if not immoral and therefore counterproductive.
4. Individually, as a seemingly anatomic behavioral response to serendipitous personal and cultural predicaments that will inevitably result, if not corrected, in the necessity to successively engage in increasingly potent and apparent stupid behavior.

Conclusions

The following are valid theoretical postulates:

1. Stupidity is to be found in and result from confused thinking that can be inferred as resulting from the basic human condition as declared by Descartes declaration that he is a "thing which thinks," and it therefore follows, to think is to be confused.
2. Stupidity can also result from a misinterpretation of reality. This principle follows the idea behind Kierkegaard's conjecture, "subjectivity is the truth."

3. Stupidity can also be generated by the inevitable reality resulting from humankind's incapacity to live a moral existence. This is a slightly modified version of one of the most essential issues explored by the Greek philosophers.

4. Ultimately, the condition of stupidity may not be correctable. However, by refining the processes by which we arrive at awareness, at least that which is associated with conscious consciousness, we can compensate for stupidity by applying an intelligence that represents a capacity to more fully realize consequences.

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