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ON INSTITUTIONALIZING THE HAWTHORNE EFFECT

By

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I entitled the remarks that I want to share with you this afternoon "On Institutionalizing The Hawthorne Effect." I am sure that I need not explain to a group of educators the allusion, but they tell me that the press has been having some difficulty with it. As you know, the Hawthorne effect has come to us from the studies of a major company which I am sure one should not mention in this land of its competitor. However, a major company once did some studies and found that whenever they introduced an experimental program there was a ruboff of vitality and energy in their workers. They thought at first that this threw off any kind of evaluations of the study. I suggest that out of this pattern, (and this is not a new suggestion) we ought to develop a respect for the Hawthorne effect. I do want to make a case for real change for change's sake. Although I do not mean this in a global sense of irresponsible change, there is a great force in changing things all of the time. The regrouping of old and new ideas, the regrouping of ideas sometimes borrowed in part from someone else, is what gives to an institution and the persons within that institution a vital kind of force.

I was interested and pleased this morning in listening to the three speakers from very different kinds of institutions, because it seemed to me that all of them were speaking about the process of innovation -- the very energy, the

activity, that went into innovating. I wanted to tell Dr. Margaret Lorimer that I seldom write down a quote but I'm utterly fascinated with one of hers, and I want to ask her immediately for her permission to quote her often with that magnificent statement which I find very heartening: "We so often find the conservatives protecting what the liberals just won." Somehow or other that is the most succinct and clear-sighted view that I've seen.

Each one of the speakers this morning spoke about trying to re-dress the problems of a particular institution by taking, as one speaker said, "a long step into the past to borrow something that needed to be re-integrated into the present mix," that the present original and peculiar mix could be made. In no sense can innovation in any institution be a patchwork quilt of borrowing the little artifacts of other people's innovation. I think all too often the more prosaic kinds of administrators and faculties think that they can "play it safe" by waiting until somebody else proves the credibility of a particular piece of innovation. Then they attempt to put together a mosaic, not an original one, but a patchwork-quilt mosaic of the tried and true. This, I think, is the kind of status quo patchwork that is not innovation in any sense because it does not have the sense of integrity, the sense of functional force, that every existential person and institution must attempt to put into his own conception.

Each one of us, each one of our institutions, is both the sum total of all of its past, of all of its history, of all its peculiar configuration at this moment in time, and of its peculiar insights into the future. Each institution at best is the attempt of some group of persons at a given moment of time, to permute, to integrate its limitations and its abilities in the best possible form. When you talk about a massive institution like Michigan State, or an about-to-be massive institution like Santa Cruz, you are trying to do

away with the faceless society, the bureaucratic, no-name society, which seems to be the inevitable consequence of bigness. But when you talk about an institution like Beloit or my own Webster College, you are trying to counteract the very in-turning coziness of the tribal, little kind of world that turns smug and old and arrogant and stuffy precisely because it does not have the kinds of open societies which it must borrow from the larger world. And therefore, it was obvious that a place like Beloit in order to have the vitality that it has, is integrating into its patterns ways to throw its students and faculties out of itself, lest they get involved in the kind of student-teacher relationship, a terrible transgression of the old Mr. Chips, where this student and this teacher lived in a kind of parasitic interdependence on one another. If my only option were to have that kind of family coziness, or the bureaucracy of the faceless society, I would argue with Harvey Cox and others in our modern theological world that there is more chance for the personal development of the human individual in the faceless society than there is in the one-to-one kind of relationship in which academic matriarchs or patriarchs live in a parasitic future through the next generation.

We have had all too much, I think, in the small liberal arts college, the family kind of world in which the man who did not make it to be a doctor lives through his son by forcing his son to be a doctor in the next generation. That kind of personal encounter, I think, is not what the students at Berkeley are looking for. I am sure many of you are aware of the terms that have been used in the curriculum materials developments of the last decade to differentiate one kind of style of teaching-learning as expository and another kind of teaching-learning as inductive. The best proponents of a focus on the inductive system have never negated the necessity and inevitability of an expository style. Rather, these kinds of styles had to live in mutual co-existence. In redressing an

indoctrinatory tradition-focused era in education, many of us have been asking for a new focus on inductive learning. Inductive learning to be true to itself must always take respect for that which comes from history, must always within its own induction present the expository facts from the past so that they can be permuted and induced into the prognosis of the future.

I am more and more convinced that not only do we need to respect the inductive process in learning theory inside our epistemological conceptions of education, but you and I, the institutional heads, the administrators of our institutions, have to develop not only in our intellects but in our hearts and in our nervous systems and perhaps in our muscular reactions -- we have to espouse a respect for inductive administration. When my sense of humor is operating at best, I am convinced that the modern administrator needs to have two qualities to a very high degree. He must have the quality of insightfulness, of being able to see and support individual initiative within his community, and he must also have the ability to protect his innovators from one another -- because an innovator is a lyrical kind of prima donna, a person who must have the freedom to go it alone, but a person who is threatened often, ironically or paradoxically, by someone else doing a very deviant thing.

My students about a year and a half ago wrote an editorial about me which I found very amusing and very interesting. The thesis of the editorial was that Sister Jacqueline was open to everything but closure and that this was its own kind of closure. I accept that indictment. I hope I live up to that indictment all my life because I believe that kind of world is the only one that will free us from the puritan, judgmental, tribal culture that absolutely throttles initiative. That kind of puritan tribal judgmental culture has been just as characteristic of some faculty committees as it has been characteristic of the puritan town -- the kind of faculty committee that is so afraid of deviant

behavior of any individual or any department. We must find a way to wade our way through that kind of log jam.

Jerome Bruner, in his early writings and speakings talked a great deal about the inductive mode of learning. I have never been able to find it in his formal writings but at conference tables and on platforms I have often heard him describe the expository system as going from generalization, to example, to use. In the expository mode, you start with a general formula or a general thesis. If you are a good teacher you try to give the students various examples with some overlapping imagery and difference. You try to give them enough examples that this generalization take on blood and heart, and then you expect the student to be able to make the knowledge functional. Bruner always defended that kind of teaching, but he called also for the respect for the inductive teaching which he said went, rather, from action to imagery to notation. I asked him once during a coffee break at a conference whether or not these were in direct inversion to one another. He said "almost," except that what he meant by imagery, obviously is not what the older systems meant by generalization. What he meant by imagery was always an open-ended situation. It was the best that man could see at that time. It was a structure -- it was a pattern, but a structure and a pattern which was by its very nature open to new imagery, open to transformation.

This, I think, is obviously the style of the modern world and it is just beginning to be the style of higher education in our country. The administrator who is bright enough and sensitive enough to begin to see the imagery that is forming within his own institution, who is bright enough and sensitive enough to expose his people to other actions which may indeed begin to help them see a new kind of pattern -- that administrator, I think, will help to keep an institution off-balance all the time. Unless an institution is out of equilibrium, it will never be a vital institution.

Today's successful institutions, because of their deep vested interests,

are already in danger of being tomorrow's mediocre institutions. In our respect for tradition, in our respect for history, we know that the great powers of yesterday are seldom the great powers of tomorrow. We sit in this room today watching the two great powers of our world -- the United States of America and Soviet Russia -- struggle against each other, each trying to protect her vested interests as the emerging nations everywhere are trying to form a new pattern of history. If the United States and/or Soviet Russia are able somehow to keep the pattern open enough so that they converge into the pattern of tomorrow, so that they are part of the transformation and part of the input of destroying their status quo precisely so they can be part of the dynamic future, then there is some possibility that Soviet Russia and/or the United States may still be power inputs in the 21st and 22nd centuries after all of us are somewhere else. So with our institutions, be they the system of higher education in general or the system of a given institution.

I love the scriptural image that reminds us that "unless the seed go into the ground and die it shall not bring forth new fruit." Unless the principle of life can somehow or other decay so that it becomes the former of the new plant, it will not live. Yet we in all our institutions have had great difficulty in espousing that kind of principle in operational contexts. Unless I am convinced that there is a possibility that Webster College, as an institution, may not exist a hundred years from now, I will submit that the next ten years at Webster College will not be exciting or vital. Unless the principal administrator believes the purpose of the institution is possibly, I'm not saying deliberately, but is possibly to destroy itself in order that it may converge into even more vital institutions, then the administrator and the people who share in that administration are so preoccupied with how to preserve the institution that they lose the focus of how to invest in the future through the

institution.

Institutions exist to serve men at this time and institutions exist to serve men in generations which we will not know. Institutions do not exist to satisfy themselves. All of our vital institutions were once new configurations like this one at Albany State -- new configurations trying to come to terms at some moment of time with a series of factors which the old institutions either in quantity or quality were not able to satisfy. But the tragedy of the institutions is that born out of functional necessity they turn in upon themselves and some day or other they begin to conceive their mandates in how to be loyal to their founders. If anyone in history thinks he is being loyal to me by trying to defend my position of 1967 in 1997, that person will have been fundamentally disloyal to me. The creative people of all times have always been the ones who were, as Dr. Lorimer said, making breakthroughs which somebody else has to conserve later on. But the process by which these men read into the future and knew that there had to be regrouping will produce a new kind of situation which of its very force will have to be modified by other men in other times if we do not have the sense or insight to modify it in our own time.

We have long been preoccupied with the question of standards and norms. Where do standards and norms come from? Standards and norms of good writing come from the pattern of history of past good writings which some men invented. Everytime a Faulkner comes upon the scene -- and a new Faulkner will come upon the scene -- the standard of writing is not destroyed but it is enlarged. Everytime that somebody in the teaching of English tries to restrict the student to a particular kind of Victorian style, he restricts that student from having a vital conception of structure in writing. Everytime he enlarges the picture by throwing in as many possible patterns as he can -- not that the student imitates narrowly one of those patterns but hoping that the student out of the

elements of many varied kinds of writing will create his own style, with its own structure, with its own pattern, with its own discipline -- that kind of teacher is producing a vitality and I think a standard for the future.

If we worship standards we will never make standards. If we worship norms we will never expand norms. If we do not respect standards as partial truths, as part of static evaluation at a given time, we will fail to make that input of the past part of our creative making of the future. This kind of evolution, this kind of creative energy, is of course, not the stuff of the psychometricians. The people who want the experimental and the control group always want us to hold our experiments constant until someone can measure them. I have found it wonderfully amusing in the last few years to sit at a number of conference tables with the physical scientists who really made the world of empirical evidence on one side of the table and the social scientists who keep trying to be "hard scientific" on the other side of the table. If my small sample, and I grant that it is an unusual sample of exposure to physical scientists, has taught me anything, it has taught me enough respect for empirical evidence to know that we seldom have it. Many of the best physical scientists in the business often talk about flying by the seat of the pants, about gradients, about the limitedness of one's insight. Too many social scientists have said, "Let us respect only that which is measurable." At this point in time, I would say that some of us have to bear with all of the criticism of being soft-headed -- soft-headed precisely because the fringes of truth are always soft.

Philip Morrison, a theoretical physicist for a long time at Cornell and now at MIT, gave a brilliant lecture to in-service teachers at my college a couple of years ago. He was talking about the statistical and dynamic theories of evolution. He defined the statistical theory of evolution as the battering breakthrough -- the battering breakthrough where all kinds of things are

attempting to be the new order and one or two get through and become the new convergents. He defined the dynamic theory of evolution as the vector force in which you carefully plan a long-range future, and you order all of your experiments and your trials in that way. He carefully said there was room for both. But then Morrison, an elegant teacher, did a beautiful thing. He trained a light on the ceiling where a very interesting phenomenon was going on. He got the teachers all involved in this phenomena and threw the spotlight on another part of the ceiling where something much more exciting and vivid was going on. He let them see it momentarily and then went right back to his unilateral discussion. He vividly exposed to those people what would happen if you kept your sights trained only on one possibility. If we all kept our sights trained only on one possibility we were taking the terrible chance of never discovering the happenstance that might be going on somewhere else.

In this world of innovation what we need more than anything else is the sense of humor to live with pluralism. I really mean this. I think we have only begun to find it in infinitesimal ways. If we transfer the old order of orthodoxy, -- if we transfer the old order of dogmatic truth to the new society, we are doomed, I think, to failure. The president of Beloit said this morning that some of their problems arose from using some of the elements of the old forms to try to make the new ones in a much more magnificent way. If we assume that our experiment is valid only if it becomes almost universally adopted, we are making, I think, the terrible mistake of new wine in old wine skins. This is a world of statistical evolution even if it is a world of long-range planning.

I am obviously politically involved in a massive movement in Catholic education -- religious education -- and I am constantly being pressured by reporters to make statements which I do not want to make. I am constantly being asked if I believe that this is a mass movement and that everybody is going to

follow. My answer is, "Please, God. No." If one finite mind or one group of finite minds in finite time is willing to permute the elements a particular way because of their existential situation in political and human history, it seems to me that future history is in so much better shape if there are multiple other elements doing it other ways. Rather than threatening one another by divergence of existence, we ought to be giving to one another the courage to go on precisely because it isn't a one-shot deal -- precisely because there are many patterns, many overlapping attempts. Many experiments are going on. If however, we lack the sense of humor or we lack the humility and the courage to allow deviant behavior -- if we must somehow or other cause every new kind of experiment to catapult itself into failure in order that ours somehow or other prove itself to be orthodox, then I think we are seriously hampering the future.

The example from Santa Cruz this morning, the example from constituent colleges everywhere, are attempts to give within the great massive institutions real individual choice. As I heard the two morning presentations in particular, they were attempts not to get the student to select pattern a, b, c, d, or e, but often to let the student take major parts of one of those programs and to reintegrate and permute them into his own program. If modern man and future man are to define the Age of the Person in a terribly complex society, then we have got to find the principle of integration within the individual student. Not only the individual student must learn this art within our colleges but so also must you and I, the presidents of universities and colleges who are profoundly the students of modern times.

There is no blueprint by which to run today's educational system. There is no pattern by which I can simply solve my situation by taking Beloit's plan. There is no way by which Dr. Upton can solve his situation by taking my plan. But we can learn from one another and we can look at the consequences -- we can

look at the strengths and weaknesses of our geographical position, of our human position, of the people we have brought together, and we can attempt with our colleagues to keep inventing the situation, to keep permuting the variables toward a little more sense at the present time.

We are all frightened, and I share that fright, about what the student movement means. I predict new student movements will force many of us into a kind of liberal boarding school permissiveness. I want to suggest to you this afternoon that I think rather than finding the new monastic community, rather than finding the new totalitarian education -- total education -- we ought to respect the fact that the educating society includes the college, includes the school system, but the school system or the college and university can never again be the company town.

I was intrigued at the State University of New York at Old Westbury to hear the former town manager of Antioch tell us that students come to Antioch with a high protest level only to find very little to protest against at Antioch. "And so," the young man said to us, "Last year we almost hung the barber." There was something humorous and yet something a little sick about that. I have not had a chance to talk to President Dixon about it, but I feel sure he would agree that there is something a little sick about a protest movement that has to go looking for something to protest against. Why, in heaven's name, should the barber have anything to do with the central administration?

I want to suggest that one of the things all of us have to consider at this moment is how to break up the company town instead of how to make it more integral. If the student is to be the author of his own education, if he is to be the author of his own education in a time of inter-locking systems, of inter-locking authorities, then let us not confuse the future and the present by trying to make the new benevolent matriarchies or patriarchies. Let us not turn our

presidencies into the global responsibility in which we must create the most permissive state for all of our constituents.

If we have given up, and I submit that we have, the notion of a monolithic totalitarian state in modern life, then we must find a way to subject our faculties and our students to multiple authorities. They must learn how themselves to integrate the authorities that they have to deal with. They have got to live with parking laws. They have got to live with housing conditions. But they have got to live with them not in a central administration, but in one in which they have some kinds of options. If we require all our students to live on the campus, I think we are doomed to create a permissive state in which they always carry the placards. If we allow multiple choices for them, if we allow multiple choices of curriculum, if we allow multiple choices of living conditions, if we allow multiple choices of packaging their own individual lives, then we thrust the burden of initiation on them, and make them respond to the multiplicity of authorities which you and I have to deal with everyday. We have to deal with the authority of union labor. We have to deal with the authority of a ten per-cent cost of living rise. We have to deal with the authority of faculty committees. The student in our time is living in an educating society, but you and I can't absorb the whole of that society.

I fear a little bit our attempt in modern society to transform the bureaucratic university into total living. I want to suggest that Michigan State and Santa Cruz and Beloit and Webster Colleges all have to avoid being the new residential colleges in any total sense. Unless we do, the student will become the benevolent recipient of a permissive culture in which he has no responsibility and in which he does not have to negotiate his position but can always protest against the authority. If we try to supervise his entire education, we have to run an expository, authoritarian shop. If we submit our students and our faculties

to the chaos of failure, to living with their own failures, to the necessity of making up for their own failure, I think we are much closer to the real world. This is, I submit (and I think this will take the scrutiny of real test, of real empirical evidence) an age of inter-locking institutions. It is not an age of anti-authority. It is an age of multiple-authority. If we think of a unilateral, monolithic institution, then the best we can do is to be beneficent kinds of despots, creating spoiled children in the name of new responsibility.

We must have the courage to say that you and I are partial imparters of partial truth. We have something to offer but we must not take responsibility for everything. If the higher education system can give us deviant behavior, if the students of this day have vast ranges from which to choose, if we give them ways of not being possessed by a single institution, then I believe we will help them become responsible citizens, responsible persons. If we attempt to find the great liberal Utopia, if we assume that there is some holy grail out there then I think, we are going after the golden fleece that does not exist.

It is a terrible thing to be a finite man in finite time. The system of higher education, which in its very nature has always committed itself to open inquiry, and by that commitment to partial truth, has got to be able, more than most, to live with friction, to live with unfinished business, to live with deviations, to live with different views of truth, and to see that all of us are better off because my institution is not like yours and yours is not like mine. We must create in our own institutions the best possible integrity that we can give at a given time, knowing that history will be loyal to us if the institutions of the future look not at all like what you and I create today. We all give lip-service to this theory, but every one of us thinks about creating a thing in stone so that the future will be loyal to us if that goes on existing. In an evolutionary period when everything is exploding and will continue to explode,

history may rather be loyal to those men who are most forgotten because they created a society that was expendable so that that society could invest itself in the future and become a new society. If this is true about our political institutions, it must be true about Harvard and Yale and Podunk Corners and the State University of New York and the junior colleges and every other educational approximation which is tried at a given time.

Unless the seed go into the ground and die it shall not give new life. It takes a profound sense of humor to be an innovator in such a time. Today's liberals either become tomorrow's conservatives or they remain the focus of attack. The conservatives of one generation espouse the artifacts of their creation of last decade even as they continue to potshot the men and women who go on trying to invent the future.

The conviction that somebody else at this moment in time, and always somebody else in the future, has the mandate to modify my mistakes is the only thing that can keep a finite man in finite time ready to go on and do things. If we must say that our artifact is to be proved inviolate and absolute, then I would submit that not one of us can act. Our institutions will be different from one another. My institution will be different from what it is a year from now if it is successful.

Innovation is a process. We must stand tall at this moment in time and say that there is a great value in change for change's sake.

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