

dialectical method. Ideologically it is explainable in terms of Heiss' interest in attacking dialectics as having any relevance to science: it is the science-dialectics issue he is concerned about and not the relation (or lack thereof) between empiricism, rationalism and dialectics.

Marx, we are further told, was driven "back to Hegel again and again [because] Hegel had given Marx his catchwords." Marx, however, simplified Hegel. He was a kind of epiphenomalist who made it seem that the material conditions of the world completely determine the superstructure of all thought and culture. Heiss, triumphantly, shows from some Marxian texts—apparently even *contra* Marx—that this epiphenomalist position is not consistently maintained.

The main simplification and thrust of Marx, we read, was that he "narrowed down the dialectical process...to the interplay between productive forces and conditions. For him basically there is only one dialectic which is economic in nature...the dialectic process, as he saw it, would not in fact continue after the revolution...once a communist revolution had occurred entirely doing away with private property the very bases of economic dialectic would be wiped out." Here, of course, Marx is transformed into a "vulgar economist" and a "utopian" who, like Adam Smith, saw a Nirvana-like rest as the result of historical effort.

We are also told this: "The creator of historical materialism, to put it bluntly, was not much of an historian. ...history's changing face as such really had no interest for Marx." Be that as it may, certainly one knows nothing of dialectics if one does not know that that methodology is adopted as the correct way to delve beneath the face of things to the underlying invariant which is nevertheless the governing principle of radical development and not just superficial change. This is just one of the many places Heiss proves his incompetence on the subject of dialectics.

One might sum up Heiss' general level of accuracy and powers of logic by

reproducing here his "refutation" of Marx on the penultimate page of the text. "Actual facts seem to show that every society establishes an order of rank. In this sense a classless society, one without any hierarchical arrangement whatsoever, is obviously impossible."

Heiss devotes two chapters to *Capital*, and claims—similarly to Tucker, in the latter's recent anthology—that "the first volume was a comprehensive effort." This is said despite the fact that extended social reproduction (progress, the necessary condition for continued human civilization according to Marx) is not dealt with until volume three.

That this volume received such high praise as it did in such a crucial periodical as *Library Journal* and was recommended to undergraduates in *Choice* is a sad commentary on the state of scholarship concerning 19th century philosophy. A good monograph on the development of dialectic in this period remains to be written. □

## Liberal Education: Two Views

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### Education and the Democratic Ideal,

Steven M. Cahn.

Nelson-Hall, 1979, 111 pages, \$7.95 pbk.

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### On the Idea of a University,

J. M. Cameron.

Toronto, 1978, 92 pages, pbk.

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James Gouinlock

*Emory University*

While Cahn and Cameron do not select identical issues for examination, each of the two addresses himself to fundamental questions about the nature and function of liberal education. In part, their differences represent the continuation of a controversy that originates with Plato and Aristotle. In the sense to be indicated, Cahn's work is Platonic, Cameron's

Aristotelian; many issues in higher education can be clarified by reference to this distinction.

Although contemplation of the forms is for Plato an experience akin to the divine, knowledge of the forms is given direct application in determining and governing a just social order. The ultimate purpose of the educational system is good leadership and good citizenship. For Aristotle, on the other hand, the highest objects of knowledge are without utility and are glorified, in part, on just that account. The philosophic life is the ultimate goal of education. Aristotle, too, of course, is acutely concerned with political education; so one might say the difference between the two on this score is primarily a matter of emphasis.

The difference is largely one of emphasis, but that is a difference that makes itself felt in a concrete manner in both the liberal arts curriculum and the conception of the teacher. Above all, the status of the university in society is at issue. Cahn, who takes his immediate point of departure from a philosophy of education owing much to Dewey, is concerned with university education in and for democracy. Cameron's thought is deeply and specifically indebted to John Henry Newman. Cameron, like Newman, conceives the university as a place for intellectual culture, where inquiry goes on for its own sake. Cultivation of this life has, presumably, highly valuable results for social and political activity; but such results are incidental. The life of the mind is its own reward and justification. The question for Cahn is What is the best education for "preserving and enriching" democracy? For Cameron it is What is the best education for participating in and enjoying intellectual life? Their answers are such that the forms of university education that they advocate are dissimilar.

According to Cahn, minimal requirements for all college students should include enough instruction to provide "substantial knowledge" of one's native language and literature, at least one foreign language and literature, natural science, social science, world and national

history, methods of inquiry and critical analysis, aesthetic phenomena, and fundamental philosophic ideas. Trendy courses are dismissed for lack of substance. Thus would the student become equipped to participate well in a democracy.

The teacher demands excellence from his students, his colleagues, and himself. Cahn is partisan to the view—much loved by administrators but otherwise unsupported—that good teaching and good research are inseparable. He also makes a strong defense of the traditional practice of giving frequent examinations and grading them relative to a clear and uniform standard of excellence. There are, he argues, good pedagogic reasons for such practices, quite apart from their utility in making distinctions required for entry into professional careers. The student is able to determine whether he is suited for further pursuit of a given subject, and the teacher is better able to advise him. Regular examinations encourage the student to maintain a steady pace of work and to attend to all aspects of the subject matter. Cahn (rightly) dismisses the view that grading is "dehumanizing."

Cahn's chapter "The Art of Instruction" characterizes the fundamentals of good teaching. The first such element is to provide motivation to appreciate the intrinsic value of the course material. The teacher's enthusiasm and his ability to relate the subject matter to the interests of the students are here paramount. The second element is organization. Cahn is an advocate of meticulously prepared and executed instruction. "Each day he sets foot in the classroom, a teacher should decide exactly what he intends to accomplish during that particular session and precisely what he expects his students to know by the time the period ends" (30). Third is clarification: making every effort to recognize concepts that will be difficult for students and to elucidate them in a variety of ways. Finally, there is generalization. This is the synthesis of detail and of apparently unrelated facts into a meaningful whole, or the demonstration of the relevance of such items of information to

significant issues. In addition to being highly skilled in these areas, a great teacher projects "a vision of excellence" (32). In general, the role of the teacher is to impart knowledge and to indicate its significance. Cahn recognizes that graduate programs have failed grievously in not providing instruction in teaching.

Education for democracy is not egalitarian. Cahn insists that excellence be identified, rewarded, and publically distinguished from mediocrity. Neither is education permissive. The student is a novice; he is indiscriminate and relatively ignorant. The aims of education are subverted by allowing each student to follow his (reputedly creative) nose. Contrary to some recent views, Dr. Cahn recognizes that even under the best of circumstances, learning isn't always fun, and it isn't always rewarding in the short run. He is also opposed to, or at least extremely wary of, student evaluations of teaching, arguing with some plausibility that students are not qualified to make such evaluations and pointing out that professors tend to feel hostage to student opinion and good will. He favors instead visitation of the classroom by colleagues.

Cahn's view is dominated by attention to definite requirements and to techniques for imparting knowledge, with deliberate reference to the demands of democratic society. Cameron's is a markedly different vision. With the demands of intellectual culture having priority, the pervasive concern is with the quality of the entire academic environment. Accordingly, he shows great concern that there be extensive contact between teachers and taught, that there be genuine and mutual bonding in that relation, and that students live and study in relatively small and autonomous collegial units, free of "excessive and burdensome administration." Most teaching should be either by tutorial or seminar, and the method would be primarily maieutic—that of eliciting insight from the students, rather than instructing them. "What I maintain is that this is in liberal education the *central* method and the only one that has transforming power" (75).

Cameron laments the lopsided allegiance of faculty to graduate education. He believes the primary concern of the faculty must be with undergraduates, and his remarks are directed principally to that level. He finds students devoted more than anything else to grades and to meeting requirements, their safest strategy being merely to parrot their instructors' lectures. Ideally, graded courses would be abolished, except perhaps in the first year; likewise course examinations, but there would be many written essays. In such a program, students would be advised of the nature of their progress at the end of the year. Examinations of some form would be given at the completion of the entire course of study.

In the first year there would be a minimum of required courses; after that students could engage at once in rigorous programs of specialization. (He acknowledges that this arrangement will not be suitable for everyone; so students should have available to them after their first year the option of a more conventional program.) Programs within an area of specialization would be designed to introduce cognate subjects as well. (Cameron is not in favor of specialization in Philosophy. One first has to have knowledge about which to philosophize.) The course of studies shouldn't make great demands on students' time. There should be leisure to attend lectures outside the prescribed course of study, participate in various discussions, and just engage in reading and reflection. He is confident that this course of study will greatly reduce the susceptibility to the superficial, sophistic, and the merely fashionable. Students will acquire "a powerful instrument for the interpretation of human life" (6).

Perhaps Cameron's greatest concern is with the autonomy of academic life. He offers severe warnings about the intrusion of the state into the affairs of the university. He says that a chief problem of the contemporary university is its loss of identity and therewith much of its authority in contemporary society. The university must not be confused with any sort of in-

stitution that ministers directly to perceived social needs. Its lack of identity contributes, Cameron believes, to the destruction of the ambience needed for liberal studies; and its very independence depends on restoring its proper identity. "The independent existence of the university as a self-governing community of scholars, teachers, and students may rest upon our ability to explain, patiently and with good humor, what a university is and on what principles it is necessarily founded" (38).

These two studies have similarities as well as contrasts. Neither Cameron nor Cahn advocates "relevance," as this notion was understood ten to fifteen years ago. They are both in favor of the maintenance of high academic standards, and both recognize that university professors tend to be heedless of the great responsibility to educate undergraduates.

There are at least three notable differences between them. Most striking, perhaps, is their conception of teaching. Its maieutic and—in the classical sense—erotic dimensions are not so much as mentioned in Cahn's analysis. Cahn is preoccupied with instruction, with having students master a certain body of knowledge, while Cameron sees the role of the teacher much more as that of catalyst and guide. Cahn is too much concerned with mechanics and not enough with *ethos*. Perhaps he has neglected that which is most precious—and most elusive—in university life. Yet Cameron, for his part, is too disdainful of the crafts of instruction. The reader might well assume that such differences in the conception of teaching have their source in the divergent conceptions of the purpose of university education.

The same divergence is very likely the source of their respective convictions about curricular requirements, examinations, and grading. In our highly pluralistic and specialized civilization, it is difficult to see much merit in the haste with which Cameron would allow students to focus their studies within a given area. (And isn't such specialization contrary to the aim of general intellectual

culture?) It is also difficult to see the virtue in postponing examinations to the end of the undergraduate career. Cameron is obviously looking for a way to diminish the hypertrophied concern with grades that typifies the undergraduate. We are depressed by students who care nothing about the relative merits of classical liberalism and Marxism but who care everything about getting an A in Political Philosophy. This is a problem that Cahn doesn't seem to feel, but he would surely protest that the abolition of graded courses is too great a price to pay to mitigate the difficulty. (And one might add that it is very difficult to maintain high academic standards without grading of some kind.) Insofar as preoccupation with grades is a problem that can be handled within the confines of the university, perhaps the most promising approach is in the development of the academic atmosphere upon which Cameron rests so much hope.

The third contrast centers on the social role of the university. Cahn does not address the issue of the relation between the university and the state. He probably assumes the topic is beyond the scope of his discussion, but in fact it is not. The conception of the university's function is of deep significance to those who are deeply fearful for government encroachment on university prerogative. Cahn desires the university to design part of its curriculum explicitly for the sake of strengthening democratic institutions. Cameron emphatically rejects such notions. His reason seems to be that insofar as the university has a deliberate social purpose, it is the more susceptible to both internal politicization and external political control; and the life of the mind is profoundly threatened. The determination of a curriculum for encouraging certain kinds of political behavior becomes itself a political problem; the determination of ends extrinsic to education becomes its essence, and the ideal of inquiry with no ulterior motive is sacrificed. Here we see the most significant difference between the implications of the Platonic and Aristotelian models of education.

It would be comforting to believe that cultivating the life of the mind would also be a preparation for democratic life, but there is little evidence to indicate that it must be so. Pursuers of intellectual life have all sorts of ideologies and all sorts of virtues and vices. It would also be comforting to believe that the functional education conceived by Cahn would also have liberal effect. Again, however, we are entitled to no assurances. Indeed, we may be skeptical that either of these schemes would have even its own desired effect. Cahn is unduly confident about the effects of instruction, while Cameron's willingness to permit early specialization seems inappropriate to intellectual culture.

Although there are some possibilities of adjusting the two philosophies, the options are limited. Could Cameron's *ethos* be preserved in Cahn's curriculum without requiring a drastic compromise in one of the two modes of teaching? Teachers of philosophy, for example, often feel a tension between the intent to impart the substance of the discipline and the more socratic goal of educating insight into a problem, largely through the exertions of the student himself. These procedures are by no means identical; and there seems to be a real difference in the quality of learning that each provides. That which is discovered largely by our own exertions is more prized, more enduring, more affective in thought and action. Surely Cameron's emphasis is well taken here, so long as it is not taken exclusively. The quality of a mind is more important than its mass of information. To attain this quality, there has to be a sacrifice in the quantity of information set forth in a given period of time.

The unresolved issues exemplified in the work of Cahn and Cameron are evidence of the still unsettled condition of our thinking about higher education. But what is problematic is not necessarily insoluble. We must continue to discern what is truly threatening to academic freedom; we must continue to address the question of the content of a genuinely liberal education; and we must continue

to devote ourselves to distinguishing an educational process that reduces our tendency to rely on prejudice, passion, and dogmatism. □

## Literacy and Growth: Opposing Views

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**The Culture of Narcissism,**  
Christopher Lasch.  
Norton, 268 pages, \$11.95. cl.

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**Person/Planet,**  
Theodore Roszak.  
Doubleday, 1978, 347 pages, \$10.95. cl.

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Stephen W. White  
*East Tennessee State University*

Two historians setting out to write analytic treatments of American culture, could not consciously and successfully attempt to come to more contradictory conclusions than Christopher Lasch and Theodore Roszak have in their recent books. Time and time again, one could say that what Lasch sees as symptoms of deterioration and decline in American culture, Roszak sees as the expression, however feeble, of authentic personhood. What Lasch sees as the unhealthy erosion of authority and discipline and standards, Roszak sees as the expression of a desire for freedom, self-discipline, and self-created and self-imposed standards. What Lasch sees simply as the disintegration of society, Roszak sees as the "creative disintegration of industrial society."

How could two scholars in the same disciplines reach such contradictory, or at least contrary, conclusions? Why would their evaluations of current trends in American Culture differ so markedly? Perhaps the reasons for such differing evaluations by Lasch and Roszak can be seen by examining their respective views of recent developments in higher education.