

# The Underground GRAMMARIAN

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## Psychoevolutionisticism in Actual Decline!

For the purpose of systematizing public administration theory and producing a science of public administration traditional psychology does not easily resolve the democratic metaphor. However, the democratic metaphor comes into clear focus by the use of solipsistic instrumentalism, which is a deterministic, modern thought modality in the form of a transpersonal pragmatism that finds truth to be a function of evolutionary purpose. Solipsistic instrumentalism synergizes with a pragmatic modification of Freudian psychology, which also deterministically references to the autonomous psychoevolutionary machine whose substance is the biosphere.

*Bruce K. Pollard, Ph. D.*

WHAT a very singularly deep young man that Bruce K. Pollard must be. Of course, comforting as that thought is, he may not be all that young, and what would be excusably cute in a precocious tyke takes on a sinister flavor in a grown man who is obviously in the business that is nowadays called the “management of human resources.”

Of Bruce K. Pollard himself, we know little, but we know much. We found his little essay, “The Psychology of the Democratic Metaphor,” in a poopsheet called *Dialogue: The Public Administration Theory Network*, which is emitted from a school in California. Southern California. Having printed Pollard’s piece as a case of “provactive thinking,” the editor of *Dialogue* does a little provacting of his own. “To illustrate the diversity of styles and modes of thinking *on the same subject*, I offer a piece of my own rather than select somebody else’s piece for invidious comparison.” The italics are ours.

As to which of the two pieces is supposed to be in danger of suffering by that invidious comparison, there is no telling, any more than there is any useful distinction to be made between chaff and dross. But judge for yourself. Here is the first paragraph of the editor’s piece, which is called “Excessive Bureaucratization: The J-Curve Theory of Bureaucracy and Max Weber Through the Looking Glass,” by Gerald E. Caiden:

For some time, students of bureaucracy have been concerned with its apparent contradictions. On the one hand, its institutionalization of legal-rational authority makes it more productive than most alternate forms of human organization, especially on a large scale. Yet it manifests so many potential organizational deficiencies or bureaupathologies that it can become most unproductive. Can it be that there is in operation the same kind of process that economists and others have observed in respect to utility, namely a J-curve whereby with increasing resources, utility at first accelerates then experiences diminishing marginal returns, and finally reaches a point of non-utility? With increasing bureaucratization, does productivity first accelerate then experience diminishing returns, and finally reach a point of actual decline?

Try not to be intimidated by “writers” like Pollard and Caiden. What they say is *not*, as they would like us to believe, too complicated and technical for the likes of us. When you don’t understand a discussion of vectors or dolomites, it is because you don’t happen to know what those things are. There is remedy to be found. But when you don’t understand how productivity can experience returns, or exactly what attribute it is by which a mere decline can be distinguished from an *actual* decline, it is because your mind is in tune and the writer’s isn’t. If you find yourself longing to ask Caiden to name at least half a dozen of those “alternate forms of human organization” in which “legal-rational authority” is apparently *not* institutionalized, and by contrast with which he pronounces bureaucracy more productive, or to require of him some definition of “utility” that would permit reproducible results in the researches of those who would like to discover that elusive “point of non-utility,” it is because

your reason is in frame, and he is just shooting the bull.

Pollard sounds even more formidable, but he isn't. Just try to imagine\* the equivalent of reproducible results in the "resolving" of metaphors, or the supposed effect of bringing them "into clear focus." Think also of an instrumentalism that *is* a modality *in the form* of a pragmatism, and remember that it references, and *deterministically*, to a machine whose *substance* is something other than itself. Wonder also, in the still watches of the night, whether an instrumentalism is the same thing as an instrument, or is it, like other isms, the belief system of some cult.

And ask of both of these weighty experts the Big Question: In what branch of knowledge is it, exactly, that you are experts? If your essays are "on the same subject," what is the name of that subject? Where are its terms defined, and its standards of measurement laid down for all to see and use? If you are still trying to *produce* "a science of public administration," just what instrumentalism in the form of a modality are you using in the meantime? If you have thus far failed to make a science out of your clerkish calling, have you considered the possibility that there might be some very good reason for that failure?

All of the vast tribe of the managers of human resources would like very much to claim the rank of "scientist." Educationists and bureaucrats would find us—their resources—all the more amenable to management could they stand before us in their lab coats. With clipboards.

But there is more than science-envy in the fustian festooneries of their gobbledegook. "There is something in a bureaucrat," Gore Vidal observed, "that does not love a poem." The bureaucrat's fear and loathing in the presence of poetry are testimony to the truth of one poet's utterly unscientific observation that the "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world." No bureaucrat would be able, like a Sophocles or a Dante, to bear the burden of unacknowledgement.

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\* If you really want to do that, you will be further enlightened to know that Pollard later says: "The democratic metaphor is the democrat as the terminal and most efficient evolutionary program that resolves through the territorialization of the solipsistic frontier." So there.

In fact, the poet and the bureaucrat are alike, in that both are managers of human resources. The one, however, has quite enough work to do in managing his own resources, while the other, perhaps for the lack of his own resources, is endlessly busy managing everybody else's. The one needs no justification, and is content with trying for truth, and the other, needing much, can never be content without pretending to science.

### Through a Kwack, Darkly

"One should return back to those who give to him."

*Ray V. Kwack, Altromoralist of Islip*

NOTHING more vexes the budding Boy Scout than the little old lady who can cross a street on her own. What with NOW and the Grey Panthers, and little old ladies who are often members of both, and armed as well, a merit badge is hard to get. But Scouts need not despair. In fact, there has probably never before in the history of humanity been an age so full of opportunities for good deeds and the display of virtue. We can surely be, and may already be, the very best human beings who have ever lived.

Where our forbears had to make do with handing someone a turkey twice a year, we can sing our little hearts out and climb Kilimanjaro to show how much we care about World Hunger. We can carry a sign to the picnic on Saturday and have a swell time with our kind of people and tell all those war-mongers that we're mad as hell and that we're not going to take it anymore. Should even sterner virtue be needed, we can sell some stock, or refuse to buy fur coats, or even give up grapes.

But wait, there's more. We can also—and here's something that not even Saint Francis would have thought of for himself—join clubs dedicated to the wholesome work of seeing to it that other people sell *their* stock, and refrain from furs and fruits. It's easy as pie. All we have to do is send in some money. And we even have superclubs that can arrange to take a tiny slice of *everybody's* money and translate it into turkeys. We are good!

But, of course, we could be even better. And that's where men like Ray V. Kwack come in. Without the Kwacks of this world, befuddled schoolchildren who have never memorized "If,"

and who can't even tell you that "Excelsior" is also a packing material, would have to figure out all by themselves how to be good. Not bloody likely, eh?

Although Ray V. Kwack claims only the modest title of Educator of Other People, he is actually *Doctor* Ray V. Kwack, the Superintendent of Schools in Islip, New York. It was his plan to have every high school student in town put in, as a requirement for graduation, one hundred and twenty hours of good deeds, known also as those "services" approved by "school officials," including "the raking of leaves on school property." Students who might happen to do good deeds for unofficial civilians were to bring in signed testimony from same, including, we have to suppose, some reasonable estimate of the time spent in doing good. Since it can't take more than a minute to help a little old lady across a street, students who would like to graduate in that form of goodness would end up bringing in seven thousand and two hundred slips of paper, each of which would have to be duly approved and then entered in a big book. That work alone would justify the hiring of a dozen new bureaucrats whose labors Kwack could superintend. But he probably wouldn't mind. Our Kwacks are indefatigable, resting neither night nor day in hastening to do good.

Kwack's plan, alas, was rudely undone by a bunch of parents who seem to care very little about Other People. We have to suspect that what they really wanted was to monopolize for themselves any goodness that might crop up in their children. That's how people are in those affluent suburbs. If their kids are going to haul any trash or shovel any snow, it had damn well better be their own.

Kwack did his best. When a bunch of testy parents showed up at a meeting of the school board, he broke them up into small groups, each under the tutelage of a *bona fide* educationalist facilitator. And why not? It always works with school people. But these, unfortunately, were mere laymen, the sort of people who know so little of humanistic behavior modification in the affective domain that one of them could actually say that "the true spirit of volunteering is lost when it's mandatory." Amateurs.

Nevertheless, resistant even to facilitation, they prevailed, and today, in the schools of Islip, there

is probably no good being done at all. Kwack's dream of making, at last, "a full and total person" of every graduate has been undone by unenlightened self-interest, and there is nothing to expect of education in Islip but more and more of those empty and partial persons that it must obviously have been producing all along.

And there it is, education in the shell of a nut, wouldn't you say? It's the difference between the full and total and the empty and partial. And who, therefore, could be a greater benefactor of other people than he who educates them, who brings them into what a Ray V. Kwack would probably call the fullness of their complete totality, the education of the whole entire child, who returns back, for at least forty-five minutes a week, something or other to those who gave something or other to him?

But there are benefactors and benefactors. Now you take your ordinary sort of Mother Teresa or run-of-the-mill do-gooder, the sort that goes out and finds someone who is sick and hungry and spoons him a little hot soup and maybe a couple of aspirin. That's nice. But how much good, speaking realistically, can that sort of do-gooder do? In the time that it takes one garden variety Mother Teresa to return back soup to those who gave to her, one Kwack can send forth hundreds, maybe thousands, of apprentice spooners, without even having to go near the kitchen, thus doing good beyond calculating to countless suffering wretches whom he never has to see.

And with education, it is the same. How much, after all, can a mere teacher do? Until very recently, no one in the whole history of education was able to bring the light of understanding into more than one mind at a time. There's room for only one student on the other end of that log. Why even Socrates, when you get right down to it, was able to awaken thoughtfulness in only a few people once in a rare while. In fact, in his whole life, Socrates could not possibly have educated as many people as any one of our Kwacks can educate in a single day, provided only, of course, that his district is a pretty large one, at least the size of Islip.

Who could be a worse citizen than the man who thinks first of himself, judging first of his *own* goodness, and of his *own* powers to know the good from the bad; and who is a better, than he who humbly puts himself last, and instructs others

in goodness, even requiring it of them? Of the two, which one is the true “educator,” which the fitter guide of youth? Which one is the real Kwack?

### The Real Jane Austin Stands Up

ONE of the great pleasures of putting out this sheet is putting up with readers of this sheet. They are few but fine, and we hear from so many of them so often that we have bundles of evidence by which to prove just how fine they are.

One of them has just discovered for us the real Jane Austin, the one with the “i,” whom we must have had in mind. Here are her works: *A Nameless Nobleman*, *The Desmond Hundred*, *Mrs. Beauchamp Brown*, *Nantucket Scraps*, *Standish of Standish*, and *Dr. LeBaron and His Daughters*. So there.

But don’t be discouraged. It is just in the nature of things that someday we really will commit a very serious error.

### PEOPLE LIKE US

Books are to be call’d for, and supplied, on the assumption that the process of reading is not a half sleep, but, in the highest sense, an exercise, a gymnast’s struggle; that the reader is to do something for himself.

*Whitman*

Professors should be teaching future business managers and government officials how to write texts that proceed logically and simply from “the beginning, top down,” with the main points at the start, not the end, Ms. Matalene said. . . . That idea is contrary to all writing in the belles-lettres tradition and is “generally thought by people like us to be really rather low-brow,” she said. “In literary criticism it’s not thought elegant to announce your structure at the beginning.” She added, “It may not be too outlandish to say that every effective writer on the continent announces the plan at the beginning, and every writer who saves the ‘lead’ until the end is in an English department.”

BY what yardstick to measure outlandishness, we do not know. But we do suspect that it may, in fact, be too outlandish to claim both knowledge of every effective writer on the continent and also the power to judge of effectiveness. If anyone is to make such claims, however, it had better be a member in good standing of the National Council of Teachers of English, which, of course, Ms. Matalene is.

Ms. Matalene said what she said to the *Chronicle of Higher Education* at a confabulation of the NCTE in Philadelphia. She was far from alone in the refreshing (and more than somewhat startling) discovery that the writing taught in English departments is far too elegant and high-brow, and its *lettres* all too *belles* for the real needs of the real world. A certain Ms. Kristin Woolever, who is nothing less than the very *director* of technical and professional writing at Northeastern University tartly reminded all who might listen, that “readers don’t have time for an adventure in learning or a mystery story. They need the point. Most humanists don’t write this way, though.”

Heavy charges. And properly levelled too. Not only against all those wandering humanists but, more to the point, against all those high-brow English departments, well known for turning loose among us all these “people like us,” all these twerpy, precious belles-lettrists, whose elegant conceits and elaborate metaphors and lofty diction are the very hallmarks of freshman composition in our time. There isn’t a one of them can meet a payroll or finalize a bottom line.

From Marcus Aurelius to Emerson, from Bacon to E. B. White, every one of those humanists blithely and ineffectively overlooked the fact that readers don’t have time for an adventure in learning. More often than not, if you want to know what one of those guys is trying to get at in some elegant little piece, you have to read the whole damn thing! And even that won’t always be enough. Sometimes you have to stop for a while and look out the window, and pace the floor, and waste the time that is so precious to business managers and government officials in *thinking* about the whole damn thing!

It is refreshing, too, to see that the National Council of Teachers of English has put both its feet squarely on the ground and come to grips

with reality. Just a few years back, they were whimpering about “the students’ right to a language of their own.” Now they have at last understood what school is about, and what the teaching of writing is *for*. It’s all for “future business managers and government officials,” of course. Who else is there, after all? They’re the ones who have a right to a language of their own. They’re the “readers” who have no time for an “adventure in learning.” They have important work to do.

In many societies, the teacher, most unfortunately, has played the role of the insolent servant. It seems very unlikely that even so great a teacher as Aristotle would think of asking Alexander what his needs were, and how best his teacher might adjust him to life as the Great. In general, teacherliness has been an autocratic enterprise, haughtily scornful of the needs of future business managers and government officials, and enforcing such high-brow irrelevancies as reflection and rumination on people whose work is going to be so important that they won’t have the time for that sort of thing, and who really need only to know the trick of putting the bottom line right up there at the top.

Now, happily, a fresh breeze blows in Academe, and not just in the NCTE. At every level of schooling, “people like us” are coming to terms with bottom lines and learning to put aside highbrow pretensions. After all, it is almost entirely from business and government that we take our pay, and no effective agent of either will long put up with an insolent servant. And it may not be too outlandish to say that, someday soon, every effective teacher on the continent will be a servant who knows his place.

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Correction: We accepted without checking the word of the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*. Anthony Oettinger turns out to be *not* a math teacher at Harvard but a professor of *government* at Harvard’s Kennedy School. He is also not a consultant to the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, but a full-blooded *member*. It’s a whole lot worse than we thought.

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**MUCH** to our amazement, this is the first issue of the *tenth* volume of *The Underground*

*Grammarian*. To all of you who have made such an unlikely longevity possible, we send our thanks, along with wishes for a happy and thoughtful new year. We are convinced that the two go together, and that the best hope of happiness is given to those who will take thought. Daily.

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## The Real Thing

An excellent plumber is infinitely more admirable than an incompetent philosopher. The society that scorns excellence in plumbing because plumbing is a humble activity and tolerates shoddiness in philosophy because it is an exalted activity will have neither good plumbing nor good philosophy. Neither its pipes nor its theories will hold water. —*John Gardner*

**W**ITH that useful, and unhappily admonitory, observation from one of our more competent philosophers, we observe a minor but interesting anniversary. The issue for March of 1977 also began with that epigraph. We discussed “cut-rate professors, whose degrees have been earned by clerical labors rather than sustained, written scholarship.”

At that time, we were thinking only of the fact that the competence expected of a plumber seems

to have no counterpart in the work of the professor. Now, having had all these years in which to think about it, we are sorry to have left it at that. Professors are far from alone in the snug shelter of “professionalism,” where no charlatan will use the word “charlatan,” and where “peers” are usually co-conspirators. As hard as it is to imagine charlatanism in plumbing, it is even harder to imagine that charlatanism in plumbing might long succeed, and that there might arise among us throngs of false plumbers, claiming respect, and gaining wealth and influence, not by the evidence of their valves and pipes, but by their “professional” (and sincere) assertions as to their valves and pipes. In Congress, as in Academe, it is otherwise.

And so, too, in almost all of those callings dignified as the “professions.” Should two plumbers, giving testimony in court, disagree as to leaking, one of them would properly be judged either a perjurer or a poor excuse for a plumber. But there seems to be no such thing as a poor excuse for a psychiatrist. Should two psychiatrists disagree, both will retain the rank of “expert.” Like the indelible stain of priesthood, such supposed conditions as psychiatristship are held inalienable. Of a bad plumber, other plumbers might accurately—and publicly—say that he is no plumber at all. If there is such a thing as a bad psychiatrist, or a bad professor, however, we are not likely to hear about it.

We are content with this state of affairs, however, because we suppose that the work of the mind, unlike the work of the hand, is hard to test, and that the former is also far more difficult than the later, and deserving of latitude. We can test the work of the plumber by turning the faucet. But how can we test the notions of the psychiatrist, or the educationist, who claims also to be expert in a vast body of “knowledge” of which we are ignorant?

We are brought to these vexing considerations by Coca-Cola. Someone sent us an excerpt from a book called *Marketing Warfare*, yet another book on the doing of business. Here is a portion of the excerpt we have:

The return of the real thing spells the death of New Coke. We predict that New Coke will be gone in short order.

Perception is stronger than reality. In spite of the fact that tests showed that New Coke tastes better than old coke, customers believe otherwise. After all, original Coke is the real thing. How can anything taste better than the real thing?

Perception affects taste in the same way that it affects all human judgment. The battle takes place in the mind. There are no facts in a human mind. There are only perceptions. The perception is the reality.

Fascinating. What sort of “test” do you suppose that was, by which the testers persuaded the tasters to perceive the *real* perceptions?

The “we” who predict are two men whose names we do not know, the co-authors of *MW*. Our informant is a faithful reader who has the good sense of all of our faithful readers, and who would not bother with trivia like the names of chaps in whose minds the battle is going that badly. He does tell us, as he should, that they put on helmets and fatigue jackets and trundled a half-track down Fifth Avenue to a book-signing party at Dalton’s.

Do not be misled by their breezy tone. Do not dismiss them as trendy opportunists hoping to cash in on the new cult of the Corporate Gurus. They probably are that, but that is not all they are. They are philosophers. They are lousy philosophers, and not all that good as prophets either, but they are indeed philosophers. They do not, as Socrates advised, “refrain a while from setting up as judges of the highest matters.” They presume to inform us as to the locus of “facts,” and solemnly proclaim that perception *affects* taste, thus providing us with the opportunity to meditate on the intriguing suggestion that to taste is *not* to perceive, but something else, that it may be affected by perception, also to be understood as “reality.” They are *thinkers*, and even, in the most popular sense of the word, “professional” thinkers. They expect to be paid, and will be paid, not for the penning of letters, but for the work of their minds.

And the work of these minds has a familiar smell. This is hardly the first time that we have come across minds that can say, at the beginning of one paragraph, that perception is stronger than reality, and conclude, at the end of the next, that there are only perceptions, and that the perception

is reality. Who says such a thing can not be dignified as “mistaken.” As to the unintelligible, there is neither verification nor refutation. And this is the strong defense of all professional charlatans: the deep belief of the ordinary person that what can not be proven wrong might perhaps be right, and that the opinions of the “experts” deserve, at least, respect. This belief is inculcated in school, where the work of the mind is also based on the premise that “there are no facts in the mind,” whatever that might mean.

Consider these words from one Ken Lexier, an assistant school superintendent in Pittsfield, Maine:

The question we have to respond to from taxpayers is, “What’s in it for me?” We should view taxpayers as consumers. Consumers are willing to pay more for what they perceive is a better product, so we should begin selling the schools as a quality product. We could die holding our breath waiting for the American public to stand up and cheer public education.

Lexier, too, believes that perception is reality, and that there are no facts in a human mind, but only perceptions. It sounds, because Businessism is just now such a popular cult, as if he had been influenced by some near cousins of the authors of *Marketing Warfare*, but it is in fact the other way around. The Lexiers have been preaching the superior reality of the Affective Domain for a long, long time. It was they, not the hucksters of pop, but the hucksters of PopEd, who first concocted that strange sort of “test,” by which we might be convinced that the swill was really delicious, and that it was only our *perceptions* of it that made us imagine that we preferred the Real Thing.

In spite of the weight of the evidence, however, there actually *is* a difference between the Coca-Cola business and the school business. The Coca-Cola people still have the formula for the Real Thing. It is, we might say, “a fact in the human mind,” and even a sort of “reality.” But the school people have nothing to brew but their perceptions.

### **The Great Washed**

Hand washing is the single most important technique for preventing the spread of

disease and should be done frequently. Guidelines are attached which emphasize the proper protocol for hand washing. It is imperative that each principal provide his staff and students the opportunity to comply with the protocol for hand washing. Therefore, each principal or his designee is directed to inspect their respective washrooms to ensure that all sinks are operating efficiently and each rest room has appropriate soap and towel dispensers.

**M**ENCKEN understood vulgarity, and not as a class distinction, but as a mental distinction. “Hygiene,” he said, “is the corruption of medicine by morality.” And school, we are led by his example to say, is the corruption of education by morality.

And Emerson, who was not all that dirty, noticed that “people who wash much have a high mind about it, and talk down to those who wash little.”

As to Robert Price’s customary degree of cleanliness, we can make no guess. But we do know that he is the superintendent of the schools of Anne Arundel County in Maryland, and the author and promulgator of the proper protocol cited above. Thus, knowing much about many other members of his tribe, we can make a guess about the height of his mind and of his customary degree of morality. He is a caring man, a sharing man, a man who thinks of others. He loves children.

If it weren’t for the fact that all the school people are caring, sharing, child-lovers, who have nobly forgone all the lucrative and prestigious callings open to people of their intellectual powers, our schools would be changed beyond imagining. They would become dreary academies devoted to dull, unmitigated studies in the pursuit of mere disciplines. There would be no enhancement of self-esteem, no free play of the creative imagination for the solution of global problems in seventh grade rap-sessions, and, probably, not a clean hand to be found.

School is the place where the Uncaring and Unsharing learn better, where the Great Unwashed get taken to the cleaners, the Great Washed, who know how to devise all the proper protocols, and even how to get paid for that work.

We wish we had the space to reprint all of “Proper Handwashing Procedure,” the instruction page that came with Price’s prolegomenon, in which “hand washing” is consistently written as *two* words. No matter. The important thing is the washing, and the instructions do point out that it is necessary to “wet hands with running water,” and then to “combine soap and water to wash hands.” Exactly how and where to “combine soap and water” is, alas, not specified, and we can not tell whether to “apply liquid, powder, or dispensable machine type soaps” to the *running* water, which is “necessary to carry away dirt and debris,” or to the still, or stagnant water left on the hands, which may, like “bar soap... in soap dishes,” encourage the growth of “bacteria.”

Step 4 says, “Wash hands, using a circular motion and friction.” Go ahead. Give it a try. Use a circular motion. Of something. Just for the hell of it, *don’t* use any friction, and see what happens. That will show you how important it is to have among us men like Robert Price. Without our educators to give us the secret of using friction, we would stand around forever, waving our dripping hands all in vain, and forgetting to “include [in circular motion] front and back surfaces of hands, between fingers and knuckles,” and perhaps even letting bacteria grow on “the entire hand area.”

Yes. The entire hand area. Where but in our schools could we hope to find such finesse, such exquisite accuracy? Who but a school superintendent would show such a lively awareness to unfelt needs, and so gently engender a more perfect cleanliness in those of his subordinates who might very well be washing, even as you read these words, only a portion of the hand area? We only regret that he did not remind everybody to be sure to wash *both* hands.

In all of this, there is a lesson for us taxpayers. Sure, it must have taken a long time, and thus money, for Robert Price, Ph.D., to polish up the proper protocol for hand-washing and finalize the guidelines for proper hand-washing procedure. And it did take lots of time, and paper, and thus money, to send out all the copies. And it will take lots of time, and dutiful vigilance, and thus money, on the part of each principal, or his designee, to see to it that all the washrooms are operating efficiently, and to be certain that even the gym teachers use friction, and then “wipe

surfaces surrounding sink [or the entire sink area] with clean paper towel and discard towels immediately,” lest “damp surfaces promote the growth of bacteria,” and the big in-service workshops for all the staff will take up lots of time, and thus money, but it will be worth every cent and minute. We can not afford to cut corners on Quality Education.

## The Garbage Pail Letter

(Our Man in Manhattan Reports Something at Last)

*The righteous one has no sense of humor.*

*Bertold Brecht*

**Dear Boss,**

School may not be exactly full of joy, but it isn’t entirely joyless either, you know. Memorable and wonderful things do happen there.

When I was in the eighth grade, we had a terrific principal. He had the habit of taking off one shoe and running like hell from his office all the way down the hall to the boys’ room. To us, it sounded like a man walking, and we all presumed, the first time, at least, that we still had time to flush our butts.

You can imagine our surprise—and chagrin—when the door flew open and there he was, a shoe in one hand, and a clipboard in the other. The man had style, and we liked him.

And then there was the day when Miss McCready, always prim and proper, always reminding us to “fly our true colors,” flew a little true color of her own in the form of an absolutely fascinating, lacey pink strap hanging down below the jacket of her neat tweed suit. I remember nothing of the *dictée* she was giving us at the time, but I surely remember that strap. And her. She was a great lady, and I hope against hope that she still flies her true colors today.

We did laugh at our teachers sometimes for things like that, but I do not remember that we “laughed them to scorn.” Far from it. We liked them all the better, not only for being subject to the same perils of person that we all faced every day, but for knowing how to bear them. In fact, if I were a school principal, I would walk the halls of my school once every term or so with my fly unzipped, pretending not to notice the giggles. When some kid finally got the nerve to mention it, I’d just smile and casually zip it up and thank him

very kindly, and go right on walking the halls. I do suspect, and revere his memory therefore, that that is what old Willie One-Shoe, thus caught, would have done. And peace be to his soul.

Ah, them was the days, Joxer. I don't think they have people like that in the schools anymore. At least not if Jack Zuckerman and Rob Peterson are typical of the new breed. Jack and Rob are principals, respectively, of P. S. 6 in Manhattan and the Brunswick School in Greenwich, CT. I read in the paper that they are both pretty upset about the Garbage Pail Kids. You know, all those yechy picture cards of disgusting and truly tasteless characters, like Virus Iris, and Greaser Greg, and Leaky Lindsey, whose leakage is better left unspecified, and even Slain Wayne, more full of holes than the proverbial cheese. But still alive and kicking. Go, man, go!

(I wanted to enclose some examples, but I've been to three candy stores and one tobacconist, and they were all sold out. Guy at the cigar store says they're always sold out.)

The kids love them. There's nothing a kid likes better than a good grossing out from time to time. But Jack and Rob are making some very long faces indeed. Rob says that they "make fun of the way people look and act." Rob even says that they give the children "*license* to make fun of a child." Italics mine. (Maybe he's speaking metaphorically, but the Garbage Pail Kids do occasionally come with permits to eat between meals. Wish I had one.)

And then there's Tom, Tom Blair, that is, a principal up in Montrose, NY. I forgot to mention him. He calls the Garbage Pail Kids "in bad taste," and "inappropriate," although inappropriate to exactly what, he doesn't say. Maybe he means inappropriate to the customary good taste of bulletin board displays on child molestation and the pictures of rock stars in the music room.

Golly, these modern principals are sure a bunch of high-minded and pure-thinking aesthetes. I'll bet they keep both shoes on at all times. Narrow the way, and strait the lace that leads to the unsullied virtue of complete tolerance in all-too-unlikely combination with exquisite and uncompromising discrimination as to other peoples' taste.

There is some deep confusion in the minds of those principals. If Trollope gives us the picture of a contemptible but very amusing swine in Slope,

is that a license that encourages us to make fun of "people"? Or of Slopes? I sure would like any child of mine to recognize a Slope when he sees one, and to protect himself, if necessary, in the only way that works against Slopes and similar pests—by making fun of them. In the search for self-betterment, I have tried and tried to restrict myself to making fun only of minerals and vegetables, but it's just no good. For making fun, people need people. The difference between a good kid and a rotten kid, as I see it, is that a rotten kid will make fun of what he doesn't like, and the good one will make fun of what he shouldn't like. OK by me.

The kids may be just a little more subtle and astute than their principals. I suspect that when they giggle and squeak in disgust at Greaser Greg, they have no doubt whatsoever that the object of their disgust is Greaser Greg, and not "people," or a "child." Unlike most grown-ups, children put little credence in witchcraft.

They do not believe that sticking pins in Smelly Kelly will cause punctures in one of their less fragrant classmates. They do not believe that their perfectly appropriate scorn for Disgustin' Justin will bring into disrepute and melancholy all riders of motorcycles. They don't even believe that Shylock causes anti-Semitism. It takes grown-ups like Jack and Rob and Tom to convince them of that sort of nonsense.

Of course, if the principals of their schools are all guys like Jack and Rob and Tom—that can't be true, can it?—they'll probably never hear of Shylock. Or Mr. Slope. Or of Dr. Pangloss, or Othello, or Becky Sharp, or Malvolio, or Viper Fagin. Or, or, or. It could be a long list. I don't think I'd want a child of mine to grow up without learning how to identify the wildlife in this forest, the fools, fops, clowns, charlatans, imposters, posers, hypocrites, cornercutters, sluggards, parasites, con-artists, climbers, flatterers, and just plain jerks of any kind. There are such folk.

Any kid who can spot those critters for what they are might also be able to notice it whenever he is in danger of turning into one them himself. It happens to the best of us. I know those school people are hot for what they call role-models, but I'll tell you this. I do not imagine that a child will look at Greaser Greg and decide that he wants to be just like that when he grows up. It's likely, in fact, that he will want to find some other destiny.

On the other hand—and this gives me the willies—it may, just may, be possible that some especially docile and weak-minded kid will decide that, when he grows up, he wants to be just like Jack, or Rob, or Tom. That’s scary. We have to save him.

First of all, get on the phone to the ACLU. There’s a big move on among the Jacks and Robs and Toms to ban the Garbage Pail Kids. It won’t work, of course, but the whole hassle will be a lot more fun if we get someone to make it look like a big civil rights deal.

Then, hire an artist, and crank up the old Webendorfer. We have to put out our own series of cards, maybe just a bit classier, but not too much.

We could start out with Holier Than Anybody Howard, the Prim Principal, and Glib Glen, The Guidance Counselor. Sanctimonious Sally, the Rap-Session Revivalist, is a sure hit. We could move up a notch with Obtuse Oswald, the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Taking a Firm Grasp on the Obvious. And how about Righteous Roland, the Discipline Dean, and Entirely Enlightened Eleanor, the Enhanced Awareness Facilitator?

I leave the rest to you, Boss. Let’s give those kids a little *real* relevance. But stay away from Willie One-Shoe and Miss McCready, OK?

Yours in English,  
Snarky Snavely, the Strident Stringer

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**The Underground  
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**The Dumping Grounds**

**BY** now, we have a shoebox half full of clippings about the great Kemp Hassle at the University of Georgia. What a mess.

Jan Kemp, who used to work in the remedial shop at UG, was denied re-appointment by one Virginia Trotter, the academic vice-president of the plant. A ruckus ensued, Kemp claiming that she was being punished for failing some football players, and Trotter claiming that Kemp was just no good. It’s a sleazy, typical tale of Academe.

All of this began back in 1981, and seems to have been related to a game that some school children were to play in the Sugar Bowl, or perhaps not to play, depending on who could do what to whom. At this writing, a jury has awarded Kemp a little more—if seventy thousand can be thought “little”—than two and a half million dollars, of which one and a half million were specifically levied as punitive damages against Virginia Trotter. The assistant vice-president, a certain Leroy Ervin, was hit for eight hundred thousand. The rest was “lost wages.”

The whole smelly mess, suggests, we hope, the shape of things to come in all “higher education” in America. A fate most richly deserved.

Our readers send us many examples of written inanity, and from the disproportionately numerous examples of the work of the mind as done by “academic” VP’s, we guess that the title is like the “doctor” in Doctor J. Folksy.

Virginia Trotter, the director of the life of the mind at the University of Georgia, is a reupholstered home economics teacher. She is not, however, without a list of “publications,” so useful in determining genuine academic status. Her works include “No-Stoop—No-Stretch Kitchen,” and “Cleaning Supplies—Keep Them Handy.”

It was she who decided, when nine schoolboys responded but ill to the remediation of Jan Kemp,

that they were to be “administratively exited” into the *regular* curriculum, whose requirements are obviously less rigorous, so that the children could play their game. Of that decision, she said, in the great tradition of academic vice-presidents everywhere, “I would rather err on the side of making a mistake.”

UG’s defense attorney, Hale (Friends Like These) Almand opened his case by saying, “We may not make a university student out of him, but if we can teach him to read and write, maybe he can work at the post office rather than as a garbage man when he gets through with his athletic career.” Fred Davison, the president of UG, further enlightened the jury as to the meaning and purpose of higher education in America by saying, “If they leave us being able to read, write and communicate better, we simply have not done them any harm.” Vince Dooley, Athaletic Director, told it like it is, explaining that higher entrance requirements for athaletes would mean that “The athaletic program would not be able to compete at any level, and the chances are I would not be the football coach or the athaletic director.” And Heywood Hale Broun, even before the trial opened—half a century before, in fact—noticed that “Sports do not build character, they reveal it.”

The *New York Times* quotes Harry Edwards, sports statistician:

Five percent of high school athletes pursue basketball, baseball or football on the college level. Only 1.7 percent of those eligible to enter professional sports at the end of their collegiate careers do so. In the last decade, the average professional career in those sports was three years. In three years, over sixty percent of the athletes who entered the pros are back on the streets.

As to whether they are picking up junk on the streets, or delivering junk mail on the streets, deponent saith not.

The most astute observations that we have heard on this matter come from Frederic Allen, who is the political editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*. He is, as far as we know, the only one to notice, or to be willing to announce, that the pot and the kettle are not easily to be distinguished, and that Jan Kemp’s claim to academicism is a little like Virginia Trotter’s. One of the remediationist’s

self-recommendations, for instance, was the claim to have served as a consultant to King Faisal University. Her claim was revealed, in the course of the trial, to be based on the fact that she had once sent some “instructional materials” to a friend who later took a job at good “ol’ KFU, the home of the Fighting Sultans.”

A *NY Times* editorial concluded that “Mrs. Kemp’s victory in court vindicates her long protest.” True, but not to the point. One Ed Davis, who “monitored” the trial for the American Association of University Professors, called it “a victory for academics.” Wrong. There is nothing “academic” at issue here. Had those children “passed” the Bonehead English course, they would still have been left to choose between the garbage and the junk mail.

Frederic Allen got it right, in saying of the University of Georgia, “Its teachers and leaders have been made to look ridiculous. You can’t call yourself a consultant if you mail booklets to Riyadh, and you can’t call yourself a university if you accept students who can’t read.” We would presume to correct him in only this: that this is not a case merely of *looking* ridiculous. And as to that passive—“having been *made* to look ridiculous”—we would like the names of the makers.

Like more and more of our colleges and universities, especially those owned and operated by government, the University of Georgia has noticed that there is big money in waste disposal. Where else but in schools can we find the equivalent of kollege kredit courses like “Library Orientation,” “First Aid,” and “The World of Manufacturing,” all designed to “do no harm” to incipient postal workers? And where else can they find employment—the teachers of those trashy courses? And where but in some school can they be dumped—the unfortunate children who have been led to believe that they can make livings, and cushy ones, with their bodies? Where else but in academic administration can we dump the Fred Davisons,\* the educrats whose versions of “The

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\* Davison’s reappointment was recently “deferred” by the regents in Georgia. He huffed and puffed thus: “I consider the deferral of my reappointment a personal and professional insult and a questioning of my integrity which I will not tolerate.” Yeah.

Idea of a University” would fit on the backs of match-book covers with space left over for snappy pictures?

We hope to see lots more of this. If the schools, well equipped with clowns, want to make money with circuses, let them *buy* their trained animals. Trick dogs and musical seals already have diplomas, prancing ponies have proven their competence, and menageries of well-trained beasts, with all their keepers and trainers, would cost much less than a School of Remediation, with its facilitators and supernumeraries.

Nowadays, everybody, well, almost everybody, knows all about the “worth” of a “college education,” though many of us imagine that it is a bit more than the difference between trash collection and zip-code comprehension. But how do we measure the “worth” of the college? What do *they* hold worthy, all the Davisons and Trotters and Dooleys and Ervins who run the schools? And what do they hold worthy, who run all the Davisons and Trotters and Dooleys and Ervins who run the schools?

Jan Kemp was asked by a university apparatchik whether she thought she was worth as much to the school as an athlete. Considering the school’s definition of “worth,” it was a fair question, and the answer was surely No. So we have advice for all the Jan Kemps.

Flunk every athlete they send you. An F, as any teacher knows, can always be justified. Fight about it. Let them fire you. Then sue the bastards for all they’re worth, which is exactly the same as all *their* worth. It’s just money.

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IN Texas, many schoolteachers marched in the streets to display their dislike of a state-mandated competence test for schoolteachers. In their innocence—for they can hardly be expected to judge of such things for themselves—they followed the example of their administrators by calling it a test of “competency.” Fine distinctions do not interest them.

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Davison will now return, it seems, to the humbler calling of professor of Veterinary Medicine, a mere science which he obviously did not think as important as the defense of the Georgia Bulldogs against the “unilateral disarmament,” as he called it, that would be the result of imposing academic standards on athletes.

One of the picketers carried a scrawled sign asking: “Did Ronald Reagan have to take a competency test for his job?” It reminded us of another such test, which used to be required of would-be schoolteachers in California in 1875. One of its questions, one of its *easier* questions, required the candidate, to name five powers vested in Congress.

And we wondered: would he who made that sign be able to name five powers, or any powers at all, vested in Congress? Does he truly imagine, and do his co-pickers imagine, that presidents are hired by boards of citizens? That can’t be. They may never have read even the Declaration of Independency, but they must remember having once voted for somebody or other for that office.

What sort of people *are* these teachers, that they can not only tolerate but even flaunt a childish false analogy in support of their claim to be fit mentors of the life of the mind in young children? Why did they not send that fellow packing, lest he disgrace their cause?

Socrates and Glaucon concluded that these qualities were proper to those fit to guide others: The spirit of truthfulness, reluctance to admit falsehood in any form, the hatred of it and the love of truth. For those qualities there *is* a test, an utterly objective and unbiased test at that. As far as we can tell, every single schoolteacher in Texas flunked it, and, if there were such a thing as a wise governor, he would send all of them packing.

### **Bobby Reads the Big Book**

WE do love a rousing bout of theology. We are experts on God. About God, we know as much as anybody. Nothing. Nothing at all. Theology is the most democratic of all mental exercises, a game played on an unlined field, with no rules, no ball, no referees, and millions and millions of cheering fans, of whom some carry the Uzi, and some the Kalashnikov.

And we love to hear from the experts on God, who are, thank goodness, not at all rare. Thanks to a recent editorial in the NY Times, copies of which were sent in by numerous readers, we have now heard from one Robert B. Mozert, Jr., Theologian of Church Hills, Tenn.

Mozert is marching as to war against the threat of “new-age religion,” whose influence can be

seen, for instance, in roadside signs bearing icons of beds and fuel pumps and such, all of which are incentives to non-verbal communication. Bad. Against God. And he finds even worse in this passage from one of those silly “reading” books:

Pat has a big book. Pat reads the big book. Jim reads the big book. Pat reads to Jim. Jim cooks.

Unless you are a theologian too, and if you have not guessed that Pat is short not for Patrick but for Patricia, you will have missed the implication of that passage, which is that God has *not* assigned the task of cooking to women, as Bobby Mozert, who is a Big Reader of the Big Book, knows that He has.

Bobby is just one of a swarm of religionists who have come up with a neat idea. All that silly stuff that goes on in schools, all that rapping and appreciating, esteeming and awareness enhancing, all that sentimental pap about self and others, in short, the whole system of belief out of which educationists have established training camps for the manipulation of the Affective Domain, all of that *is* a religion. As such, it is not entitled to “establishment,” and its promulgation in government schools is unconstitutional. We love it.

Given what is almost certainly Bobby’s definition of a “religion,” a club of true believers *is* a club of true believers. Some such definition must have been in the mind of one Judge Brevard Hand (but not, as he claims, in the Constitution), when he gave the Bobbyists a break in a Federal court in Alabama. He opined that “the constitutional definition of religions encompasses more than Christianity, and prohibits as well the establishment of a secular religion.” That, too, we love.

By that definition, which we ardently hope to see adopted as the law of the land, trade unions and gun clubs, special interest groups like Republicans and Democrats, to say nothing of the evangelists, preachers, and prophets who run the educationalistic seminaries of the land, will suddenly find themselves disestablished. All clubs of true believers will become outfits concerning which “Congress shall make no law.” Billions will be saved. Lobbyists and coordinators, grant-grubbers and change agents, enhancers and facilitators beyond counting, all will end up

selling apples in the streets, and the land will have rest.

The *Times* editorial said of Bobby’s crusade that it is “no isolated case of know-nothing alarmism,” which is far righter than the writer probably meant to be. If these silly fundamentalists have multiplied prodigiously in recent times, and grown more and more pugnacious and intrusive, it is because the propensity for officious ideological prying has been systematically inculcated in millions and millions of students for more than half a century. It is in the government schools that children are trained to believe that it is both their right and their duty to inquire into and meddle with everybody else’s feeling, beliefs, and values, lest they be left in error. It is in school, where a rigid ideological orthodoxy is marvelously combined with the notion that truth is relative and all facts “mere,” that know-nothingism is learned, and minds so disordered that there is no Bobby in the land, however patently silly, who lacks a devoted and numerous following.

When people are taught that feelings and beliefs are not only knowledge, but even a better kind of knowledge than “mere” knowledge, they can *all* be theologians. And there is no war more bitter than the war between true believers of different persuasions, who differ, like Bobby and the schoolers, in particulars only, and not by one iota in principle.

## **The Revenge of the Walking Dead**

The content, the learning processes, the academic settings, and the expectations for the student products are differentiated. Both instruction and content is adapted. Literature selected for study will be challenging to the most able students. Students are afforded the maximum responsible degree of independence in identifying learning activities, products and assessments. Continuing emphasis is placed on going beyond the skills of knowledge, acquisition and recall to the use of higher level thinking/processing skills of application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Instruction affords opportunities to integrate literature, language and composition, as well as incorporating relevant learning from other content areas. Content is selected on the basis

of its potential for providing simultaneously progressive, nonrepetitive skill development.

*The Honors English Program at Herbert Hoover Junior High, in Rockville, Maryland*

THOSE words were discovered by Bob Levey, a chatty and readable columnist for the *Washington Post*. We suspect that it was his own child who brought them home, having been given them in the school office. Bright kid. Not because he was interested in Honors English, probably a bad idea, but because he knew that he had stumbled on treasure, and he knew what to do with it.

Levey chatted with the lady “responsible”—*le mot juste, n’est-ce pas?*—for the Honors English of Herbert Hoover. (God seems big on irony.) She declined to give her name for publication, but she did say that such stuff was “not the kind of thing we usually let go through to 13-year-olds.” But she also said that “puzzling out language like this is good training for future life,” and why she would want to deprive 13-year-olds of such nifty training for future life, which is, after all, the only kind of life they have, we just can’t fathom. Must be some real professional reason that mere laymen can never understand.

This real professional official school lady, while she did proclaim that that was the sort of language the schools use all the time in course descriptions, did not name the author of the piece in question. Well, maybe she did. Maybe “the schools” write such things, for all we know. It could well be that we are seeing here an astonishing, and hitherto all unheralded, breakthrough in the exciting new field of artificial intelligence. Schools that write. And why not? Are there not offices and agencies and even committees that write? Have we not all had letters and memoranda from desks?

That would certainly explain a lot. The tone of the passage is, well, how shall we say, brickly, or perhaps even cinder-blocky. And not merely official, but positively edificial. And of such a passage, even the sternest critic would have to say that, for a building, especially for a building named after Herbert Hoover, it’s a damn fine piece of work.

But alas, while the idea is seductive, we cannot embrace it. As it happens, we know who wrote that passage. It was none other than the Great Zombie of the Schools, the soulless spirit of Nobody At All who writes *all* their stuff.

What you hear in that passage—do read it aloud—is the Great Voice of Policy, mumbling and muttering from the Underworld of Dead Minds the ritual phrases and slogans of Educationism. In this case, it is not amid radiant orbs that no human voice or sound is found, but amid the hordes of the Walking Dead, who have passed long ago away and out of self into the Greater Realm of Collective Mind. In schools, there is no one at home, no person who can say, It is I who speak; these are my words, and I mean them.

Nor is there, obviously, any person who will actually be *doing* anything in teaching the honorable English course. Can we hope that some mind will “differentiate” those processes, settings, and expectations, or will they, through the agency of ectoplasm, *be* differentiated? If instruction and content “is” adapted, what unseen adapter adapts, and with what in mind? By what spectral hand is content selected?

We can of course sympathize with the exasperation out of which Bob Levy imagined that he could actually talk to somebody at Herbert Hoover Junior High, and we can even believe that he imagines that he *did* talk to somebody. But he didn’t. He talked to a spooky answering machine. When we inquire into the meaning of what is said, we inquire really into the work of the mind in the sayer, and seek its clarification or ours. Of what is said above, there is no sayer, and to complain of it in any way is to complain that your ouija board just can’t spell worth a damn.

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**The Many Mad Masters**

When the fierce tensions of the passions and desires relax, then is the word of Sophocles approved, and we are rid of many mad masters. But indeed, in the respect of these complaints and in the matter of our relations with kinsmen and friends there is just one cause, Socrates—not old age, but the character of the man. For if men are temperate and cheerful even old age is only moderately burdensome. But if the reverse, old age, Socrates, and youth, are hard for such dispositions. *Republic, I:329d*

**B**EFORE you go on to the next paragraph, please turn the page and read, with suitable expression, “Walking in Another’s Shoes.”

**Walking in Another’s Shoes**  
 by Marge Hoge (age unknown)  
 Home Economics Instructor  
 Lakota High School, Bismarck ND

As the Home Ec I students walked into the classroom, they found some items on the table not normally used for class: plastic wrap, masking tape, a bowl of pebbles, and cotton balls. They were instructed to tape the plastic over their eyes, put the tape over their fingers, the pebbles in their shoes, and the cotton balls in their ears.

All of this activity was not done just to make them uncomfortable, but to show a point: what it’s like to be old. As people age, their senses tend to become less acute. Their hearing starts failing, their eyesight is worse, and they may get arthritis or other crippling diseases in their muscles. Their sense of taste and smell may also decline.

During the class period, the students were asked to do small tasks, such as writing their name, cutting things out and tasting some

pudding. When they were done, they each wrote a reaction paper about their experiences. Students commented that they didn’t realize that being old was so different and how they would hate to have everything taste that way. They also realized how long it would take them to do things if they were older.

Students learned what the elderly people today are going through. This activity helped them to understand the elderly, instead of laughing at them.

Learning how the aged feel is an important part of the home economics curriculum. With the number of elderly in our society rising every day, it’s becoming more important for us to understand them. An activity such as this one gives students one more small look at what it would be like to be old.

We will refrain, although with great difficulty, from instructing Marge Hoge as to what *she* should do with her plastic wrap and tape and pebbles and cotton balls. We will not inquire as to the flavor of the pudding, or the remarkable conclusion drawn by the children that someday “everything will taste that way,” as though cooked up by Marge Hoge, we presume.

Nor will we speculate as to the probable age of Marge Hoge. (Mental age, that is.) And as to what exercises our aged readers might undertake to find out “what it feels like” to be a Marge Hoge, beset by crippling diseases in their minds, and why they would do such a silly thing, we are at a loss. But as to why there are Marge Hoges in the schools, and as to the Great Purpose that they serve (and all unwittingly, for witting is not their habit), we have no doubts whatever.

School is for babies. Babies are sent there to be confirmed in infancy by the babies who work there. School is about appetites, feelings, and sentiments. All that is in a human being which is set in opposition to thoughtful self-control is celebrated and perpetuated in school, especially, of course, in those supposed “studies,” of which home economics is a perfect example, which have no specific content, no intellectual foundation, no discipline.

What a strange “curriculum” it must be, that Marge Hoge can identify “an important part” of it as the preposterous goal of “learning” how some utterly unspecified and indubitably diverse people

“feel.” But there would be no point in asking Marge Hoge, for instance, *which* old people walk as though they had marbles in their shoes, and which don’t. Or, for that matter, which *young* people walk as though they had marbles in their shoes, and why, or which schoolteachers *ought* to have in their shoes the marbles that they have lost. No such concrete considerations of mere fact are wanted here. What is wanted, and, in the weaker-minded students, probably achieved, is a horror of leaving babyhood, the pleasures of appetites indulged, feelings cuddled, and sensations adored.

Infancy is that state in which, at any age, we serve gladly the many mad masters into whose service we are all born. Maturity—does *anyone* reach it, even with the help of kindly age?—is the state in which we serve them but grudgingly, and less and less, and at the last, not at all. And of the mad masters, it is the maddest, and also the strongest of them all who is best served by the silly, and primarily time-wasting, exercises of the Marge Hoges of government educationism. Fear.

We read recently one of those school district poopsheets in which some superintendent identified the truly “great and important educational issues” of our time. No, they were not the struggle of the individual mind to inform and govern itself in a time of waxing factionalism, or even the problem of awakening in multitudes the habits of thought once supposed possible only to the few. Nor were they even the trivial non-issues, like preparing workers for the growing needs of the information society, or to compete with the Japanese. They were: the dangers of drug and alcohol addiction and the possibility of sexual abuse. To these “subjects,” the children must be “exposed,” said the superintendent, as early and as continuously as possible.

(Let us at least hope that it is not to Marge Hoge that the exposing will be left. We dread to imagine what the students will find next on her table. But let us also remember that it probably *is* Marge Hoge to whom the exposing will be left. Home economics, no?)

Well, why not? The children are already afraid of nuclear war (and power), chemical pollution, acid rain, cancer, AIDS, terrorism outside of the schools, growing old (now that they know all about it), the unlikelihood of ever being able to write a letter of application for a job, and even of the dire consequences of being unable to compete.

About all of those “subjects,” we can assume that they know and understand every bit as much as they can know and understand, having learned it from Marge Hoges all over the land, about the terrible taste of pudding in the old-folks’ home. About the mad masters that *cause* such things as drug addiction and sexual abuse, they will know as much as they know about growing old. Nothing.

But they will know fear.

The only clear lesson that any child could take from Marge Hoge is that the life of the old is not worth living. If we reversed her exercise, and provided Mortimer Adler with the tools by which to know how it feels to be Marge Hoge, would he think *that* life worth living? And if we could convince him that, if he manages to escape AIDS and nuclear devastation, along with sexual abuse, he will inevitably turn into a Marge Hoge, he will know fear. That “temperate and cheerful” disposition, whose lack makes any age burdensome, will depart from him, and he will be once again a child.

### Keeping Them Simple

Your friends shall be the tall wind,  
The river and the tree;  
The sun that laughs and marches,  
The swallows and the sea.  
Your pray’rs [sic] shall be the murmur  
Of grasses in the rain;  
The song of wild wood thrushes  
That makes you glad again.

And you shall run and wander,  
And you shall dream and sing  
Of brave things—and bright things  
Beyond the swallow’s wings.  
And you shall envy no man,  
Nor hurt your heart with sighs,  
For I will keep you simple  
While “search” may make you wise!

**T**HERE is always more poetry in the world than any sane person could want, and among us there is probably more abominable poetry than at any earlier time in the whole history of our species.

We have discovered the source of all that bad poetry. Just as surely as the Black Death was spread abroad by rats and fleas, the current

pestilence of abominable poetry has been caused by schoolteachers.

It is not sufficient to say that schoolteachers encourage or permit poetry in children, either of which would be understood, in a sane land, as a corruption of the young. In fact, they actually require it, and of little children who, if left unmolested, would never by nature produce such revolting messes.

Somehow or other, probably from listening to the effusions of their teachers in the education academy, they have taken the fancy that poetry is easy, and also cute. Poetry is as easy, and cute, as architecture or thoracic surgery. The teachers who make little children write poetry should be required to live in high rise apartment houses built by creative tykes who have proven themselves in the sandbox, and get their mitral valves stitched up by five-year-olds expressing themselves with their nurse sets.

The mushy blither that you see above is the work of little Inez Bull. She is a high achiever. She is already, bless your heart, the president of her club. And her club is called the New York University Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa. Her poem is part of the President's Message in the April 1986 newsletter of same.

Here is more of that message:

**Spring**, the season between winter and summer reckoned astronomically as extending from the March equinox to the June solstice... it can be a hidden or ultimate source... the beginning or first appearance of something, a crocus, a daffodil, the violet in her hood... a time or state of growth and development... something that produces action or motion, a water's rushing journey to somewhere...the art of leaping forward... a frog's awakening... the season reckoned astronomically comprising the months of March, April, and May... a force, perhaps the tall wind... Yes, a force to **educate** which may apply to more pretentious processes of teaching and instruction designed to ensure full development of the capacities of a more intelligent person—a season to **train** which may suggest methodical thorough instruction and guidance with a specific end in mind until rapid and successful execution of duties and tasks is assured.

Phi Delta Kappa is what educationists call their "honor society." The name was chosen so that it might conveniently be mumbled in such a way as to be mistaken for the name of the other outfit. What merits admission to Phi Delta Kappa, we neither know nor care to know. We are more interested in what might preclude admission, if anything.

The inability to pay attention to what you are saying is obviously no impediment to admission. Clearly, no one is to be debarred for such startlingly inappropriate gaucheries as that "reckoned astronomically as extending," or even for obstinately repeating them. The mind of the Phi Delta Kappan need know no reason to abstain from tired clichés, lest thought be drowned out by that very rote recitation that educationists claim to disdain, but never fail to provide. And no one, obviously, will fail of election to lofty office just because she happens to be ignorant of the difference between "pretentious" and "portentous." In short, to join this august assembly of the mentors of youth, no one need worry about his inability to make sense.

And that is why schoolteachers push poetry on little children. To them, poetry is bits of borrowed babble broken into short lines. Anybody can do it. It helps the children to feel good about themselves, and the teacher's treacly praise of their babble convinces them, and perhaps for life, that you don't *have* to make sense to do good work. Just be sincere, a condition which, all unaccountably, schoolteachers claim to be able to measure. And, of course, cute, like little Inez, with the violet in the daffodil's hood, or even transcendental, like little Inez, with what may, or may not, be the hidden, or ultimate, source of a something that produces action, or motion, as of a journey to somewhere.

Consider what must be the necessary skills of poetry, and whether their acquisition is likely to be any easier than learning the skills of architecture or, for an even more useful example, the skills of musical composition. They are nothing less than the skills of thought and language. It is only after study and long apprenticeship that they become what is correctly called a *second* nature, a new knowing of what is right, appropriate, and beautiful, and which is not, except in Mozarts, provided by the first nature into which we are all born.

We like especially that last bit of the poem, where little Inez—or is it the frog?—says “I will keep you simple.” Right. That’s what school is all about.

The poetry-pushing schoolteachers never bother their sweet little heads with brooding about the deep sea of thoughtful reflection out of which poets, when they are lucky, draw the right word, the perfect metaphor, the just, illuminating analogy, or the great realm of poetry itself, in which they dwell and rest and wander. Poetry is not only the fruit of pondering and meditation, but the concentrated and purified elixir of that fruit. There can be no Mozarts in poetry, any more than there can be child prodigies in history or philosophy, to say nothing of architecture and thoracic surgery. And a writer, of *anything*, who has written more than he has read and pondered is as much to be prized as a bridge-builder who has built more bridges than he has measured and studied.

And less to be prized is the “educational” expert who has gushed more about the “more pretentious processes of teaching” than she has obviously ever read or thought about it. But she’s just right for the Phi Delta Kappans. She’ll keep ‘em simple.

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When we read junk like little Inez’s President’s Message, and especially in some “official organ” of a bunch of people calling themselves “educators,” which is where it usually appears, we despair. What is it with these people, we wonder. Is there no one among them who objects to nonsense, who thinks the calling in which he labors demeaned by a public display of mindlessness? Are they *all* like that?

In this case, of course, there is one who is not. He sent us the goods. One such dissenter from collective cant is more to be prized than a hundred commissions on the reform of education. In the September issue, we’ll look at the latest such commission and its dreams.

### **The Categorical Imperative Blues**

**W**HAT a knotty dilemma. We were moved to virtue when we read an op-ed piece by this fellow who just wasn’t going to take any more, and who had decided, right out in public, to sell off his

IBM stock. South Africa, you know. His stern and splendid righteousness shamed us.

What a great idea, we thought. Let’s send a message to bigots and bigwigs everywhere, making it perfectly clear that *we* are not like *them*. That’ll teach ‘em. Let’s also, as the scripture exhorts us, send out a press release and let our light so shine before persons that they will see our good works. Who knows. If *we* sell IBM, maybe *everybody* will sell IBM, and people of all colors will immediately learn to live in amity and concord in South Africa.

We put the whole thing to our Moral and Financial Advisor. He patiently explained—patient explaining is his forte—that the stock had increased in value over the years, and that we would have to decide whether to reinvest the profit in some impeccably moral corporation—Dow, for instance—or, since we were clearly too virtuous to spend it on ourselves, to hand the take, less taxes, right over to Bishop Tutu.

And were we willing, with all that tax, to encourage in iniquity a government well known for the manufacture and sale of dangerous weapons, and for the aid that it seems regularly to provide to other naughty governments?

Hard questions. But we took the high road, and went for the Bishop. And as for the tax money, we took comfort in hoping that ours might be spent not on warheads and riot-control equipment, but on Conflict Resolution Facilitators and four-color posters in which cute little children of different races present each other with flowers. Could happen.

Girded with righteousness, forth we urged him, to divest us of our complicity in the vile doings of other people. Somebody, after all, must Set A Good Example.

Fine, he said, but let’s cool it for a while on that example-setting business. In fact, *mum’s* the word, OK?

But what about the press release, and letting the whole world know that we, at least, are innocent and good?

Later, he said. It takes two to tango. If it’s virtuous to sell IBM, it’s vicious to buy it. You can be innocent and good *after* you’ve cut a good deal with a collaborator who’s willing to be guilty and evil. Every seller has to shake the unseen hand of some buyer. If you Set A Good Example too soon, the Street will turn bearish on vice, and

the virtuous will have a hard time unloading their complicity, even at a loss.

Thus it is, as you have surely noted, that we are not proclaiming, just yet, the great moral superiority that we must nevertheless be accorded for *wanting* to sell IBM. We just Kant, you might say. We're stuck with either hanging on to our own complicity, or encouraging complicity in others. A sorry business. So we'd love to hear from that moral guy as to how he managed to pull it off.

### Summer Notes from Central Control

Because we have come to know what our typical subscribers are like, we are not surprised that some of them have made mild complaint about the fact that we stick stamps on the return envelopes sent out with the expiration notices. Why do this, they ask. It must cost a bundle. And should someone not renew a subscription, there is no return at all. Please don't do it anymore.

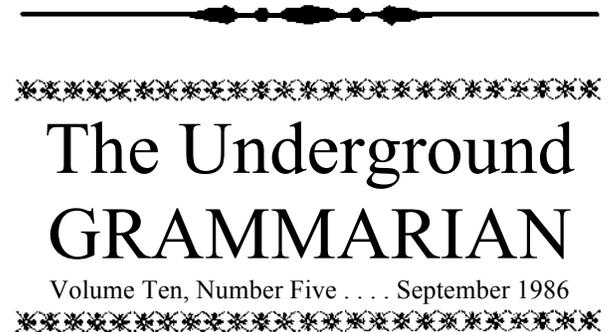
We will continue to do it, for several reasons. First, there are remarkably few who do not renew. Second, the stamps are different for every batch of notices, and serve as a code that helps us to get you back into the computer. Third, we enjoy picking out the stamps.

The postal service disintegrates apace, in part, no doubt, because outfits like the University of Georgia are laboring mightily to prepare athletes for postal clerkshipness as their only alternative to trash collectionism. We are more and more often informed that some of you, having been with us for years, live on streets, or in cities, or even at zip numbers, that do not exist. It's unsettling. When that happens, we will try to get an operator, find your number, and call you. So, if an issue seems unusually late, and especially if you haven't had one in months—that happens—call us. The 24-hour emergency number of THE UNDERGROUND GRAMMARIAN industrial megacomplex is (609) 589-6477. Actually, it's the candy store downstairs, but they'll take a message.

A special message to Canadian readers, which might also interest others: Bob and Carol Verdun have begun a national edition of their feisty and truly independent *Elmira Independent*. They are

the only full-time journalists we know of, in any nation, who deal regularly and thoughtfully with education, and who know the difference between education and schooling. We hope some of you will consider subscribing. They can be found at 15 King Street, Elmira, Ontario, N0B 2T0. (Those are zeroes.)

We wish you all a moderately restful summer, and intend to return in August with the September issue. For summer reading, we recommend an old book, *The Art of Teaching*, by Gilbert Highet. Teachers, especially, will be astonished.



# The Underground GRAMMARIAN

Volume Ten, Number Five . . . September 1986

### Injury and Insult in Orono

The University of Maine at Orono, as an equal opportunity educational institution, is committed to both academic freedom and the fair treatment of all individuals. It therefore discourages the use of sexist language. Language that reinforces sexism can arise from imprecise word choices that may be interpreted as biased, discriminatory, or demeaning even if they are not intended to be. Accordingly, all university communications whether delivered orally or in writing, shall be free of sexist language.

A THOUGHT that often haunts us is from Georges Bernanos. He suggested that modern society might be best understood as a vast, but unwitting, conspiracy against the inner life. That seems to us to be so, and important, for if there is some condition properly to be called "education," it can reside only within a person, in the life against which the world conspires. But, like much of what is so, it is not *all* that is so. That same world can also be seen as pampering and spoiling

the inner life by according it unnatural power over the outer.

One of our less responsible staffers, not long ago, discovered an interesting quirk in the postal regulations having to do with the sending of pornography through the mails. The bright sword of bureaucracy had cut cleanly through the knotty problem of defining pornography by granting every receiver of mail the right to define it for himself. As far as we know, this is still the case, but we tell you that only because we are sure that you will not take advantage of that curious way of “defining,” as our staffer, we regret to say, did.

His congressman sent him a pretty calendar, with a picture of the Capitol. He took it to the local postmaster and filed a complaint against a sender of unsolicited pornography.

“So what’s pornographic about this pretty calendar?” asked the postmaster.

Let it at least be said for our man that he did not try to make a case for the Capitol dome as a phallic symbol.

He knew his rights. He tartly replied, “That is not for you to ask. Read the regulations. According to your rules, whatever I say is pornographic, is pornographic. Please send it back with a stern warning that I will have no more of this.” And back it went. (Congress, however, continues unabated.)

He did likewise with Easter seals and offers of unlimited credit. Prurient pleas from Ralph Nader, and filthy announcements of tire sales, and a vile postcard from a friend who was touring the continent, he sternly refused. A braver man would have done the same with the electric bill and the summons for jury duty, but he did what little a man can do in the face of the monster of preposterousness and absurdity.

Mischief, to be sure. But those who would grant one inner life the power to constrain another are asking for mischief, and should be given it.

So we have some good advice for the people who are trying to get their work done at the University of Maine up in Orono, students included. Know your rights! Remember always that your school has come out in favor of “the fair treatment of *all* individuals.” What a pregnant phrase, sexistly speaking.

Never forget that “all individuals” includes cranks, jerks, persistent malcontents, fervid factionalists, religious maniacs, self-appointed

thought police, ism-sniffers of every stripe, and even paranoid schizophrenics. Flat Earthists and vegetarians have just as much right to preserve their self-esteem, and rest secure in their faith, as Anabaptists and neo-conservatives. Should you not happen to be any of those, don’t despair. Fake it. You’ll think of something.

Remember that sexism is only one of the dozens and dozens of nasty isms that have recently been discovered among us, and that there are countless words and phrases whose mere appearance on a page might make you feel less cheerful and confident than you would prefer to feel. Look for offense, and study irascibility. Never forget that fair treatment and unfair treatment are whatever you say they are, and that, “even when not intended to be,” words that you would prefer not to have read are unfair treatment. And that’s not all. What free American would be willing to settle for nothing more than protection against unfair treatment? Go all the way, and demand Fair Treatment, which is, never forget, whatever you want it to be. Where Perception is the King, let it reign!

Faculty members might begin, for instance, by reading, with an exciting new sharpness, the third paragraph of the document quoted above, which is some sort of putout from some outfit suspiciously called “Public Information and Central Services.” (Hmm. Is that to say that there is some private information that they don’t give us?)

Who can feel warm and comfy to read:

Supervisory personnel have a particular responsibility to discuss this policy with faculty and staff and to make available to them guidelines on non-sexist language. Guidelines of the American Psychological Association on the use of non-sexist language provide direction and are recommended because they are brief and list examples...

Now that passage just brims over with language that, whether so intended or not, will make many people feel far less satisfied with themselves than they would like to feel. For instance:

**Rankism.** “Supervisory personnel” are wiser than faculty and staff, who do some *lesser* kind of work here at UM, and who need the guidance of their betters in the delicate matter of fairness? Is

the assistant dean for attitude control to counsel a wise professor of Home Ec. and Family Dynamics, who has been preaching attitude control for years’?

**Disciplinism.** Why a *psychological* handbook? Is that to suggest that there is more understanding of the inner life of human beings in the department of psychology, where notorious meat-heads imagine that they can measure everything from creativity to angst, than in the department of philosophy, or history, or literature? Is that what “supervisory personnel” have discovered in their wisdom? And what about the phys. ed. folk? Haven’t they been the experts of character building, along with the chaplain, for donkey’s years?

Fair, after all, is fair: and all individuals are *all* individuals. The only fair way to ensure the fair treatment of all individuals is to establish a Committee of the Whole to study the possibility of forming an All-University Task Force for studying the possibility of a Draft Proposal for Universal Fairness Guidelines to be implemented, if implemented, by a Universal and Perpetual Fairness Control Board under the Joint Supervision of All Individuals. Anything less might turn out to be fair only to a number of individuals *less* than all. Intolerable!

And in the meantime, until universal justice is established among us, let every apparatchik in Central Services, as well as every member of Supervisory Personnel, mind only *his* own damn business.

## A Nation Bamboozled

For the first time there is now a body of information that we can pass on to new teachers about what does and does not work in the classroom. Ten years ago, this body of research did not exist.

Robert D. Barr, Education Dean,  
Oregon State University

**WE** are of two minds, at least, about the teacher competence test business. There are some things that a teacher ought to know because they are things that anybody should know, and some things that a teacher ought to know if he puts himself forth to teach those things. But is there anything that a teacher ought to know beyond all that—

anything that pertains essentially and exclusively to the art of teaching?

As schoolteachers all over the land try to learn long division and when to put *i* before *e* and vice versa, we keep remembering that Epictetus would have failed any TeachComp test now going, even in Texas.

As to the ability, or, for that matter, the inclination, of a board of government employees to discover what it is that makes an Epictetus, we are of one mind. But that, to us, at least, utterly incapacitating disability is obviously not going to spoil the fun of those who imagine that such a board of glib examinees turned examiners is just what we need to bring about a golden age of education in America, and to compete successfully with those feisty Japanese.

It is easy to forget that this latest What to Do About Those Schools Report was concocted by a outfit called the Carnegie Forum on Education *and the Economy*. Like all of its predecessors (how many have there been?), it discovered that it would not be able to do its assigned job if it wasted any of its time in trying to define “education” in any way that might distinguish that condition from the acquisition of skills and the implantation of beliefs. As the recent federal ProComm concluded that, while they couldn’t *define* pornography, they could know it when they saw it, the Carnegie Forum said that it *could* define *the Economy*, and that education must be whatever the schools could provide for the health of same.

The Forum was made up of weighty citizens, government apparatchiki and erstwhile of same, known achievers in the business world, and two unionists. The unionists, having once been schoolteachers, and having also found that life not sufficiently suited to their interests and talents, are now being put forth as perfectly satisfactory representatives of all teacherdom, lest the public imagine that teachers were left unconsulted in this serious matter. Epictetus was not a member of the Forum, but, in any case, he would not have represented teacherdom as it now is any more appropriately than two unionists.

And that gives us to think. There is, as far as we can tell, having run out of time for the reading of all these reports, nothing terribly bad in the suggestions of the Carnegie Forum. Technical and vocational training are good things, and working

for one's living is a good thing. And those are good things not because they will bring us to compete better with the Japanese, but because they are at least conducive to self-discipline and self-government. A good purpose, not a bad one, is served in teaching children how to move gracefully through the world in which we all must live, not so that they may "relate to self and others" in some currently acceptable fashion, but so that they may live in such a way as to discover the merits of that "cheerful and temperate disposition" without which neither rich nor poor, neither young nor old, can hope for happiness.

Nor is there anything bad in their suggestions for the certifying of teachers. Certainly a physics teacher should know physics, and know it well, and a German teacher ought to know the prepositions that take the dative and a lot more. Elementary teachers should be not just OK but pretty damn good at reading and writing and arithmetic. Such things can be measured, and should be. But everybody—well, almost everybody—has always known that. So the Forum's suggestion that the measuring should be done by the only people who don't know it, the educationists who have brought us where we are, is bad.

Bad, too, and surely the result of an ignorance that the unionists could perhaps have dispelled but didn't, is their naive suggestion that education courses should be taught in graduate schools to students who already have degrees in subjects. Anyone who knows anything about the teacher academies knows that such a scheme will require, and bring forth, nothing more than a change of some numbers in the catalog, and also that students who already have any decent grounding in academic studies will turn either to drugs or mayhem if forced to endure that rubbish at any level.

Nevertheless, the report urges many obviously good things. They are, to be sure, exactly the same obviously good things urged, after about three seconds of deliberation, by the man who came to repair our postage machine, and at no extra cost to us or anyone, but they are good things and should be done. In fact, however, they will not be done, no matter how elaborate a machine is designed to do them, for the machine will be operated by none other than the Robert Barr quoted above, along with countless others of his kind.

Educationists have short memories. It is a protective device, lest they come to notice their own follies. Unlike Barr, we can remember "ten years ago." We were right here, writing about the Barrs and their pronouncements of "new" understandings. Ten years ago they were saying what every generation (which is just about ten years) of educationists has said: "Well, maybe we have made some little mistakes, but *now*, by golly, *now* we know what to do!"

If those people have anything to do with the coming Great Reform, there is no hope. But it is to them, of course, and only to them, that well-meaning innocents like the Carnegie concocters will always turn, like the desperate wife who believes, that *this* time her husband really *will* give up gambling.

They will not turn to Epictetus. But, in truth, why should they? What would he know of their *real* problems, which are not problems of education at all, not thoughtful reflections on the birth and nurture of mindfulness, but problems of what is best understood as "schooling." Schooling is a political entity as well as a vast collective enterprise directed by no particular mind, and operated by countless hired hands, most of whom work truly not so much for schooling as for government, of which schooling is only one minor department.

The logistics of schooling are horrid to contemplate. Five days a week, millions of Americans play their tiny parts in an enterprise far more complicated than the invasion of Normandy. So it's a mess? Well, what else would it be? Those who run it have to deal with the brake linings of the busses just as well as with the question of who rides the busses. They have to attend to the contents of the coleslaw in every cafeteria just as carefully as they must stand guard over the contents of the books. If the problem of separating the competent teachers from the clowns seems enormous, so too is the problem of keeping athlete's foot out of the locker-room. In fact, schooling will never go smoothly; at best, it will muddle through. And its relation to education will never be more than accidental and rare.

Education arises in one and only one circumstance: a thoughtful conversation between two people. And if one of them happens to be dead, like Epictetus, or fictitious, like Faust, it doesn't matter.

We would applaud the work of the Carnegie Forum, and other such outfits, if only they would stop lying and remove from all their reports the word “education.” Let them fix schooling a little, with an eye to the chance that education might occasionally erupt in it.

### Innovation Abstracts Abstracts

WE have finally figured it out. *Innovation Abstracts*, which is sent to us in a plain brown envelope with no return address, is surely *not* published, as the masthead says, by the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development. How could such an outfit exist? The whole thing is a clever ruse, suckering fruitcake educationists into blowing their own little horns in print, thus commending, all unwittingly, that universal law of Justice by which those who seek the glory of self-commendation are automatically deprived, without even noticing it, of the protection of the Fifth Amendment.

We now have Vol. VII, No.16. (The numbers are fake.) Both its articles are confessions of the sort that must be extracted, except from educationists, by electrical devices. In one of them, a certain Andrew Bulleri is boasting of that fact that the community college of which he is president is attracting students by holding “mathematics competitions” in local high schools. “In the final analysis [where else?],” he says:

the math competition has done *exactly* what we hoped it would do. It has created great enthusiasm: most teams wear matching T-shirts, and some have even written and performed their own cheers. [The italics are ours.]

Yeah. Exactly what they hoped. There is just no getting these people away from group cheers and T-shirts. They are, in fact, an interesting primitive culture, a tribe of easygoing food-gatherers whose cave paintings (done by committees) are always of themselves and all their nifty doings, and whose bumper stickers read “Honk If You Love Mathematics.”

The other piece is by, and about, of course, a convert to the tribe of educationists. Although he came from what he calls “a field position with Commerce Clearing House”—about as likely as that National Institute for SOD—he is now in

what he calls “academia,” teaching some sort of business course at a certain Hazard Community College in Hazard, Kentucky.

(No, we *don't* make those names up. Some greater power always seems to provide them for us. And we have no more idea than you as to exactly what a “field position” is. Shortstop, maybe.)

If you want to shine as an innovator, you must preserve intact your ignorance. The more you know about the history and tradition of your calling, the more likely you are to notice that something you would like to do is actually a few years older than the hills. Consider how little you had better know, for instance, to imagine that you have made a great leap forward in the life of the mind by giving your students play money in the place of grades—and play money of the playest kind—entirely imaginary.

“I give,” says Richard Crowe of Hazard, “four tests during the term, each worth \$40. The comprehensive final exam is worth \$100.”

He has a little price list of what is worth what. Students have to “earn” \$240 to get an A, or, perhaps, earn an A to get \$240. Whatever. Who cares.

What makes this silly old gimmick interesting in this case, however, is the strange “conclusion” that Crowe draws from his bold innovative thrust. “The dollar grading system,” he says

is a simple addition to the straight points method of grading. It integrates more reality into business law classes and has worked well in my effort to provide a more meaningful classroom environment for my students.

School people, for some reason that we would like to understand, all seem to be experts in a very thorny matter—the nature and content of nothing less than Reality. Here is one who can not only tell what is real from what is not, but who can even “integrate” the *more* real where the *less* real—mere A’s and F’s, we presume—was . . . uh . . . *unintegrated*? Insufficiently integrated? Insufficiently real to *be* integrated? What can a man possibly mean, who says such words?

Although it often seems that schooling among us is sick unto death of ten thousand little disorders, there is in fact only one, of which all the others are but the outward and visible

manifestations of the sickness within. Bad philosophy.

The school people neither know what they mean by Knowing, nor know that they do not know what they mean by Knowing. Because they do not consider and refine the meaning of their words—which is nothing less than the whole method of philosophy—they can imagine that a man has both said and done something when he has “integrated more reality” where before there was less.

Plato called complacent ignorance, the cheery glow of self-esteem that burns in those who imagine that they know, the most lethal sickness of the soul. It can not be cured, for the afflicted are quite content with themselves just as they are, and seek no remedy. And for the schoolers, remedy would mean the end of innovation as they know and love it.

*Neither can his Mind be thought to be in Tune,  
whose Words do jarre;  
nor his Reason in Frame,  
whose Sentence is preposterous.*

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# The Underground GRAMMARIAN

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## The Thing Which Is Not

WASHINGTON, July 1—After months of vigorous opposition by feminist groups, the American Psychiatric Society announced that its trustees had approved the addition of three new psychic disorders to its official diagnostic manual, but only in an appendix.

The three disorders would describe women with premenstrual syndrome, individuals with “self-defeating” personalities, and people with sadistic personalities.

*New York Times*, July 3, 1986

For he argued thus: that the use of speech was to make us understand one another, and to receive information of facts; now if any one *said the thing which was not*, these ends were defeated, because I cannot properly be said to understand him; and I am so far from receiving information that he leaves me worse than in ignorance, for I am led to believe a thing is black when it is white, and short when it is long. And these were all the notions he had concerning that faculty of *lying*, so perfectly well understood among human creatures.

THE second epigraph, all of our readers are likely to know, is from *Gulliver's Travels*. It is a happy circumstance for us that the Unspellable horses of the Fourth Voyage don't even have a word for *lying*. Thus it is that Gulliver's Master has to coin a useful and unsettling phrase that leads us to reflect on some of the things that we *ought* to mean when we use the word. Unhampered by any superstitious notions of the sanctity of “definitions,” the puzzled Houyhnhnm (Ha!) is driven to understand the meaning of a word by actually using his mind, a faculty that a dictionary does not have.

It is an interesting irony that mind seems also noticeably missing in those who put themselves forth as great experts of the mind and its work. Educationists are by no means alone in that world where inventive definition takes the place of understanding. Their very close and kissing cousins, all the practitioners of the unnatural sciences whose names begin with psycho-, have learned how to make handsome livings entirely by defining the thing which is not. It is a stupendously successful way of lying.

We can not resist comparing the busy practitioners of the American Psychiatric Society with their kinfolk in Educationism, especially the sniffers-out of new and hitherto unsuspected “learning disabilities.” Both tribes get paid, as it were, “by the piece.” Every newly discovered disorder means more profit.

But it is only in loose talk that such intangibles as learning disabilities and disorders of the psyche can be called “discovered.” They are only *defined*, and even those who pronounce themselves competent to define have a strange way of disagreeing as to the presence of the “things” they

define, especially when one expert definer is being paid by the defense, and the other by the state. Let us therefore praise calcium and even the dreaded PCB, things which *are*, for if the experts disagree as to *their* presence, we know good and damn well that one of those experts is wrong. Experts of the invisible, however, even when disagreeing, can never be accounted “wrong,” but only “in disagreement,” or, as they themselves prefer, “in *honest* disagreement,” a cozy moral condition unavailable to detectors of calcium and PCB.

Whether of the psycho- subclan or the edu-, *they*, of course, take comfort in their apparent immunity to exposure as charlatans or liars, but so, too, do the hunters of witches and the casters of horoscopes. All such deal in the grandest possible lie, the granting of reality to the thing which is not, carefully confined to those matters in which there is no possibility whatsoever of refutation by publicly verifiable evidence. That in just such matters there is also no possibility of verification, is a fact that does not discomfort the practitioners of the unnatural sciences.

Any thoughtful mind *should* be made uncomfortable by propositions that can neither be refuted nor verified, and by the imputation of reality to things that can not exist. Such notions disorder the mind, leading it to imagine that there *are* such monsters as War and Crime, and that *they* assault *us*. But war does not break out; persons choose to fight. Crime does not arise like a foul gas from the sewers; persons choose to commit it. Women, and men too, and little girls and boys, and cats and dogs as well, are from time to time brought into both mental and emotional disorder by virtue of the fact that they are organisms, and thus subject in every part of themselves to chemical processes. Who is, this morning, confident and effective, may, this evening, for one or another of causes beyond our power to count or even to imagine, turn into a “self-defeating personality,” who had better have the kind of insurance that covers “mental illness,” so that he doesn’t have to take hold of himself and shape up.

But there is no germ of Sadism in the water supply to make people cruel, that we may discover it, and name it, and, by a happy coincidence, turn a small profit by becoming experts in its eradication. There is no Black Bat of

Premenstrual Syndrome fluttering in the night at the windows of sleeping ladies, that wise and courageous psychiatrists might track it down and slay it in its lair. There is no behavior without a behavior; no deed is done except by a doer. If we ascribe reality to such non-things as sadism and self-defeat, and set ourselves to deal with *them*, as physicians deal with bacteria, and plumbers with leaks, we encourage in self-defeaters and sadists the illusion that they are helpless victims of powers beyond their control. We encourage also a belief remarkably convenient for all self-styled experts in how other people should live—the belief that our lives must be directed from outside, and that there is no help in us.

Nor is this belief diminished by the fact, obvious even to little children, that teachers are rarely wise, marriage counselors are not happier in marriage than mechanics, psychiatrists are as weird as survivalists, preachers, and preachers of peace, are looking for cheeks to smite, and those who hasten to govern others govern themselves no better than the rest of us. And, no less than the rest of us, every one of the experts in how to live will excuse himself for not living as well as he claims to know how by pointing to the baleful influence of the thing which is not, to something that can never even be suspected to exist unless *he* exists to embody and express it.

Some professional experts once announced that there were 10,007 demons residing among us. Others said 10,008.

## The Fear Of God in Inez Bull

AN alert reader, with a very good memory, noticed something a bit familiar about the cute little jingle with which Inez Bull began her President’s Message to the assembled members of Phi Delta Kappa. And sure enough, a little research turned up the original, a cute little jingle by Fannie Stearns Davis. Both versions are printed below for your entertainment. Each is amusing in its own way.

Of Fannie Stearns Davis, we have nothing to say; the wild wind of poesie bloweth where it listeth, no doubt. But of Inez Bull, who turns out to be a more intriguing personage than we would have dreamed, and of whose further adventures

we intend to keep track, we do have something to say.

Writers, of course, are thieves. Their thievery, however, often has this unusual effect—that their victims are rather enriched by it than impoverished. We have even seen here and there, phrases and whole sentences of ours, and some of them already stolen once by us, put forth as though they were another's. We are delighted, and more inclined to admire the thief's astute judgment than to castigate his morals. After all, what else have we but words, with which to seek out understanding and to discover some tiny hint of an inkling of a truth?

But, as the poet says: Who steals my *trash*, steals trash. 'Tis nothing. 'Twas never mine, nor 'twill be his, and has been pap to thousands. We, when we steal, contrive, as best we can, to steal bones with some meat still on them, and nourishment still to be found in the gnawing of them. And, of the great writers, it must be said that, while we hardly know who they are or what they mean, they are good health to us, and the sour smack of the dregs in their dusty cups may friend us on a dark and cloudy day. But Fannie Steams Davis? Aw, come on, Inez!

Nevertheless, we are constrained by decency not only to forgive Inez Bull, but to praise her. Book-learning, after all, is only *mere* book-learning, which any dry pedant may find, and which never made anybody into a sharing and caring, beautiful human being who just loves children, and can really relate. So what if Inez has little? What she does have, in a time when it is rare among us, and almost unheard of in the government school business, is Piety.

Now Piety is like pornography, in a way, and like education too, for that matter. We can no more define it than poor, baffled Euthyphro could when he ran into Socrates on the courthouse steps. But, just as the Federal Porno Seminar was able to say a whole lot about pornography without feeling any need to discover any of its essential attributes, and likewise for education in all those education rap sessions, we find ourselves perfectly competent to understand Piety and instruct you about it.

Now Piety is when you obey the Commandment and steadfastly refuse to take the name of the Lord in vain, even when doing so might bring you some advantage. Surely you have noticed the most

intriguing feature of Inez's purification, the replacement of "God"—we can print it because we're not pious—with more reverent forms. It is obvious that Inez knows her audience, and must be therefore a better leader of them than they deserve. She knows of course that they are just a bunch of secular humanists who don't want the "Christmas Vacation" to go away, but who do wish it were called something else. So she is very careful not to expose God to their contempt. And oh, so subtly. Notice the cunning change of "prayers" to "pray'rs." That'll fool 'em. And how about that cleverly quotation-marked "search"? What a touch!

Well, by golly, we're proud of her, and those Basic Minimum Christianists who are clamoring about schools should be proud of her too. There's a lady who *has* the Fear of God. She's like one of those Catacomb Christians, steadfastly, but not too rashly, standing up for God. We do hope she gets reelected.

And we're even more proud of her because she obviously knows her trade, and knows that the educationists who read "her" poetry would probably not have read too much of anybody else's.

#### **Exhibit A: The Original**

Your friends shall be the Tall Wind,  
The River and the Tree;  
The Sun that laughs and marches,  
The Swallows and the Sea.

Your prayers shall be the murmur  
Of grasses in the rain;  
The song of wildwood thrushes  
That makes God glad again.

And you shall run and wander,  
And you shall dream and sing  
Of brave things—and bright things  
Beyond the swallow's wings.

And you shall envy no man,  
Nor hurt your heart with sighs,  
For I will keep you simple  
That God may make you wise.

**Exhibit B:**  
**The Painstakingly Pious Redaction of Inez Bull**

Your friends shall be the tall wind,  
 The river and the tree;  
 The sun that laughs and marches,  
 The swallows and the sea.  
 Your pray'rs shall be the murmur  
 Of grasses in the rain;  
 The song of wild wood thrushes  
 That makes you glad again.

And you shall run and wander,  
 And you shall dream and sing  
 Of brave things - and bright things  
 Beyond the swallow's wings.  
 And you shall envy no man,  
 Nor hurt your heart with sighs,  
 For I will keep you simple  
 While "search" may make you wise!

**About as Fer as They Kin Go**  
**The Visible Educatinal Enviornment of Kansas City**

There is a need for the Kansas City Missouri schools to attract children back into its schools. These children have left the schools because their parents felt that the Kansas City Schools would not provide a good educational enviornment for their children. ¶ I am interested in the Science and Math magnet school because I feel that I have the interest, expectations, background, and leadership qualities to develop a magnet school that will provide a visable and quality educatinal enviornment that will attract children to that school. I will be able to select and quide a staff into providing an edcational opportunity for the children to grow educationally at a rapid rate. To cause these children to develop the love of learning that will give them the desire to become serious students of Science and Mathematics.

*Daly Macgrayne, newly appointed  
 Principal of Magnetism in Kansas City*

What you see is *sic*, absolutely *sic*. It is Macgrayne's letter of application for an appointment as principal to one of those really

nifty new "magnet schools" of Kansas City, where everything will be up-to-date. If you haven't already concluded it, we will be delighted to tell you that he got the job, of course.

There was, somewhat less of course, a bit of a flap in the papers when some reporter got hold of the evidence. But the school board didn't think it was all that big a deal. English is, after all, not easy to spell. And Macgrayne explained that the board had really gotten, some-how or other, only a rough draft that had been left lying around on his desk, or someplace else, maybe. Who knows? These things happen. Anyway, it all worked out for the best, and the Science and Math magnet school will now have a principal who actually admits that he is perfectly capable of causing children to develop a love of learning.

This is not the first time that we have heard about some principal's sad misadventure with a rough draft. It is about the tenth. Those guys seem to have a way of leaving scraps of paper lying around in strange places, perhaps near windows on windy days. Maybe they have treacherous secretaries, or, even worse, secretaries boring from within as undercover agents for the great cause of simple justice.

However, unlike you, and you, and you, and even *you*, we believe the man. And he leads us, for a moment at least, to admire Iago. There is a little something to be said for the caught culprit who says, "Ask me nothing. What you know, you know." But Iago, of course, had less at stake, and no hope at all of principalship in a magnet school.

Nevertheless, Macgrayne might have done better to pull an Iago, for, as we have often noticed in educationists, his excuse reveals a greater transgression than that with which he is charged.

OK, so it's a rough draft. Is "enviornment" then a mere typo, appearing also as "enviornment," another typo? What can we suspect of an educationist who can not spell in his sleep one of educationism's favorite catchwords? How do you suppose he pronounces it?

"Visable," not only in a rough draft, but especially in a rough draft, is an interesting mistake. It is a member of a numerous family, which includes "definatly" and "seperate." Any teacher of composition will recognize those as the typical mistakes of one who in not in the habit of reading, for it is from *seeing* them often that we

learn to spell those words whose sounds give no clue as to what vowel should appear in an unaccented syllable.

English is hard to spell, and mistakes will appear in anybody's writing, and in final drafts as well as rough. But there are mistakes and mistakes, and there is one sort of mistake to be expected from the "serious students" with that "love of learning," and quite another from those who just want to get to the end of the assignment, and whose stored-up fund of language is meager.

And what sort of person are you, if you can consider even your roughest draft, and notice that you have written both "educatinal" and "edcational," and then let them stand? Is the combined work of the mind and hand so little to be respected that some of its errors can be called trifles, unworthy of attention, perhaps, because your ideas are so much more important? Is it a serious student filled with the love of learning who imagines that he can be a Master of the Greater Mysteries without perfect mastery of the Lesser?

And what are Macgrayne's ideas? See if you can find in his rough draft any statement that is not the recitation of some conventional slogan. Would his parroting have become, in a *final* draft, thoughtful new understandings, grown from rational reflection on the inadequacy of the routine?

And, most important of all, for this would certainly *not* have been changed in a final draft, what does he himself put forth as his qualification for the job? Nothing but a feeling. "I *feel* that I have" he says, in effect, all those neat virtues that all educationists feel that they have. Swell. Just the man.

In Kansas City, for all we know, the people buy used cars from dealers who feel real good about *all* their clunkers.

## Brief Notes

OUR Assistant Circulation Manager recently met a nice man who said that he had been reading THE UNDERGROUND GRAMMARIAN pretty regularly for six years, but that he had never actually seen an example of what he called "the real thing." He assumed that it existed only in the form of Xeroxed copies. So the ACM gave him a

copy of the real thing, requiring of him only that he make a few Xeroxes and pass them out. True, we would like to have enough subscribers so that we could buy badly needed BMW's for every member of the staff, but we are ready to settle for the next best level of success, and to be, as some say we already are, the most frequently Xeroxed sheet in the country. So we here say again what we all too seldom have space to say: Everyone has our permission to copy and to circulate THE UNDERGROUND GRAMMARIAN, or any portion of it, at any time. There.

SOMETIMES our readers surprise us a little. For Summer reading, we urged a book called *The Art of Teaching* by Gilbert Highet. A few people wrote to say that the book was out of print, and to ask our advice as to how they might find a copy. We were astonished. Surely there are, even on the far side of the Appalachians, libraries, and librarians, and inter-library loans, and even a few sellers of old and useless books.

But when we got over astonishment, we fell straightway into apprehension. We remembered that librarians had been generally replaced by media specialists, and we thought of Mrs. Pullen, who wants to remove from the schools in Great Britain all books more than ten years old, lest children be corrupted by images of the elitist past-children in neat clothing, for example. And it occurred to us that *The Art of Teaching*, a thoughtful and enlightening meditation by an outstanding teacher, had *not* been studied and preserved in the schools of "education," as mere reason would have dictated, and that it might not even be allowed in *their* libraries.

It is nothing, after all, but the record of one man's attempt to understand. It contains neither charts nor tables to reveal, even to schoolteachers, what the latest studies have shown; no accredited government agency funded what educationists call the "preparation" of the book; and neither committee nor task-force of certified professionals has approved its conclusions. And all of the same could be said of the *Theatatus* or the *Gorgias*, which is why educationists don't read any of that stuff either.

Well, maybe it is going to be kind of hard to find a copy of *The Art of Teaching*. OK. Tell you what we're going to do. We have an old paperback in pretty good condition. We'll be

happy to lend it out to anyone who wants. All you'll have to do is put on the return postage.

*The Underground  
Grammarian*

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## The Flightless Birds of Academe

In our concept, liberal learning will simulate the collaborative environment of the workplace and will emphasize the active engagement of students and faculty in working groups (rather than encouraging individuals towards isolation and the passive absorption of ideas and facts.)

**N**OW AND THEN, we like to visit the nearby State Mental Institution where this little journal had its start. In those days, there was no great difference between the work of the mind as done by the keepers and the same as done by the inmates. The inmates, however, have improved.

The "writing" above is not the work of an inmate. Nor was it truly *written* at all; it was "produced," as they put it, by a little clutch of keepers, out grubbing for a grant.

Grant-grubbing is an enterprise in which the obsequious solicit the collusion of the officious in the extraction of wealth from the industrious. The grant-grubbers, while not ashamed, do seem to suspect that they *ought* to be ashamed, for they almost never sign *one* name to their supplications,

but go forth to beg in little mobs. And no *single* person says: "I want this chunk of somebody else's money." The buck-passing passive is implied throughout: "This money is wanted." Whose words those are, we never know. And what mind conceived and phrased the ideas supposedly illuminated above, no one can say. And lucky it is for that mind.

The dodos, of course, were galled that other birds could fly and sing. They held that birds should keep both feet firmly planted in the guano, and gurgle and squawk with the flock. While the feathered dodos are extinct, as some Great Plan has wisely decreed, their bare-skinned relatives are, for yet a little while, still among us. True to type, they continue to hate the eagle and the lark. They hate also, and fear, solitude. The singers and fliers are most truly themselves in solitude, for they are not empty. But the dodos, who know what to do only by following the flock, take solitude for loneliness, and they are afraid.

The strange little passage above puts forth a fancy about "liberal" education. It calls us to imagine, say, the study of philosophy conducted according to the principles of the workshop, or the assembly-line, or the many-cubieled mill of corporate conglomeration. Here, side by side, in a manner of speaking, a work-force will produce a... Well, a something. A "liberal learning."

A teacher of philosophy, perhaps, will democratically join forces with a teacher of accounting and a teacher of family nutrition. Together with eager students, actively, and in working groups, they will ward off the demons of isolation and of the passive absorption of ideas and facts. They will process the product from hand to hand, that a bolt may be inserted by one and tightened down by another, a wire soldered here, and a label glued down there.

And when the work is finished—Thank God It's Friday!—they will leave the miserable contraption on the shelf and find some noisy place where Stroh's is spoken, and where they are still safe from solitude, but not—most certainly not—safe from "passive absorption." Indeed, with very rare exceptions in the case of very few people, "the collaborative environment of the workplace" is the very Palace of Passive Absorption, where "active engagement" is nothing more than the outward and visible act to which the inner self need give nothing more than hand or voice, and

where the mind, while it need not be engaged, can neither be entirely free.

Consider Berkeley reading Locke, and thinking. Consider Hume reading Berkeley, and thinking. Consider Kant reading Hume, and thinking. Consider yourself reading the passage quoted above, and thinking. And consider the dodo who, with no experience at all of the immense *life* that the mind *is*, would call such acts passive absorption, and condemn as isolation the inward intensity which is the only state in which they can be performed. Out of that consideration alone you can discover all you really need to know about the flightless birds of Academe, the dodos who run our schools.

Nevertheless, since everybody loves a little bird-lore, consider further. What inward mental labor was done by the he-bird, or she-bird, who “wrote” that bit? Did it seek, or even suspect, some possible distinction between conditions of mind that might *accurately* be called passive, and acts of mind that can not occur without the participation of the will and the expense of effort? Did it ask, in what sense, exactly, can even the “workplace” be understood as collaborative? What is it but a romantic fantasy, to imagine that the bolt-tightener at one end of the line and the label-licker at the other are “collaborating” in a cause, when either can easily do his work without knowing even of the existence of the other? When the bolt-tightener has tightened his bolt, and the label-licker has licked his label, *where* have they done their work, and *where* does it bear its fruit? Is it, as “learning” must be, an inner growth of the mind? Might its results be the same for any bolt-tightener and any label-licker, or will they be, in one case, the result that is right for the singer, and, in the other, what is right for the flier?

It takes very little examination of that passage to see that no thoughtful labor has gone into its composition. What *has* gone into its composition is recitation, a trotting-out of slogans and trendy terms, designed to win the hearts—the minds don’t count—of the grant-granters. The bird who pecked it out is saying, Look how with-it we are! We do, we *do* understand that business is where it’s at. And look how democratic and socially responsible we are! None of that isolation stuff here, and none of that selfish individual absorption either. Just you give us the dough and watch us compete with those Japs!

And next year it will occur to one of our dodos that playing the violin is not only very difficult, but also elitist, requiring both selfish inward absorption and anti-social isolation. How much more socially useful it would be, and how much easier, if the immense labor of playing the violin could “simulate the collaborative environment of the workplace,” and be handed over to a crew of co-workers!

As *learning*, “liberal learning” is no different from playing the violin, or, for that matter, throwing a big ball through a hoop. Who does not do it, all alone, does not do it; and who does it, does it, all alone. There is no “collaborative” learning. Others may show, or testify, or even proclaim, but anything that we come to understand, we understand alone. To be told what others understand is not *our* learning.

No student of the violin will ever imagine that he can play it except by and of himself, or that he can do it because his “collaborators” say they can. With “liberal learning,” it seems to be otherwise. Any inmate of a state mental institution can master it with nothing more than a little help from his friends, and, of course, a big fat helping of somebody else’s money.

## The Overhead Socratic Projector

As bad actors cannot sing alone, but only in a large company, so some men cannot walk alone. Man, if you are worth anything, you must walk alone, and talk to yourself, and not hide in the chorus. Learn to beat mockery, look about you, examine yourself, that you may get to know who you are.

*A saying of Epictetus*

YES, we have used that epigraph before, but it was many years ago. We should use it more often. We should print it on millions of leaflets and drop them from aeroplanes onto every campus in the land. Those words should be chiseled into the massive blocks of granite that should be blocking every door into the unhallowed precincts of every teacher academy in America.

We can not count the many times when we have heard schoolteachers say of their students, and always with a smug simper, that “They weren’t cut out with cookie-cutters, you know.” It is thus that they justify their inability to teach anybody

anything, which they can hardly be expected to do until they have measured the utterly specific learning modalities and cognitive styles of each and every unique individual whole child. It'll be a while.

We have some interesting news, which is far from new, about this tribe of individualism-lovers. There is a man in Canada named Wolfgang Franke. Why he chose to read 1,200 letters of application from teacher academy graduates looking for jobs, we have no idea. He didn't have anything to do with giving them jobs. But he did it anyway. We have his report on this appalling experience.

Many of the 1,200 said almost the same thing. We must say "almost" because the applicants had apparently reached no consensus on the spelling of "fulfill" (But, to be fair, neither has anyone else, except in deciding that the first *l* must be single.) Here, spelling aside, is what they said:

If appointed to a teaching position at your school, I will do my utmost to fulfill my responsibilities to the best of my ability.\*

Franke managed to discover that they had all copied that silly fluff (more or less) from a handout given to them by their Porseffors of Eduction, those despisers of rote learning, you know.

The "original" parts of the applications were just what you suppose—recitations of code words and phrases in Pedaguese, sometimes entertainingly spelled, and pious pledges of professionalism. But enclosed with the applications were recommendations—or so they were meant—from Porseffors of Eduction who had watched the applicants "perform." ("Perform" is not good, but it was the best word we could come up with.) A bouquet of their expert, professional comments, every one of them absolutely *sic*, is printed below for your delectation and dismay.

We think you can make the best use of them by experiencing a real experience of rote learning.

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\* If you had taken our advice and subscribed to the National Edition of the *Waterloo Independent*, you could have read Franke's piece for yourself, and seen many more hideous examples than we have to show you. Good fun.

Memorize a few of them, and find some way to insert a few phrases into an otherwise polite conversation. Imagine the renewed interest with which your friends will behold you when you say that you want to experience relevant experience of failure, and to get very abreast with things through a positive approach to stimulating an awareness for the sake of enhancing your own image, and that you are also planning to buy yourself an overhead Socratic projector.

But do not imagine, when friends recoil from you as from an unexpected idiot, that you now know how those educationists feel. You do not. They *feel* just fine. They sing together in happy chorus. Their approaches are positive. Any one of the comments below could have been written by any educationist on the face of the Earth, and approved by ditto. They will never have to walk alone. However, if you make copies of this piece and send them around, they may just have to learn to bear mockery.

"Danny experienced a real teaching experience. I feel his failures as well as his success made him have a relevant experience. His strongest asset is certainly his ability to use his relevant experience."

"Her enthusiasm was so good, even the students noticed it. She really had innovative relevance."

"He has the tendency to mispel on the board. But he benefitted from the experience."

"She was readily accepted by the students, even though they didn't understand her. With the help of the overhead projector she used the Socratic method."

"I found her very abreast with things. The lesson direction improved greatly when I told her so. I would emphasis good understanding between she and the students. A credit to the profession."

"Terry is very uptight most of the time. This shows when he stammers. He will be a fine teacher."

"The emphasis is a positive approach to stimulate an awareness of the value of communication skills in enhancing one's own image."

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## Hypatia Strikes Back

THOMAS AQUINAS is little read by religionists in these days. That is a pity, for, while his religious credentials are impeccable, his ideas would foment some valuable religious questioning and considering where just now there is none.

Various points of view might find in Aquinas various virtues, but for us, his greatest is literacy. He knew how to read, and he knew the difference between reading and the receiving of communication. Inevitably, therefore, he also knew how to write, and the difference between writing and the transmission of communication. And thus it is that he is little read, for reflection and pondering, the proper result of reading, are utterly inappropriate to the reception of communication.

It is out of his power of literacy that he reaches one of his most important understandings, which modern religionists of every ilk, including those who think themselves political rather than religious, will find unbearable. It is one thing, Aquinas held, to say that a belief is “based on Scripture,” and another to say that the *meaning* of Scripture is clear.

If you must divide the world into Two Kinds of People, the most useful division could be made between the people who presume that the meaning of words and deeds is completely and perfectly knowable, and those who suspect that it is not. While it seems certain that either temperament might be found, from time to time, in any individual mind, nevertheless, such a division does permit a useful definition of believers and unbelievers of all kinds. It allows us, for instance, to tuck some Christians and some Communists into the same bed, and to seat certain Jews and certain Moslems side by side.

What all such factions have in common, and it is not a trivial detail but a tremendous principle, is the proclivity to make two stupendous claims: These very words are *the Truth*; and, *I* can understand them correctly.

Somewhere in the darkness of a tropical jungle, there is a prudent and industrious hunter who tries to walk in the way of goodness according to his beliefs; and, in the wastes of Queensland, there is surely an aged shaman who teaches as best he can the unity that binds his people in harmony with

one another, and with the animals and the Earth; and hidden among the Hairy Ainu there is a wise old mother who can see that there are no Children of Light and no Children of Darkness, but only the Children. They may be the last three believers in the world who are content to mind their own business and to look first to their own virtue. In every part of the “civilized” world, in whose destiny we are helplessly involved, systems of codified beliefs have engendered deadly enemies to happiness far more dangerous than poison gases and nuclear weapons. Missiles and gases are tools. The true believers are far more likely than the questioning doubters to use them.

What can we say, for instance, of Basic Minimum Christianists among us who have recently embarked on a holy war against their very numerous “enemies,” and wage it by piously gathering together to pray for the death of unbelievers? Fortunately, at least for now, they have taken in hand a capricious weapon. Will they find a better? Will he who believes himself justified in trying to throw the biggest bomb of all find some reason to refrain from throwing a smaller but more dependable one?

To the left of the Christianists who are as harmless as the serpent, we have those who are as subtle as the dove. These are the worried wimps, diligently deleting from all their texts anything that might vex the minds of imbeciles or give offense to fools. Not for them, the strait gate and the narrow way, but the broad interstate that leadeth to nutrition and comfort for all. As to the bringing of peace, they are fundamentalists, but as to the sword, they are clever literary critics. They are not of good cheer.

By “religion,” thinking of its roots, we understand a way of the mind that seeks connections, a “tying back together” of all that seems scattered in the outer world, where no connection is ever truly broken; and, in the inner life, a mending of what is easily broken by those who live there. We deem it only pious, therefore, to see in the Lunatic Christianity of our time nothing less than the working out of a great plan of justice.

We remember Hypatia. She was both scholar and philosopher, and the curator of the great library of Alexandria. In 415 AD, she was ripped into pieces in the streets by Christians, who spent the rest of that day in burning down the library.

God noticed, and said: “That’s the way you want it? OK. From now on you can just live without your minds, and you won’t be bothered with reading any words that you don’t understand, or don’t like. For lo, unto the seven-and-seventieth generation, when your kiddies will be filling blanks in workbooks and checking little boxes in “comprehension” tests cooked up by Caesar’s lackeys, no one of you will be able to read and understand and inwardly consider my Word, or your own, or anyone else’s. Amen.”

Having turned religious, we turn fundamentalist: “Whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.”

### And furthermore...

LAST MONTH, we printed a piece called “The Thing Which Is Not.” It began with an epigraph that mentioned some “vigorous opposition by feminist groups.” One of our readers wrote to tell us that she had begun reading that piece with trepidation. She feared we were about to display some folly in feminist groups, which we have sometimes done. But she discovered that we “recognize that feminists do have some valid points,” and that we “recognize valid points no matter who the messenger.”

We like her a lot, and not only for approving of us, but for going on to read and consider in spite of trepidation. We know—and you do, too—liberals who don’t want to hear a word from George Will, and conservatives who refuse to consider a line of Lenin. We know self-styled atheists who can’t bear the thought of reading Aquinas, and religionists who will not allow even *The Voyage of H. M. S. Beagle* in the house. And we know of educationists who have never read a word of Plato, since he never had the benefit of what their “studies have shown.”

We often think that there is no need for anyone to subscribe to this sheet for more than a year. Only the details of its essays change. The theme is always the same. The mind *will* be governed. If it find no government within, it will embrace whatever government offers itself from without. The minds whose pitiable effusions we examine are the disorderly little colonies they are because they are governed by appetite, or tradition, or the random suggestions of the world, or socially

acceptable sentiment, or, in the worst cases, factional belief that will not, can not, test itself. What we call “bad language”—the same thing as “bad sense”—is nothing but the involuntary ejaculation of a mind that has nothing to say for itself.

So our reader’s letter also causes in us some vexation. We have carefully studied “The Thing Which is Not.” We can find nothing in it to suggest that feminists have some valid points. And, if we were asked, Do feminists, or socialists, or vegetarians, have some valid points? we would have to answer with a question: *Which* feminists, or socialists, or vegetarians? In some cases, probably in many, even “a valid point” is an involuntary ejaculation. To deliver a message requires no understanding of it in the messenger.

It is one thing to be an -ist, and to subscribe accordingly to some proposition of the -ism. That is a mental condition best called “superstition.” It is quite another thing to test a proposition and find it rational. That is an act best called “judgment.” The -ist who starts doing the latter is in peril of becoming, soon or late, an ex-ist.



# The Underground GRAMMARIAN

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## A Surfeit of Dearth

*Cocaine is for horses, and not for men.  
They say it'll kill ya but they don't say when*

SUCH an outcry. Such lamentations and wringing of hands. Such searchings of heart, and mighty outpourings, whole rivers of specimens of urine. Fired with virtue, the land that stamped out poverty and hunger and crime and bigotry, to say nothing of illiteracy and flabby bellies, will now stamp out the nihilism and self-indulgence that its schools have been deliberately fostering for just over seventy years. And to this Great Cause it calls forth the massed forces of those schools.

“The University of Maryland,” says its Chancellor, John B. Slaughter, “has had a dearth of unhappy events over the past several months. Today represents a major change in our fortunes.” By “unhappy events” he must mean the death of a basketball player who killed himself with cocaine. By a “major change” he means the appointment of a new basketball coach. And by “dearth” he must mean that he is learning to talk fancy.

How interesting it is to notice that a “major change” at a large public university should be expected from the appointment of a new phys. ed. instructor, who will, presumably, supervise the children at their play in such a way that they will *not* kill themselves with cocaine. Will that new gym teacher, we wonder, go so far as to agree that his charges ought to be expected to pass some of their courses now and then, or is such a change just a bit too major? Would it be detrimental to those unspecified but all too easily identified “fortunes” that the new man is supposed, after all, to improve, not to destroy? And does it occur to that Slaughter chap that there may be some connection between the lives of his paid performers and the deaths that they don’t seem to mind risking just for fun?

The life of the hired college athlete is the perfect and ideal embodiment of the Great Theme at the heart of the American public school. The athlete has achieved every goal that the public schools promise. He has his high school diploma, his career skills, his escape from the deprivation and neglect visited upon him by a hitherto uncaring society, his ability to relate to self and others and to function effectively in the arena, or maybe the sphere, of collective enterprise, and his self-esteem is forever insured, for his name is to be found on a plaque in the lobby of his old high school.

And he has escaped the one thing about schooling that he and his pals, and his teachers too, found galling and irrelevant—reading and writing, and the study of mere subjects. He is filled to the brim with emptiness, and there is no worthless thing that he lacks.

With its endless cant about meeting the needs of the individual, its easy tolerance that pronounces every way of life, and even every book, just as worthy as any other, its cowardly practice of “teaching” through cajolery and entertainment, its ready embrace of the trendy and demotic, its

lavish provision of gratification as the supposed nourishment of a supposed self-esteem, its shrugging contempt of antiquated virtues such as restraint and self-denial, for which it hastens to provide pampering alternatives, schooling provides any who will take it with the opportunity not only to live a life entirely without principle, but to congratulate and admire themselves as liberated and cool while living a life entirely without principle. It is astonishing not that so many Americans, but that so few, for there must be some abstainers, will give themselves any pleasure they can afford, and many others that they can not afford, but that will surely be paid for sooner or later by all the rest of us.

And now it is our Great Plan to take up yet more of the little time that children spend in school to tell them all about the terrible dangers of cocaine. With programs. And slides. And sweet urgings to say No, from the teachers who have always told them to express themselves.

It is possible that somewhere in this great nation there is a ninth-grader who knows less about drugs than Nancy Reagan. And there might even be some use in informing him. That should take about twenty minutes. Half an hour if he is a slow reader. It should cost the taxpayers about ten cents, the price of a little pamphlet. There isn’t really much that he needs to know.

If in the unlikely case that he has missed hearing the news elsewhere, he will quickly discover that even a big, strong athlete can be killed at once by one jolt of crack. Nancy Reagan says it’ll kill ya, but it is very interesting that she don’t say when, and that, in fact, she *can’t*.

Children, of any age, are not all that worried about instant death, which is, in any case, far more likely in an automobile than at a coke party. That the danger of death is the most forceful “argument” that we can imagine against the use of cocaine is also the most forceful demonstration of our absence of principle.

Contrary to a belief that is popular in both senses of the word, the life without principle is not a happy one. It is darkened by the tyranny of appetite, and unlightened by the glow of self-knowledge. It is a life of sad somnambulism. But human beings can not forever bear sleep-walking. They will try at last, in spasms, to awaken themselves, even if they have to induce nightmares. The risk of death, remote as it is, is

one of the charms of cocaine. And of reckless driving, and of sticking up gas stations.

Refraining from cocaine is not what we need to learn. What we need to learn is the art of refraining. No one will learn that in our schools.

## The Rabbit-Moving HOTS

Teachers are creative while helping their students learn to think: They wear wizard's hats when students are learning to do graphics, and clown's noses for writing humorous stories.

IN Fall River, Massachusetts, fifth-grade teacher Deborah Charette has gotten the HOTS. But she doesn't keep them under her hat, or even in her clown nose. She gladly passes them out to her kiddies. Here's how she does it:

Fifth-grader Kelly McCauley was stumped by a lesson on moving electronic markers called "rabbits" through a maze on her computer screen.

"I've pressed the buttons, but they don't work. What should I do," she asked her teacher, Deborah Charette. "What do you think you need to do?" Charette answered. McCauley called up the instructions again on the screen and discovered how to move the rabbit in four directions through the maze on her screen.

To you, it may seem hardly worthwhile to send out the news that a schoolchild went back to read the instructions again, but that is because you do not understand the HOTS, which are exactly what Charette so cunningly implanted in little Kelly. Those HOTS are nothing less than Higher Order Thinking Skills.

Higher than what other "order" of thinking skills, we do not know. But Stanley Pogrow does. Pogrow is, of course, an educationist in the teacher mill of the University of Arizona. He defines "higher order thinking" as an *ability*, not as an act. That's a bit strange to be sure, but he gets even stranger. It is the ability to design, for instance, "better strategies for solving problems." It is also the ability, so terribly important for fifth-graders, to "develop new ideas." And it is all done, of course, with arcade games involving

rabbits, funny hats, and false noses. As to the *lower* orders of thinking skills, Pogrow saith naught. Too elementary for him, no doubt.

All of this was put forth for us, in the otherwise respectable *Globe* of Boston, as "a new way to teach thinking skills." Exactly how ignorant you have to be to imagine that you have discovered a new way to teach thinking skills, we can not say, but we are confident that anyone who expects fifth-graders to startle and refurbish the world with their new ideas is at least that ignorant.

But we know what that Pogrow means by "new ideas." He does not mean, for instance, anything like the dawning in some healthy and working mind of the idea that Law is both a truer and a sterner master than the king, which Demaratus tried to explain to Xerxes, without success. He means that a little girl who hasn't yet thought of reading the instructions finally guesses that she should. By the standards of the educationists, to be sure, that *is* a big event. Their own most prodigious labors of "thinking" lead them, slowly, from some misty inkling of the obvious into nothing less than a firm grasp on the obvious, out of which they proudly announce that children who spend more time in study *seem* to learn more. But it is a very meager and debilitating idea of "thinking" that would detect not only thinking but even a "higher order" of it in that last desperate guess, not unknown to any of us, that maybe we had better go back and read the instructions. Especially with computers.

The school people are mesmerized by a line from Dewey. Although few of them have read it, some of them once did, and it had on them the effect that certain passages of this or that scripture have on true believers in any cult. Dewey once defined thinking as mental problem-solving activity. He did not, then and there, stop to define "problem." If you do not find yourself entirely satisfied with his definition, you are obviously not an educator. Non-educators are all too likely to vex themselves about such things as the idea that Law is a truer and sterner ruler than a king. Can he who reaches that conclusion be said to have solved a problem? On the day when you give yourself to considering whether you should want what you want, or whether to believe what you do believe, are you doing what little Kelly did when it occurred to her to go back and read the instructions? If you can see no important

difference between the one “mental activity” and the other, would you call it a sufficient diagnosis of your plight to decide that you have a “problem”?

Thoughtful reflection is more likely to cause problems than to solve them, as revolutions and social upheavals beyond counting will show. The discovery of an understanding that brings order into the inner life of the mind, whose main business is the search for order, will often bring disorder into the outer world of society, whose main business is the search for stability. There is no solution to any problem in the unsettling thought that there is, and always has been, some deep and elemental mismatch between what is good for the mind of the individual and what is good for the continuance of the social order as it is. But there may be some hope of *understanding* a problem in that thought.

American schooling is almost entirely just another one of government’s many functions, and what the school people do *not* want, what no government agency can afford to want, is a citizenry given to the dangerous habit of trying to understand. What any government agency *does* want, however, is a citizenry that can solve problems, get things done, and keep the system going, earning money and paying taxes, making better gadgets and selling lip-gloss to each other, giving thanks to a government that lets them sell lip-gloss to each other, and competing with the Japanese.

To equate thinking with problem-solving, therefore, is exactly one of those “better strategies for solving problems” that Pogrow cites as an example of Higher Order Thinking. And the problem that it is designed to solve is strictly political, and not in any sense educational.

Thus it is that we are especially intrigued by one of the results of the great HOTS Program in the schools of Fall River. Such gimmicks as the HOTS strategy are funded under something called Chapter I, which is intended to provide whatever the educationists suppose appropriate to “economically disadvantaged” children. It is one of those arrangements that encourages educationists to cook up notions at somebody else’s expense. Accordingly, however, the educationists are expected to report whole hosts of “findings,” which requirement is in itself further inducement to cooking things up. At the very end

of the *Globe’s* report, we found an interesting finding:

Social progress, measured by increases in the number of friends gained by Chapter I students in the thinking program, rose by 40 percent, according to a review by the Committee of the National Diffusion Network.

Now how would you suppose that they found such an interesting finding? And why do you suppose that anyone would want such a finding, which seems remarkably irrelevant to the learning of Higher Order Thinking Skills?

The *how* is easy. All educationistic “research” is done in the same way. Questions, not about what they know but about what they suppose they feel, are put to uninterested witnesses. The answers are tabulated and called “knowledge.” Such an inquiry is not any order of *thinking* at all, but it is a hell of a fine problem-solving strategy.

As to why anybody would want such a finding—well, it probably has something to do with those wizard’s hats and clown’s noses, and several other kinds of masquerades as well.

### **Sometimes, It Doesn’t Always Work**

ONE of our part-time staffers was invited to have lunch with the Secretary of Education. So he went. There was talk of this and that, and even of the nature of “education.” Our man, in strict accordance with our editorial policy, suggested that there ought to be some “pure” understanding of education, some *chosen* definition not dependent on time and place, not derived from current events and cases, but bearing reference only to human life and the human mind anywhere and everywhere. Everybody agreed, everybody being the Secretary and three of his people.

Our man went further, and suggested that, if we had to have such a thing as a Secretary of Education, he might best serve us all by being the proposer and champion of some such pure understanding, by walking point and drawing fire. Thus, at least, the supposed “great debate” going on these days might turn from the mechanics of schooling and the health of the economy to the considering of ideas. No disagreement there either.

But there was a strange reaction to our man's suggestion that an unchanging attribute of "education" was surely the ability, and the propensity, to make sense, and thus to detect nonsense. Again, no objection. Almost too obvious to mention. And it was quickly concluded that most of "us," mentioning no names, *do* make sense most of the time.

Our man, a paranoid who imagines that the expediencies of his own government are a greater threat to his security than Gadaffi and the KGB combined, did not want to get into the bad books of any high-ranking officials. He agreed, the wimp.

But life is always just. When he got back to the office, he had to read a long letter from one Frederick D. Goss, none other than the Executive Director of the Newsletter Association! Fred wanted to sell us some really neat ideas on making lots of money. Right at the bottom of page one (of six), there appeared this arresting proposition:

"Publishing newsletters is a risky business. The most successful publishers probably don't succeed more than 3/4 of the time."

All work stopped. We gathered to contemplate. The Associate Circulation Manager thought we might try to derive a syllogism, but the Typesetter suggested drawing a truth table. The Girl Who Makes the Coffee said that it would look good in cross-stitch. The Vice-President for Financial and Moral Affairs, still brooding about how to dump our holdings in IBM without providing the occasion of sin to some poor jerk who might buy them, offered a spreadsheet analysis to determine whether or not we could be said to succeed more or less, and to precisely what degree, than "3/4 of the time," *probably*, to be sure, and provided that we could determine exactly how much of "the time" we actually *tried* to succeed. Our Talmudic Scholar quoting some ancient sage, no doubt, said, "They say it can't be done, but sometimes it doesn't always work. Probably"

And, indeed, as though to approve the sage's words, Fred went to his next sentence: For others, frankly, the odds are greater.

The whole business has brought us to wonder. It seems so reasonable, and even so decent, to suppose that idiocy is just an aberration, and that most people do indeed make sense most of the time. But is it true? We have been watching our

own mouths, and lots of others, with more than usual, and openly suspicious, attention.

We have discovered that we very rarely make sense. Almost never. It begins to seem that making sense is a skill not unlike the playing of the violin. It can, of course, be done, but no one simply falls into the habit of playing the violin. Even those who can do it, do it only by deliberate design. They don't just find themselves doing it without having intended to. It requires some special focusing, some stern singleness of purpose.

Most discourse is just chatter. It isn't even intended to "make sense," in which phrase the meaning of the word *make* is usually ignored. Mostly, we just gossip. We talk about details with no consideration at all for principles. Our talking is usually the exact opposite of literature, which is understood to be the illumination of the universal in the guise of the particular. We tell fragmentary stories, and we recite, for some social reason or other, not only what we have heard, but what we have often recited before. All in all, we natter.

When we do stumble across the need to relate detail to principle, we fall at once into false analogies, non-sequiturs, undefined terms, unexamined generalizations, untested, and often untestable, propositions, and total opacity to the differences between such mental acts as knowing, believing, and guessing.

Of course, that's just right here in our own office. Others probably do better. Maybe it's not that way at all down at the Department of Education.

## Brief Notes

With this issue, we come to the end of Volume Ten. After a brief pause, we will go right on with Volume Eleven, starting with the February issue. Now it is time for a few messages to all readers:

Our beat-up old copy of Highet's *Art of Teaching* is out on loan, and working its way through the waiting list. But, we have ordered two more copies, which means, as several diligent readers found out, that it *is* still in print. Don't believe those bookstore clerks!

We remind one and all of a), our always granted permission to make and distribute copies of all our stuff, and b), our half-price subscriptions to retired teachers, whose presence among our readers

indicates that they must have been *good* teachers, and the same discount, or even more, for any of our readers who happen to need it.

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