
Part I

Not Wanting to Know

The authors of the Declaration of Independence of the United States and of the Constitution were rightly expecting any tyranny to come from government, because at that time it was monarchies that violated human and civil rights. Among these abuses, censorship figured prominently as a means of quelling political opposition and enforcing social conformity. Wise as were the founding fathers, they could not foresee that when government decreed personal liberty and free enterprise, it set up the possibility of tyranny in a new quarter, the private sector, against which they provided little protection. In granting the rights to individuals and corporations that we so proudly vaunt today, modern democracies in effect also relegated to special-interest groups the powers of former tyrants.

In ancient Rome a censor was an official who kept a census for taxation purposes and also censured vice. We are left to wonder what bound sin and taxes so closely together. At any rate, the justification for censoring has traditionally been moral, whether initiated by government or by special-interest groups, as today. Of course, since these groups lobby officials to legislate their will, democratic government does again become party to censorship. But it seldom instigates the suppression of works from the private sector as totalitarian regimes routinely do. (Democratic governments protect themselves through covert operations and cover-ups of their own actions.)

Whether wielded by the public or the private sector, censorship expresses the will and values of some part of society contending with other factions about what people are to know. It concerns education

not just because somebody wants to ban some school books but because it shows us in a blatant way how social division chronically curtails knowledge in and out of school. Censorship is manifold. In some form, at some level, we are all censoring, because we all want to control others' behavior, and our own, by controlling knowing.

Fundamentalist Insurrection

In 1974 the most tumultuous and significant textbook controversy that North America has ever known broke out in Kanawha County, West Virginia. The textbooks teachers choose from today are limited by what happened there then. The school district of Kanawha County yokes together the sophisticated city of Charleston with forests of chemical smokestacks strung along the upper Kanawha River valley and, in the lower valley, with some of the most primitive rural society in America. Ignoring the fundamentalist Appalachian part of its constituency, the district selected \$450,000 worth of reading and language arts textbooks that fulfilled a state mandate for multicultural materials. Among these figured a K-12 program that I had directed called Interaction.

One member of the five-person school board was a fundamentalist minister's wife, elected for her success in earlier quashing a sex-education program. She had challenged the proposed books the previous spring but lost when the selections came to a vote. She succeeded, however, in stirring opposition that grew over the summer as she and others passed around excerpts from the books at local meetings.

By the time school started on September 3, the book protesters had organized themselves for tough activist tactics borrowed from the labor movement. Led by fundamentalist ministers from the hills and hollows of the upper valley, they kept their children home from school and threatened parents who did not, picketed mines until the miners struck, barricaded some trucking companies, demonstrated outside the school board building in defiance of court injunctions, and on September 10 got city bus drivers to suspend service.

The next day the board announced it was withdrawing the books until a citizens review committee could report on them. But disruption escalated. At each of two picket points a man was wounded by gunfire. Cars were smashed, and a CBS television crew was roughed

up. Extremist protesters fired on school buses returning from their rounds and even firebombed two elementary schools at night. Leaders of both sides were threatened and guarded. On September 13, the safety of both children and adults seemed so much at risk that the superintendent shut down all public schools for a four-day weekend, during which he and the school board slipped out of town. The whole county bordered on anarchy.

After delaying its climactic meeting for a week, following a dynamite blast in its building, the school board voted November 8 on the recommendations of its citizens review committee. The majority of the committee asked for the reinstatement of virtually all of the books, and the minority rejected virtually all the books. The board decided to reinstate all but the most controversial series and the senior high portion of *Interaction*, which were consigned to libraries. Protest activities abated when Governor Arch Moore finally allowed state troopers to reinforce county sheriffs, and ended in the spring, after one of the ministers leading the revolt was sentenced to three years in prison for his part in firebombing a school. By then the superintendent and head of the board had both resigned. The anathematized books became too hot to handle and so might as well not have been returned. Ill feeling remained for many years among antagonists in the schools and homes of Kanawha County. The controversy drew international attention and stirred widespread debate.

During the autumn in which this drama unrolled, outsiders from Communists to the Ku Klux Klan showed up to take sides, but most connections were made by right-wing groups seeking to annex West Virginia into the national censorship network and into conservative political movements, which were forming up the New Right. Among these outsiders were Mel and Norma Gabler, whose nonprofit corporation for reviewing textbooks has made Longwood, Texas, the textbook censorship capital of the nation. Edward Jenkinson, former chair of the Committee Against Censorship of the National Council of Teachers of English, asserted to the press that "the Gablers are the two most important people in education," and some textbook editors admit that they keep copies of the Gablers' critiques before them as they work. The Gablers joined the protest leaders in talks and rallies around Charleston, sent them objections they had written on books up for adoption in Texas, and taught them how to write their own objections for the minority report of the citizens review committee.

Censoring leads to precensoring. Teachers, librarians, and administrators often rule out in advance books that may provoke such turbulence. They internalize the censors' criteria. But the most serious precensoring goes on in editorial offices. No publisher has dared since 1974 to put out language arts or literature textbooks having the range of subject matter, points of view, and multicultural integrity as those attacked in Kanawha County. As Texas goes, so goes the nation. Not only is this conservative state the largest single adoption market but books adopted there gain the selling advantage of having been so sanitized that they're safe anywhere—the rightist equivalent of the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval. The biasing of textbooks is actually a far greater problem in other subjects than English. Consider government, economics, history, and other social studies, which can never be impartially treated even in books not having to pass the Texas test.

Although the textbooks U.S. teachers may choose from today were determined by what happened once in Kanawha County and what happens all the time in Texas, the government of neither state is to blame. The West Virginia Department of Education had mandated open-minded multicultural adoption criteria that obviously influenced Kanawha County's liberal adoptions. And the Texas Adoption Agency hardly shares the views of the famed Gablers and other zealots who make skillful use of the democratic forum that the agency sponsors before adopting. When Texas does choose confectinary books, as it often does, it's because its constituency wants them. This too is democracy in action and is no doubt why George Orwell could at times rouse himself to only two cheers for it. In granting liberty to individuals and corporations, Western civilization did not at the same time teach people how to grant it to each other. Developing an inner breadth commensurate with the outer freedom clearly remains a job for the future.

My publisher started phasing out *Interaction* the next year on grounds that the program had not earned enough by its third year, according to their corporation formula; but loud censorship rows terrify textbook publishers, who fear for the company's name and will sacrifice one program to salvage their whole line of school offerings. The other publishers of major programs involved in the controversy either killed them or sanitized them by revision. The religious conversion that amoral corporations have undergone to accommodate fundamentalist censors symbolizes the ludicrous un-

ion that has occurred between the moralistic and materialistic factions in the private sector.

The Kanawha County rebellion lent great energy not only to the national censorship movement, which grew at a heady rate during the Reagan administration, but also to the rise of evangelical politics and to the New Right itself that boosted Reagan into the White House. The Heritage Foundation, a conservative Washington think tank that was so close to the Reagan administration as to have helped draft some of its legislation, sent legal aid to the protest leaders who were being jailed in Kanawha County. The old intimacy between politics and religion, glossed over in our secular age, has been thrust into the foreground since 1974 as fundamentalism has consolidated into a major political force in Christendom and Islam. What connects politics and religion today is ethnocentricity, the heart of the textbook dispute.

Inner Censorship versus Self-Knowledge

The creek preachers have done me a great favor. They have made me think about the many ways we all suppress knowledge outside and repress it inside—and about why we do. But to broach this intricate subject let's look at what these fundamentalists objected to in the books. In 1982 I interviewed three of the protest leaders in Kanawha County. I have studied carefully the criticisms that dissenting members of the citizens review committee wrote about particular selections in the disputed books. I have written an account and interpretation of the Kanawha County controversy as a book, *Storm in the Mountains: A Case Study of Censorship, Conflict and Consciousness* (1988a). In trying to see more deeply by the light of this incendiary episode, I have honored most what meant most to the objectors, their religious beliefs and values.

In plain human terms, the protesters feared losing their children. Books bypass the oral culture—hearth and ethos—and thus may weaken local authority and control. Perhaps all parents fear having their children mentally kidnapped by voices from other milieus and ideologies. The rich range of ideas and viewpoints, the multicultural smorgasbord, of the books adopted in Kanawha County were exactly what fundamentalists don't want. They believe that most of the topics English teachers think make good discussion are about matters they consider already settled. They feel that the

invitation to reopen them through pluralistic readings, role playing, values clarification, personal writing, and open-ended discussion can only be taken as an effort to indoctrinate their children in the atheistic free thinking of that eastern-seaboard liberal establishment that scoffs at them and runs the country according to a religion of Secular Humanism.

The book protesters charged that our books attacked family, church, and state—authority in general. As the most exclusive social unit of all, the family is the heart of hearts of the culture. Hearth and ethos. Consanguinity and contiguity. Blood and soil. And so the pro-family movement served as nucleus for the New Right and its anti-Communist jihad. As an example of attacking the family, the reviewers cited an excerpt from *The Children of Sanchez*, one of anthropologist Oscar Lewis's studies of the culture of poverty, based mainly on the participants' own accounts. The objection begins with a very just observation: "The father Sanchez is strict, beats his boys, etc. But when they turn out wrong, he rationalizes." Then the objections:

1. The story is deliberately concocted to belittle parents and their knowledge about how to raise children.
2. This story belittles discipline.
3. Does this story place the entire blame of failure on the part of the parent? Doesn't the school have some responsibility?
4. If the editors or author understood children and "the process of education" they wouldn't need to blame the parents. They would know what to do! (pp. 171–72)*

Gina Berriault's short story "The Stone Boy" provided another example of attacking the family. A nine-year-old boy accidentally shoots and kills his older brother as, carrying rifles, they go to pick peas early one morning. His parents and the sheriff can't understand why he goes on to pick peas for an hour before telling them and why he remains so unemotional. The boy tries that night to go to his mother, but she sends him away from the door. In their summary,

* These and other objections below are quoted from an unpublished, unpaginated typescript written by dissenting members of the citizens Textbook Review Committee. The pages cited here and below are from *Storm in the Mountains* (Moffett, 1988a), where the disapproved selections are treated in more detail.

the reviewers said at this point, “The rest of the story relates his feelings about his mother, etc.,” and they misquote the narration as follows: “He had come to clasp her in his arms and to pommel her breasts with his head.” The rest of the story is not about his feelings for his mother but about how everyone turns against him because they think he is unnatural not to show feeling. Thus rejected, he does indeed start to harden. By not understanding, the family has lost *two* boys. The objections were:

1. The story is abnormal. It should not be used in the classroom.
2. The classroom is not a “sensitivity-training” laboratory.
3. Teachers are not trained to deal with abnormal situations. Who is dictating that this type material be used in the classroom and why?
4. Why don’t the educators eliminate the problems? Why don’t they do some positive research to help the student? They are failures—as well as the parents.

Now for the correct quotation: “He had come to clasp her in his arms and, in his terror, pommel her breasts with his head.” Was it suppression or repression that omitted “in his terror” and left instead the innuendo of incest? By avoiding the inner life, both the parents in the story and the reviewer of the story missed what the author made very plain by many other indications than this, that this boy is not stony, he’s petrified. (pp. 179–83).

Had I wanted to attack the family I would have quoted Christ from Matthew 10:34–36:

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace but a sword.

For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.

Hardly sounds like a spokesperson for the pro-family movement, does it? Now, of course, Christ is speaking in the hyperbole of the spiritual master trying to wake us up from our conditioning. The sword is to cut attachments that interfere with spiritual development. This is why the Lord tested Abraham by telling him to sacrifice Isaac. Christ continues (Matthew 10:37): “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or

daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” Attachment to family is the prototype of the attachments to race, nation, and ethos that, when put first, distract the pilgrim from the way.

All of the programs denounced in Kanawha County contained works by modern poets trying to make Christ real to today’s secular readers. In an Interaction book of narrative verse for high school we included two such poems, one of which was Charles Causeley’s “Ballad of the Bread Man.”

Mary stood in the kitchen
 Baking a loaf of bread.
 An angel flew in through the window,
 “We’ve a job for you,” he said.

In this light style it goes on to tell the Nativity as it might happen today, but through the breezy manner we hear a reverential note that sounds the real meaning of the poem. Christ is imagined as a “bread man.”

He went round to all the people
 A paper crown on his head.
 Here is some bread from my father.
 Take, eat, he said.
 Nobody seemed very hungry
 Nobody seemed to care
 Nobody saw the god in himself
 Quietly standing there.

The objectors called this “A mockery of Christ’s birth and life.”

T. S. Eliot’s “Journey of the Magi” brought out a more significant misunderstanding. Recall the last portion:

All this was a long time ago, I remember
 And I would do it again, but set down
 This set down
 This: were we led all that way for
 Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
 We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death
 But had thought they were different; this Birth was
 Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
 We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
 But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
 With an alien people clutching their gods.
 I should be glad of another death.

Objection: "This poem is a take-off on the Bible. The birth they say was 'Hard and bitter agony for us like Death, our death.' It is poking fun of the birth of Jesus" (162-64).

Eliot capitalized "birth" and "death" in the abstract sense and used lowercase for the physical sense. The literalism that gives fundamentalists their name keeps them from realizing that the poem is about their favorite subject—being born again—which is indeed the central spiritual experience of any religion. But fundamentalists have an authoritarian notion of it that prevents them from recognizing it. In the passive redemption of evangelism, Jesus does all the saving. The guilty sinner has only to quit screwing up and hand his life over. The magi, on the other hand, have made a desperately difficult journey that has ended in a shattering of the old egocentric, ethnocentric life. Witnessing the new star and the radiant infant made the magi see the light of higher realms exactly as the Transfiguration of the adult Christ later did Peter, James, and John. This trauma marks the birth of the spiritual self, as rendered in shamanic myths of being dismembered and reassembled and as undergone in the three-day, out-of-body burial entrancements of the ancient Mysteries, exemplified in the story of Lazarus and symbolized in the entombment and resurrection of Christ himself.

Plato banished the poets from his republic because he thought literature would more likely fasten an audience on the forms of life than direct them to the invisible reality that the forms merely manifest. But the reader of scripture runs precisely the same risk, especially if literal-minded. And who is not too much so?

So it was that the textbooks were alleged to have attacked family and church. How about state now? A couple of Interaction books contained interviews and trial transcripts that allowed students to hear what a number of participants in the Vietnam war had to say, including some involved in the civilian massacre at My Lai. These were condemned as unpatriotic, un-American, and "pacifist," an epithet of denunciation and a synonym for "traitor." Actually, the testimony of Lt. Calley arouses considerable sympathy for an officer in a war where those you are to kill and those you are to protect all look alike. The objection to the Vietnam interviews was that they were "not necessary for education" and seemed included only to make students "feel guilt and shame."

The issue of this Vietnam material was self-examination, which the censors chronically resisted. In fact, one of the set terms used

throughout the censorship network in reviewing books is “invasion of privacy,” a liberal-sounding objection that is invoked whenever, for example, students are invited to relate literature to their own experience or to talk or write about their thoughts and feelings. One of the set terms used in the literature of psychological research on authoritarian or dogmatic personality is “anti-intracception”—fear of inwardness, something, incidentally, that women frequently attribute to men. Indeed, we shouldn’t lay just at the door of conservative censors this preference for projecting onto others instead of looking within, for self-exoneration over self-examination. As John Barth quipped in his novel *Giles Goat Boy*, “Self-knowledge is bad news.”

The injunction against “invasion of privacy” conflicts with the ancient spiritual adage “Know thyself,” which is the ground of all inquiry. It does not mean merely to understand your personal quirks but your transpersonal traits as well—your individual nature, human nature, and nature all at once inasmuch as you are a microcosm of the macrocosm of the world. “Know thyself” was the supreme tenet of spiritual education well before Oedipus discovered that he was the culprit he sought. But it was never meant to be a guilt trip. That is the negative view, based on a low self-concept, the main trait, by the way, that researchers find in the authoritarian or dogmatic personality.

Molting lesser selves can be painful and feel like destruction, as Eliot’s magi said. Some things we don’t want to know, not just the bad news but, yes, the good news too, the awesome possibility of being far more than we think we are. Most of us don’t want to believe Christ when he said, “Ye are gods.” We’d rather just keep playing schlemiel. Pursuing the question “Who am I?” to whatever depth and height we can bear the answer is a cosmic voyage that should be the first goal statement in every school district’s curriculum guide, before that stuff about being good citizens and productive workers. Those will happen as fallout from self-development.

Now I want to connect “invasion of privacy” with another of the most common objections in the censorship network—morbidly and negatively. “Trash, cover to cover” was the verdict of the Kanawha County reviewer of an Interaction book for senior high called *Monologue and Dialogue*, which contained Walter de la Mare’s “The Tryst,” Robert Browning’s “Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister,” William Blake’s “The Clod and the Pebble,” John Keats’s “Ode to a Nightin-

gale," Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach," Richard Wilbur's "Two Voices in the Meadow," Paul Laurence Dunbar's "Jealous," and stories by John O'Hara and J. F. Powers. What English majors were taught to regard as masterpieces, or at least chestnuts, of literature were summarized as follows in reviewing a book from another program:

"The Highwayman," Alfred Noyes—Girl shoots herself through the breast.

"Lord Randall," traditional ballad—The main character is poisoned.

"Danny Deaver," Rudyard Kipling—Poem concerning a military hanging.

"The Tell-Tale Heart," E. A. Poe—A man cunningly contrives to kill an old man whom he loves, carries this out and dismembers him.

"To Build a Fire," Jack London—A man freezes to death.
(p. 128)

On this basis we could dismiss "Ode to a Nightingale" as suicidal and "Dover Beach" as nihilistic and proceed to eliminate not only tragedy itself but virtually all literature.

And yet the case the censors make differs not a great deal from Plato's reason for banishing the poets. Dwelling on Barth's "bad news"—realism—just keeps you down. Why not keep fixed on the good news, gospel, the word of God? Indeed, another ancient spiritual dictum is "You become what you think." If you focus on the negative, you will become or remain negative. If you meditate on the divine, you will bring out your divinity. But if I'll become what I think, and if I work to know myself, isn't this a prescription for disaster, if I'm also rotten? And there's the crux of it all. The spiritual assumption is that one is not rotten to the core, innately depraved, but a god at heart who has to work down through the rottenness to the deeper self, rejoin the original essence. This is why the negative self-concept makes great literature look like only bad news—not "There but for the grace of God go I" but merely "My God, there go I." In lit crit circles this would be called lack of esthetic distance.

As religious education was phased out of public schools in the last century, English education was phased in. Literature took over from scripture, literary criticism from Biblical exegesis, textual performance from liturgical service. The syllabus is now the canon, the lit prof the hierophant. Has English teaching extended religious teaching in a secular way? If so, is that right? If not, should it?

Literary artists themselves, I wager, see their work as gospel, as good news, even though it may be wrought from the bad news of self-examination and other worldly realities, because they feel the transformative effect of the imagination. I don't just mean that they manipulate reality to make it satisfy some emotion important to them, though that happens too. I mean that the bad news or rottenness is illuminated, is placed against or shot through with some new light, or that the things of this world are so newly connected and patterned that they coalesce into a new reality. Creativity belies its own negative subject matter. Literature is a secular form of scripture and indeed is descended from it. Holy writ deals with negative things but to show the good news in the bad news. In its own secular way literature tries to do this too. If read shallowly, literally, both can be dangerous because their rhetorical power and spellbinding stories *can*, as Plato worried, attach readers even more to surfaces than they already are.

We resist looking inward in the measure we fear what we will find there, namely, the uncontrollable and unacceptable feelings we cannot tolerate in consciousness. Suppose we have grown up in an environment that has permitted no criticism of elders or other expression of negative feeling and has made us believe we fall hopelessly below some high standards we should be meeting. We feel both worthless and enraged. Then we have too much inside to bear disturbing. If you insist that you have nothing inside yourself corresponding to what these literary works are about, then you can claim that others are imposing their morbidity on you. To the extent we deny the inner life, we can't set up the correspondences necessary to understand things outside, including what's in books. It is in this way that self-knowledge is the gateway to other knowledge.

Ethnocentric Limitations

The accusation that our books attacked family, church, and state is exactly the same that Jesuits and other émigrés leveled against Freemasonry in the wake of the French Revolution. The fundamentalist protesters said that a Communist conspiracy in government and education had placed our books in their schools. It has been a running mistake throughout history to construe efforts to expand consciousness as attacks on everything we know and hold dear. The

Jesuits charged that Freemasons fomented the French Revolution to overturn world order as a continuation of a heretical conspiracy against family, church, and state reaching back across various secret societies into antiquity. These Appalachian fundamentalists were unwittingly perpetuating a conspiracy theory of some two hundred years' standing that persists today in much better educated groups such as the John Birch Society, who simply substituted Communists for Freemasons but kept the belief in a conspiracy pledged to fighting their Christianity to the death. Indeed, really scholarly ultrarightists can show you how Freemasonry naturally led into Communism and how both derived via the Knights Templar and medieval heresies from pre-Christian cults in the evil East.

But generally the Kanawha County objections broke the religious framework down into social issues familiar as planks in the platforms of the Moral Majority, Renaissance Canada, and the pro-family movement. The censors were for the Vietnam War and other anti-Communist military action, tougher treatment of criminals, corporal punishment of children, school prayer (if Christian), literal interpretation of the Bible, free enterprise, good grammar, and phonics. They stood against pacifism, socialism, the women's movement, abortion, gay rights, dirty words, sexual references, and relativity. Sharing these stands with national organizations may owe partly to their reading and hearing what these other conservatives were saying, but people of the same psychological makeup tend toward the same social and political positions anyway.

Another of the set phrases riding the censorship circuits that was often invoked against the disputed books is "situation ethics." This abhorrence of moral relativism rules out discussions of right and wrong in the behavior of literary characters or in one's own life. The basic idea of fundamentalism, after all, is literalism, that there is only one way to read either books or reality—oddly, the most material way. Some ultrarightist intellectuals are now mounting arguments against the theory of relativity. Einstein bids fair to replace Darwin as the preferred hate object, which comes close to Hitler's repudiation of "Jewish physics." "Situation ethics" expresses, I venture, a deep need to recoil from alternatives of any sort, whether alternative readings of a text, alternative viewpoints in thought, alternative courses of action, or alternative social groups.

Fundamentalists want school to reinforce the race spirit and the home culture not only by excluding alternatives but also by sub-

verting inquiry. The censors really wanted to fill up schooling with rote learning of facts and avoid student thinking. They wanted, for example, more grammar, which has no subject matter, and less literature, which indeed has content, often entirely too thought-provoking. Like phonics, which they also advocate, grammar is in itself meaningless. A contentless curriculum would perfect censorship. Only an authoritarian approach can enforce a curriculum tending that way of course, but then authoritarianism is part and parcel of ethnocentric exclusivity.

The book protesters could not admit one of their main objections, because it was racist. They rejected virtually all of the reading selections by blacks and Hispanics, but the reasons they cited were bad grammar, vulgar language, revolutionary ideology, irrelevance of ghetto life to their children's environment, and racism against whites. Some of their objections were anti-Semitic. Actually, there are relatively few blacks, Jews, and Hispanics in West Virginia, which is a pocket culture. Their real fear is of the Other, any other. They resented references to other cultures and other religions. They inveighed against Interaction books of folk literature such as fables, legends, and parables because they were international. Extremist conservative intellectuals despise the United Nations because it transcends nationalism, on which their identity is partially founded. Such people automatically distrust any international movement, from Communism to ecumenicism. Anti-Semitism may go back in part to the Diaspora, which internationalized Jews. The very fact of being international may be taken as evidence of conspiracy and in any case threatens the ethnocentricity that censorship is mainly about.

The One and the Many

Fundamentalist censors have performed a great public service. They have forced educators to face some issues we have avoided for generations. First is the pretense that schooling need not be involved in moral and spiritual matters and indeed cannot, in the United States, legally be involved because of the First Amendment separation of church from state. But the founding fathers certainly did not intend for public education to breed materialism, as the fundamentalists rightly complain that it does.

Modern intellectuals have reason to distrust the word “spiritual,” and I’ve certainly hesitated about using it because it’s apt to trigger associations that will smother my other words. But I haven’t found any better term. So I’ll try to refurbish it a bit. I think I can do this best if I first distinguish spirituality from morality and religion. Morality concerns good and bad behavior. As the root meanings of both “morals” and “ethics” indicate, these come from the *customs* of some group, an *ethos*. Morality is caught, not taught. *Knowing* right is not so much the problem as *doing* it, and most reasons for not doing it are very extracurricular, involving, in fact, all the rest of the culture, some of which may very well contradict the morals, which at any rate hardly apply to treatment of *outsiders*.

As *its* root meaning suggests, religion aims to tie the individual back to some less apparent reality from which he or she has been diverted by, presumably, people and other attractive hazards in the environment. However divinely inspired, any religion partakes of a certain civilization, functions through human institutions, and is therefore culturally biased. Spirituality is the perception of oneness behind plurality. Spiritual *behavior* is the acting on this perception. Morality follows from spirituality, because the more that people identify with others the better they act toward them. The supreme identification, of oneself with the One, brings about that reunion toward which religions work, at the same time that it makes morality apply beyond the in-group to the world at large. So a spiritual education can also accomplish moral and religious education without moralizing or indoctrinating, as the architects of America knew. Precisely because of the partiality and even partisanship of religions, our devoutly Christian founding fathers refrained from building theirs into the state. Nothing fuels war so hotly as the word of God construed by the mind of man.

So in forbidding theocracy, the founding fathers certainly did not mean to bar spirituality from the government and education of this country. In addition to being Christians, they belonged to an international, ecumenical, cross-cultural spiritual brotherhood that was transmitting a universal esoteric teaching synthesized from Greek, Egyptian, Christian, Jewish, Persian, and Indian sources and common to all religions but driven underground by the exoteric, or popular, teaching that the ethnocentric majority exacted of its churches. Today Masons may seem as innocuous as Rotarians, but in the eighteenth century most of the great thinkers, scientists,

artists, and leaders belonged to the lodges of Freemasonry, which did indeed inspire the American and French revolutions and played a major role in establishing modern democracy. Take out a dollar bill and look at the reverse of the U.S. seal—the esoteric side—and you will see the radiant eye, unfinished pyramid, and other devices of Freemasonry (Capt, 1979).

Like these emblems, the slogan on American coins—*e pluribus unum*—was drawn by the Freemasonic founding fathers from that universal spiritual tradition that ethnocentric people have interpreted as a history-long conspiracy against family, church, and state. Exoterically, the slogan refers to something like the union of the colonies or the immigration melting pot, both of which made one nation out of many peoples. Esoterically, it means that the many can become one because the many came from the One, a cosmic essence of which all partake. That is, plurality emanates from what is unity if spiritually perceived.

Always the one to take it on the chin, American schools have had to face most directly the dilemma of *e pluribus unum*—a single curriculum for a plural populace—without, I'm saying, the benefit of the *spiritual* half of this principle, stripped off by historians not conversant with, or embarrassed by, the esoteric teaching from which it came. A school book dispute shatters the shallow unity of the melting pot and forces the issue of how people who differ can harmoniously live together.

The real sin is exclusion. Spirituality is all-inclusive. Fundamentalism in both Christendom and Islam shows how ethnocentricity inverts religion precisely by excluding, which is also the very heart of censorship. Primitive perception confuses the race spirit with Spirit itself, the in-group with God.

Transmitting the Culture

In fending off the ethnicity of others, the book protesters were insisting on a principle that public schools seemed founded on—the transmission of culture. Fundamentalists are saying, “Those books are not passing on *our* heritage and values. They are indoctrinating our children with someone *else's* way of life.” And indeed the educational goal of transmitting the culture always begs the question *Whose* culture? America is and always has been a pluralistic nation.

Even the thirteen original colonies could barely unite, they felt so different from one another, and the later waves of immigrants increased the cultural variety. School could still get by with a single curriculum for a plural populace so long as everyone wanted to be melted into the pot. But not today, when ethnic groups want to assert differences in order to salvage or consolidate an identity. How can a single curriculum serve a constituency when one faction of it abhors the same texts that another faction is outraged to find omitted?

Some people assert that America's problems come from having lost touch with the traditions and the values of the founding fathers and of Western civilization. They blame schools and families for not teaching the culture enough. But a culture is by definition self-transmitting. Every aspect of our society—from eating and mating habits to architecture and commerce—transmits the culture, not just Great Books and Great Works of Art, which are great because they have entered into the culture and influenced the lives of people who never even heard of them. People in "Western" culture are all part Platonic, Aristotelian, Augustinian, Newtonian, Darwinian, Freudian, and Einsteinian, no matter what their particular creeds, because these ways of perceiving are built into the society that they live and breathe in. Because it transmits itself out of school very effectively, though indirectly, one has to ask how much schools need to teach it and in which ways they can add to this self-transmission.

Actually, schools affect students far more in the way they operate than in what they intentionally teach. But this *way* partakes of the culture at least as much as the history, literature, and civics that are the conscious content. In other words, schools are transmitting the culture doubly—not only in what they explicitly teach about it but in how they go about the teaching itself. One is avowed, the other unavowed. This mixture of consciousness and unconsciousness means that schools are not only transmitting the culture doubly but also double-mindedly, because their medium often contradicts their message.

Democracy is taught undemocratically. All while holding free enterprise and personal liberty before students as a great bequest to them from their cultural heritage, schools spoon-feed them through a doling system carefully programmed before their arrival that seldom allows them to make significant decisions, that in fact infantilizes them, and that has no equivalent in the society except mental hospitals, prisons, and nursing homes.

“Western” culture itself is self-contradictory. Plato and Aristotle represent two opposing philosophical approaches. Both Athenian and Jeffersonian democracy permitted slavery and forbade women to vote. Free enterprise and Marxism both came out of the same culture. Religion in the West runs the whole gamut of sacred to secular, from mysticism through the entire church spectrum to atheism. Even this conventional conception of “Western” civilization shows it to be pluralistic. It is made up of conflicting ideas, values, and practices.

But the school mission of transmitting the culture assumes that such knowledge constitutes a consistent moral framework and, furthermore, that it justifies the kind of society we have in America. Actually, Plato argued for censorship, and neither he nor Socrates approved of democracy. The Greek philosophers did advocate free inquiry, but Christianity has rarely permitted it and has frequently destroyed rival sects, both their members and their teachings. If schools were really meant to endow students with the Greek legacy, they would empower them to do the same free inquiry for which we so much value the Greek philosophers. Nothing could be farther from the case, and nothing could be more important for school reform than to deal with this discrepancy.

“Western” civilization is not a single set of values which, if we would only return to them, would by some sort of moral rearmament solve the problems we face. The fact is, it has built up both positive and negative forces that we must try to sort out and deal with (like Greek inquiry and Christian dogma). The major problems the world debates today are a big portion of “our heritage,” created by the culture but not necessarily solvable by it. American society, for example, has granted personal freedom to its members but does not develop inner resources within individuals equal to this liberty, which too often becomes the freedom to hurt and be hurt. Free enterprise, for another example, has achieved the highest material standard of living but has resulted in a corporate private sector more powerful than government and therefore capable of holding the populace hostage as tyrannical governments did in the past.

A culture evolves, and it accretes and transforms past stages. This accounts for much of the pluralism and self-contradiction. The Romans built on the Greeks, and the Christians on the Romans, and so on. The accretions are transformed, but this does not result in a neat continuity with a summarizable conclusion that you can present honestly in school or college. Different epochs have concluded differ-

ent things, and factions have differed in every epoch. In fact, if “Western” civilization has any defining characteristic it is diversity and disharmony—which is all right if acknowledged and dealt with as such.

On the growing edge of “Western” civilization, America, we can see another sort of pluralism than just the diversity of differing historical elements. The United States is not only a melting pot of different “Western” nationalities; it is a mosaic also of world civilizations. The native American Indian culture was here already, and settlers from Europe introduced into the country the black culture of slaves. Chinese laborers were imported in the nineteenth century to build railroads and service the gold-mining operations. Many immigrants, like Jews and Armenians, were not Christian or Western Christian. As a free country welcoming refugees, the U.S. made itself a multicultural nation. Today it includes a sizeable population of Asian and Middle Eastern people.

It also includes a whole spectrum of Hispanic people, who raise a central question for the educational goal of transmitting the culture. Latin Americans represent Western civilization to a degree, being Mediterranean Catholic, but are also part native Indian. In another way also, Latin American culture is not entirely “Western.” Even the Spanish culture grafted onto the Indian contained strong Arabic and Islamic influences from the many centuries of Saracen occupation of Spain. When schools talk about transmitting the culture, they don’t mean this Latin American culture—unless the majority of the local population is Mexican American or Puerto Rican and insists on it. They mean some more purely European version of “Western” culture. But even this will break down into various nationalities and churches—Polish or Irish, Protestant or Catholic. Appalachian fundamentalists resent the imposition on their children of mainstream urban Protestant culture.

So even if one were to accept a goal for schools of transmitting the culture, it is not at all clear except to jingoists what is meant by *culture*. Inevitably the definition simply comes down to what some majority or dominant subculture has in mind. Also, something as broad as “Western civilization” can be subdivided as finely as one likes, that is, right down to a sect or language or other ethnic body. One has only to look for examples to the strife among European immigrants, even as close as the British and the Irish, or between

Irish and Italian Catholics, not to mention between gringos and Chicanos, and fundamentalists and humanists.

This microscale concerns which peoples actually make up the school population today in the U.S. This is one way in which the question “*Whose culture?*” must be answered. After all, we can prate on all we want about “our Western heritage” and line up conventional European works into Great Books courses, but the culture really being transmitted in a given neighborhood is that of its local race, church, language, and ethnic group, many of whom can claim that the culture their schools are transmitting is not theirs but that of a remote majority. A hidden assumption about the population underlies both the *the* in “transmit the culture” and the *our* in “our heritage.”

On a macro scale, culture is equally hard to define, because in reality civilizations merge, absorb each other, and at the very least influence each other. “Western” civilization is the artificial and ethnocentric creation of European scholars, who preferred to keep the roots of Greek culture north of the Mediterranean, in the family, and deny what the ancient world kept asserting, that Greek language, religion, and philosophy derived from Africa and the Middle East, from Semitic and Egyptian sources (See page 53). Great Books courses start with the Greeks and Jews, but that’s an arbitrary cut-off point. Homer and Plato, St. Paul and Vergil were participating in cultural continuities preceding them by many centuries and reaching back into Egypt, Phoenicia, Persia, Chaldea, India, and the Far East. The more we know about older civilizations the more connected the world seems to have been. As one example, Socrates and Plato borrowed heavily from Pythagoras, who, it is well known, studied for decades abroad and underwent initiations in Egypt, Babylonia, Persia, and perhaps even India. Like the other “Indo-European” languages English is related to Sanskrit, and the all-important concept of ‘zero’ seems to have come from India via the Arabic world, not in time to serve Greek mathematics, which suffered all the limits of its absence.

Cultural traffic was heavy even before the Christian era between Europe, the Middle East, and the Far East. Some ideas, inventions, and practices have cycled among so many cultures that we’ll probably never know which culture to credit for them. Cultures have always been constantly synthesizing themselves, as the tight interplay between Arabic Islam and Christian Europe shows during the

Crusades and the Moorish period of Spain. If schools were to convey the true pluralism of America's dominant culture, then minority peoples, such as blacks, Latin Americans, Asians, and Arabs, could rightly feel a part of it and identify with it, because they could see how their respective cultures have contributed to the majority culture they're immersed in.

The very pluralism of America, made increasingly apparent by minority self-assertion and new influxes of immigrants, has incited a backlash. Some Americans of European extraction who fear the country is being taken over by "foreigners" or is breaking up into ethnic pockets have recently refashioned the notion of "our heritage" into an educational movement calling for "cultural literacy." Proponents of this movement go so far as to list hundreds of facts and concepts that all school graduates ought to know in common. Actually, the insistence that all students learn a certain body of information for the sake of uniformity, far from being new, has always been one of the main curses of public schooling. Because it is arbitrary, boring, and trivial it alienates learners, fosters rote learning, and takes up undeserved space in the curriculum. Ultimately, the definition of culture for many parents comes down to "what I was taught as a child" and thus seriously limits the whole idea of education for their children.

The more immigrants pour into the United States and the larger grow the minority populations the louder sounds the cry for conformity to the majority culture. We're experiencing today a virtual panic of neonationalism. Factions in Florida and California, the states having the largest Hispanic populations, are lobbying to pass legislation declaring English the official language. "Whose country *is* this anyway, huh?" It seems that the nation will fall apart or fall into the wrong hands if schools don't soon homogenize everyone. Actually, immigrants and minorities tend to want most to fit in to the dominant culture, and mass media combine with franchise chains to do quite an efficient enough job of homogenizing a population. Making everyone's head alike, as schools also do, is a totalitarian way of achieving group unity. Conformity itself is the greater danger in a world that can be saved only by the creativity that comes from hybridism.

It is in this climate of nationalistic hysteria about losing identity that the old Great Books idea has resurged as part of "cultural literacy," that is, the mandatory teaching of someone's version of "our" heri-

tage that can serve as a common medium of exchange, whether in the form of a lexicon or a canon. The real motive is to create an in-group for social solidarity, self-definition, and self-congratulation. Once again, chauvinism dominates at the expense of more basic human values. For educational purposes, it would be better for young people to grow up understanding the interconnectedness of all cultures, to learn not just about “our” culture but about all cultures at once, to examine not just “the” culture but culture, its very nature and how it affects us as individuals and how we affect it. Any culture both enables and cripples, and young people have to understand this.

To transmit a culture in school has been to retail it, that is, to overdistill it as history and social studies textbooks do for school children and as high school or college Great Books courses do through a chronological syllabus, starting with Homer and the Old Testament (already not very compatible!), and to spot-check the development of the civilization by sampling other representatives of later stages. Texts are highly selected, and lectures have to synopsise the rest. Any such effort to characterize either the West or America results in caricature, in all those stereotypes and buzzwords that anyone who learns more has to unlearn and that teach chauvinism as much as anything else.

Transmitting the culture through schools in such condensed and mandatory fashion has amounted to teaching ethnocentrism. It does not befit a democracy. It necessarily entails a kind of censorship, since it sets up a selective process for the curriculum that includes and excludes knowledge according to a preordained value system. It is not a moral nostrum for what ails a society. It is partial and partisan. It is not a whole enough and fair enough truth to stand as an educational goal of public schooling. It perpetuates ethnic conflict. A curriculum designed to melt pluralism and individualism down into a single people may have made some sense when America was consolidating itself into a nation, but today education must help youngsters resolve the self-contradictions that characterize both the culture and their own consciousness.

Advocates of “cultural literacy” and of other efforts to teach *our* heritage assume the same purpose for education as the fundamentalists, only they have a relatively broader notion of this heritage. The very concept of “Western” civilization is as parochial at Mortimer Adler’s level of education as the Appalachian folk’s concept is at its level. Both are ethnocentric.

The term “cultural literacy” implies something grand and important, whereas the culture is really betrayed by such shallow representation. Likewise, the term “literacy” falsely implies that the information is basic and necessary like reading and writing. By contrast, all students learn more, including about culture, if instead of requiring them to study the same things, the curriculum individualizes and pluralizes learning. As a defensive effort to enforce conformity to one idea of “our heritage,” “cultural literacy” just dresses up the old blood-and-soil mentality in glamorous academic garb.

I am questioning that the transmission of culture should be the central goal of education. Not only does the whole society transmit the culture anyway, not only does schooling debase it in trying to synopsize and select for it in its overcontrolled way, but this very effort militates against another educational goal—open inquiry, learning to think for oneself—that, ironically, we attribute to our Western heritage. Here we are double-minded too: you can’t program curriculum to make sure all students learn the same corpus of knowledge and still expect them to learn to think for themselves. By itself, transmitting culture builds ethnocentricity, which is the ultimate obstacle to mental and spiritual growth.

Cultural Censorship

Transmitting any heritage entails selecting some ideas, frameworks, and values and excluding others. Exclusion is built into the very idea of education as cultural transmission. How much difference is there between prohibiting certain facts and ideas and simply omitting them? In other words, how far does the selectivity of this sort of education have to go before *it* becomes censorship? When creek preachers try to control reading, that’s called censorship. When sleek academics do it, it’s called cultural literacy.

Censorship takes many forms. Cultural bias so pervades our thinking that we’re too unaware of what is being included and excluded to regard this selectivity as kin to censorship, which receives attention as a *revolt*. Never, for example, have I seen mentioned in books on American history for either school or the general public the fact that the majority of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, the members of the Continental Congress, the officers in the Continental Army were Freemasons, as were George Washington, Benjamin

Franklin, and Paul Revere who were heads of Masonic lodges. From its framework of universalist spirituality, freemasonry supplied the founding fathers with the social ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity, along with such fitting mottoes and symbols as I referred to earlier. It also enabled the upstart nation to win the support of fellow Masons abroad, like Lafayette, and of France itself, where Franklin was made head of the Nine Sisters Lodge while ambassador there lobbying for aid against England. So devoted was the brotherhood to its ideals that high-ranking Masons right in the English establishment put these ideals before their own country and aided the United States (Faye, 1935).

Does this colossal omission confirm the fundamentalists' counter-charge that a secular humanist establishment has done much censoring of its own? A secretive organization that rivaled the church in spiritual appeal and that subordinated patriotism to universal justice was bound to become a target for censorship by both religious and secular factions. On the one hand, it was transmitting the cross-cultural esoteric traditions that Christians had anathematized earlier; on the other hand, it was implementing the eighteenth-century Enlightenment of Voltaire and the Encyclopedists (who were all Freemasons). In all the flag waving and prattle about the American way, the real story of how democracy came about remains censored. The modern secular establishment doesn't want America's birth associated with this mystical fraternity any more than the church does.

In fact science has taken over from religion the role of censor. As the Inquisition was dying out during the Renaissance, scientists began to strip off metaphysics and humanities from both math and science with the result that today they seem strange and inhuman, difficult to learn. The founders of modern science themselves—Newton, Bacon, and Descartes—drew much of their perception from the esoteric traditions, as transmitted then, for example, by the Rosicrucians, the immediate predecessors of Freemasons.

These older ties to esoteric traditions embarrass today's scientific establishment, which avoids referring to the writings of their founders that show this powerful "prescientific" influence and which claims instead that modern science developed only in the measure that it shook free of such traditions. The scientific establishment's literal reading, for example, of the highly symbolic texts of alchemy and astrology, which Newton took very seriously, compares to fundamentalist interpretation of the equally symbolic Christian scrip-

tures. Adding its own inquisition to the church's has very effectively censored out of our present civilization a vital metaphysical force that would render contemporary problems more intelligible and would contribute exactly what is needed to solve these problems.

The fundamentalists are wrong to invent a religion of secular humanism and a science of creationism just to try to turn the First Amendment around in their favor, but they are right that science is not taught hypothetically enough. Nobody really understands electromagnetism, which is just a pragmatic term for some apparently related observations. Students should not walk off thinking that science is definitive, materialistic fact, unrelated to philosophy and metaphysics, when in fact the entities that theoretical physicists talk about are as hard to see, believe, and understand as the medieval theological conceits that we have learned to laugh at. Though at the other end of the intellectual scale from fundamentalists, today's Theosophists and Rosicrucians consider Darwinism as a narrowly physical theory of evolution that while true enough so far as it goes lacks the cosmological framework that would best explain the facts by subsuming them into a more comprehensive concept of evolution.

Commercial Censorship

To tell the truth, I worry less about book banners and book burners than I do about book *publishers*. I mean the publishers of trade books for the general public, not just textbooks for schools. As profit corporations, they have far greater power to limit what I can read than any special-interest group. I can hear about and probably still get hold of a book that has been banned or burned, but I will never know about the worthy manuscripts that never became books at all because publishers deemed them not profitable enough. Counting newspapers and magazines, movies and other media, the communications companies have consolidated through mergers as much as or perhaps more than any other industry. Publishers have not only been taken over by each other but by mixed conglomerates. According to the 1990 edition of *Writer's Market*, "2% of U. S. publishers are putting out 75% of the titles" (p. 47).

What and who can get published are shrinking rapidly all the time in the United States as publishers and distributors go more and

more only for big sellers. Formerly, acquisitions editors chose which manuscripts to publish according to mixed criteria by which they could accept worthy or important books of moderate readerships as well as the potboilers that would in effect subsidize them. The job of the marketing people was to find ways to sell their choices. Today this has reversed. The marketing staff usually tells the editors what to select according to their knowledge of what sells best, which is in turn determined largely by distributors as monopolistic as the publishers themselves. Three or four large bookstore chains retail most of the trade books sold in the United States and hence establish the marketing criteria that publishers look for in selecting manuscripts. Publishers feel they have to choose manuscripts to fit these successful market categories while also avoiding books that may take a long time to pay for themselves, because tax laws no longer exempt publishers' inventories.

At the same time, these major publishers have quit screening general trade manuscripts for themselves. Just as they discovered that too much competition was bad for business, they realized that by considering submissions only from agents they could shift the expense of screening from themselves to the authors, who pay agents, and never have to bother with any manuscripts except the most likely candidates for best sellers, since that's about all the agents are screening for, their criteria having narrowed along with those of editors and retailers. It is difficult to get a manuscript read even by an agent, because they too won't bother with unsolicited manuscripts but rather sift for big winners by requiring outlines or samples first. They don't want ten or fifteen percent of a book that may sell just moderately well.

The search for the blockbuster sellers has reached the point that the industry focuses almost entirely on what is well known and proven—certain topics, certain treatments, or certain people. The big publishers believe in lots of insurance. So huge numbers of books are about how to put on weight and how to take it off—cookbooks and diet books—or by celebrities whose names will ensure a big seller whatever the content or quality of what they write. A celebrity need not necessarily be a famous author but a politician, entertainer, sports hero, or criminal—anyone so long as the name has achieved notoriety and thus already done the advertising in advance. Even well known products are featured in a book so that promotion can be tied in with the manufacturer and the

book cross-advertised with the product. When publishers do accept worthy books not deemed to be good sellers, they promote them so little and spend so much instead on their hot items that they in fact prove right their own marketing judgment, and so the cycle turns over again. These self-fulfilling prophecies are not really prophetic but historical, since they are based on past successes. In a 1991 article in *The Nation* titled "The Paperbacking of Publishing," Ted Solotaroff described from an editor's viewpoint these "conditions that drive an editor to double his standards and join the hunt for commercial books. What used to be called selling out is today simply a strategy for surviving" (p. 403).

This reliance on the tried and true to maximize profit is rendering big publishing virtually impenetrable to the really original minds and creative ideas that alone will solve the mounting problems of the world. We will feel this loss more and more as we struggle in vain to make failing old ways work. Unquestionably, manuscripts are being turned down today of a sort that would have been published in the past, even a few years ago, and that will be sorely needed in the future. Of course, this very restriction plus new flexibility in printing technology have engendered many small publishers who do take in some of these manuscripts, but they are part of the 98 percent of publishers collectively reaching only 25 percent of the reading public. In other words, worthy and original manuscripts *may* find an outlet but can reach only a few hundred or a few thousand readers.

The most fanatic censors could not wreak damage of this magnitude. For its equal we have to look back to when Romans and Christians and Saracens took turns burning the libraries of Alexandria, before the power to control what people read passed from theocracies to private enterprise. A society that leaves the dissemination of ideas to such ungovernably selfish organizations as today's corporations is begging for trouble and foolish enough to deserve what happens as a result. An old-fashioned despot might well sneer that the private sector to which his powers were so idealistically transferred abuses the citizenry just as much as he ever did.

Profit corporations constitute the other part of the private sector that now enjoys, along with various religious and secular factions, the powers of tyranny formerly reserved to government. Corporations are the most powerful part of the private sector because government has neither the legal nor financial means to control them.

They have become so large and wealthy that they can easily overwhelm whatever agencies are supposed to regulate them and even buy off the legislators who create the agencies, especially when they band together as they do against not only government regulation but against consumers and workers as well, in mockery of the old capitalistic competitive open market.

Both education and publication act as censors by closing down the range of thought while trying to do something else, one to solidify the society and the other to make money. But their sorts of censorship wreak devastation far worse than that of some bands of zealots and bigots who have set out to limit thought deliberately. Both schools and publishers exclude too much. Managers of corporations have got to identify more broadly with the rest of society, so that they see themselves as having other functions than maximizing profits. School constituencies must identify more broadly with other societies and with the rest of nature.

Spiritualizing Education

Democracy is not of course supposed to produce such tyrannies as thought control, but so long as individuals broaden their freedom but not their identity along with it, then their special-interest groups will exclude and violate each other until they invert democracy itself. The founding fathers were assuming a spiritual framework for personal liberty and free enterprise that alone can make them work. In the midst of our pluralism we have to feel our oneness. Otherwise, individuals and corporations think so narrowly that they thwart one another's rights as badly as despots. This prompts some people to call for a return to central conformity, just the sort of escape from freedom that, in his book by that title, Erich Fromm (1941) so brilliantly showed to explain the rise of Hitler and other modern dictators.

The real solution to social disintegration is to develop the individual even further, to continue the evolution of freedom inward until mental liberation matches political liberation. This requires breaking through the social boundaries that restrict knowing and thinking—expanding consciousness beyond the limitations of any particular family, church, or state to a universal identity—the only way to have peaceful families, churches, and states. (As the seventeenth-century

poet Richard Lovelace wrote, "I could not love thee, dear, so much, / Loved I not honor more.") Otherwise there is coherence only *within* a group but not *across* groups.

Paradoxically, as people develop inner strength, they draw closer to others farther away, because they rely less on those around them and seek bonds based less on blood and soil than on common humanity. And common divinity. "Everything that rises must converge." The American Transcendentalists provide an inspiring model. They were the most individualistic people our culture has produced, but they identified the most universally. Thoreau's refusal to pay taxes seems antisocial, but actually he did so to protest the war to annex part of Mexico. That is, he placed the greater social cohesion over the lesser.

I think fundamentalists are right to hold out for spiritual education, but I think that cannot come about by controlling reading matter or by teaching morality and religion as such. They are right too that our secular society tends to censor out *spirituality* in its distrust of *religion*.

But education can be spiritual without manipulating minds, without teaching Spirituality 101 replete with textbooks, lectures, and midterms (open to qualified juniors and seniors only). In fact, I think schools will become spiritual only in the measure they *reduce* manipulation. Some of it—the overcontrolling of texts and topics and of the situations in which reading and writing occur—is designed to direct thought where adults think it should go. Some of the manipulation—the obsessive testing and the military-industrial managerial systems—is just bureaucratic self-accommodation. Some is state control over both teachers and students. One way or another, in the name of "structure," youngsters are infantilized. We can't expect them to understand democracy when most of what they have seen is tyranny.

The first step toward spiritual education is to put students in a stance of responsible decision-making and in an unprogrammed interaction with other people and the environment. As part of this change I would drop textbooks in favor of trade books, a syllabus in favor of a classroom library, and go strongly for individual and small-group reading. Any specific presenting and sequencing of texts, whether done in the editorial offices of amoral corporations or within the somewhat more sanctified walls of the faculty conference room, short-circuits the learning process and undermines the will of the student.

Creek preachers aren't the only ones afraid of reading and writing. We all are, and that is the real reason they have proved inordinately difficult to teach. Literacy *is* dangerous and has always been so regarded. It naturally breaks down barriers of time, space, and culture. It threatens one's original identity by broadening it through vicarious experiencing and the incorporation of somebody *else's* hearth and ethos. So we feel profoundly ambiguous about literacy. Looking on it as a means of transmitting our culture to our children, we give it priority in education, but recognizing the threat of its backfiring we make it so tiresome and personally unrewarding that youngsters won't want to do it on their own, which is of course when it becomes dangerous. They will read only when big people make them—a teacher or some other boss down the line.

The net effect of this ambivalence is to give literacy with one hand and take it back with the other, in keeping with our contradictory wish for youngsters to learn to think but only about what we already have in mind for them. The overcontrol of reading texts and writing topics that is meant to make literacy only a one-way transmitter is of course precisely what keeps us from teaching it successfully. I joke that school consists of one year of beginning reading and eleven years of remedial reading. This *is* an absurd state of affairs, but it is a societal problem going beyond schools alone to the universal fear of literacy based on ethnocentricity and the educational goal of transmitting the culture.

The solution to censorship may also be the way to a spiritual education. A single course of reading for a pluralistic populace doesn't make sense unless we really do want a cookie-cutter curriculum. If students are routinely reading individually and in small groups, negotiating different reading programs with the teacher, parents, and classmates, no family can object that their child is being either subjected to or barred from certain books or ideas. Teachers and librarians can point out skewed reading fare in conferring with students and parents and can keep students and books constantly circulating. Students read far more, it is well known, when they read in this fashion, which means that they will read more of everything—including the classics. At Phillips Exeter Academy, where I once taught, the faculty could agree to teach classics but couldn't agree on which classics. What we did agree on was a kind of education that would so sensitize students that whenever they should later fetch up against a classic without being told, they would be able to

spot it for themselves. A spiritual education subtilizes the sensibility so that whatever finer realities there may be within us and within the universe we may detect.

As We Identify, So We Know

Pluralism must be central to future schooling, because both spiritual and mental growth depend on widening the identity. Every social system is a knowledge system and has limitations that must be overcome. Both learning to think and rejoining the All require expanding the frequency spectrum to which we can attune. Great books, yes, but youngsters need to experience *all* kinds of discourse and all kinds of voices and viewpoints and styles—to hear out the world. Our heritage, okay, but we need to encompass *all* heritages, to cross cultures, raise consciousness enough to peer over the social perimeters that act as parameters of knowledge. The Kanawha County imbroglia taught me that the same attachments to blood and soil, hearth and ethos, that Christ so vividly enjoined us not to put before Him, work against intellectual understanding as well as spiritual development. As we identify, so we know. That is how spirituality develops the mind. As we know, so we identify. That is how the mind develops spirituality.

But our selves and very lives depend, we feel, on localized identifications with the family, neighborhood, ethnic group, church, nation, and language. We have an investment in not knowing anything that will disturb these identifications. So we tend to limit what we are willing to know to what is known and accepted in our reference group. I call this not wanting to know “agnosis,” partly to contrast it with “gnosis,” the esoteric term for direct and total revelation, but partly also to create an analogy with clinical states like anesthesia, amnesia, and aphasia. Just as our inner system may block sensory perception or memories or abstraction, our acculturation may block any knowledge from within or without that threatens these identities. Agnosis is self-censorship.

One generation of teachers has somehow got to bring through one generation of students who will have thoughts we have not had before. It is clear that the nation’s and the planet’s problems cannot be solved by just thinking along the lines we do now according to our heritage. Societies relying on conventional wisdom are doomed. They

need instead some breathtakingly new ideas that will never come from a cookie-cutter curriculum designed just to relay some gist of what is known and thought now. The next generation must have an education creative enough to survive its inheritance. No country still ransoming its education to nationalistic competition and ethnocentricity will survive. If we don't enable the young to transform the culture, we won't have one to transmit.

The world is riven right and left because the various cultures strive so intently to perpetuate themselves that they end by imposing themselves on one another. These lethal efforts to make others like oneself burlesque the expanded identity that would make possible real global unity. The secret of strife is that groups *need* enemies to maintain definition, because differences define. The exclusivity of cultures is so dangerous that each must build into itself the means of transcending itself. Actually, I think the deepest spiritual teachings in all cultures have tried to do this but in doing so seemed subversive, which is why they had to go underground (where historians rarely find them).

Practically, this means deconditioning ourselves, jumping cultures, slipping outside the cage of mere genetic and environmental inheritance. Schools must become places where people relate to each other and the rest of nature as all one. If we know as we identify, then the more broadly we identify the more we will know. If social systems are knowledge systems, then to know the most, join the broadest social system. Become a citizen of the universe. Educate to liberate.

If we construed public education as personal liberation, it would hardly mean more than fulfilling the already professed goal of teaching the young to think for themselves. But truly free inquiry has conflicted so much with the old goal of cultural transmission and identity maintenance that we have sabotaged our own noble aim. This is unnecessary and unwise. If we educate youngsters to transcend their heritage, they will be able to transform it and lead other cultures to do the same. The American way is to pioneer. And the practical way is the spiritual way.