Founder of 'value-free' education says he owes parents an apology

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Twenty years ago as I write, in 1967 and '68, I helped organize a project to test the effect of what has since come to be called "affective" and sometimes, by critics, "value-free" education. The project was operated out of the Western Behavioral Sciences Institute in La Jolla and funded by the R.J. Reynolds family through the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation. Reynolds, of course, is the nation's second largest cigarette manufacturing company. Carl Rogers was principal investigator. I was research coordinator. Later we gave up the idea,

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which I saw as preemptive and Rogers as unworkable. R.J. Reynolds, however, continues to participate through Tobacco Institute sponsorship of a multi-million-dollar program called Helping Youth Decide and by independently helping fund an organization called Quest International. Quest conducts affective education programs for school children in 50 states.

Our experiment was performed in schools run by the Immaculate Heart order of nuns on the West Coast. The system consisted of a college, two high schools and 57 elementary schools. The standard that was suspended on our arrival was the standard of reason; the proposed replacement was the standard of feelings.

The abandonment of reason in an academic setting, especially a college, is not a felicitous proposal. Eventually faculty realized that it entailed subverting their own traditions in favor of ours. But by then we'd attained an advantage. In being asked to speak the language of feelings, faculty couldn't keep pace with the newcomers from La Jolla; we'd had long years of practice at surfacing and reflecting feelings. So initially, from students and at least some of the faculty, there was praise for our sensitivity and skill in picking up meanings

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only tentatively expressed, and it seemed the Immaculate Heart schools might become the feeling-centered institutions we'd claimed would be "fantastic." But an increasing number of faculty were becoming uneasy, suspecting they'd been led to collaborate with an enemy, an enemy with little interest in perpetuating their traditions of mindfulness.

It may not have been clear to them at first how psychotherapeutic our philosophy was. In an interview in 1976, long after it might have provided warning, Carl Rogers confessed our intention: it had been our plan early on, and years later was still the hope of Rogers as the most determined member of the team, to invert the relative importance of ideas and emotions in classrooms all over the world. He told the interviewer, "I think the stress on the rational mind is greatly misplaced. To isolate his thinking apparatus as though **that** was the man, I think that just disregards an enormous amount of his feelings, his physiological reactions, his genetic makeup, etc."

But of course it's not possible to express such thoughts on the futility of thought—"I **think** that **thinking** is overrated"—without falling into contradiction; and seeing the transcript of the 1976 interview, a staff member said that while he hadn't yet picked up the totalitarian potential of the project's philosophy, not explicitly, he'd probably shared some of the uneasiness of the resident faculty at the time. By 1968, the second year of the project, he said, he'd begun to suspect that he and his colleagues hadn't been playing fair:

> We didn't think rationality and argumentation deserved the emphasis academics usually give them; we thought the exploration of feelings is a more complete process and inherently more democratic. Everybody has feelings. No one can say you don't feel what you know you **do** feel. But they can say your ideas are wrong. So we wanted the schools to focus more on feelings, and we didn't want to get into an argument about it; arguing was what we thought had been overdone.

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Our approach became to be empathic when anyone took issue with us. We'd say things like, "I can see you feel strongly about that." Sometimes this made them feel better and sometimes it made them feel worse. When it was worse, it seemed to be because they thought they really couldn't get our attention: We kept acting like psychologists. That was one problem. The other was our attitude about thinking. We must have sounded like we believed our thinking had value, but not theirs. When a faculty critic asked me what was the difference between us and the pig-commissars in *Animal Farm*—"All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others"—I didn't have a good answer. I said, "I can see there's a lot of meaning to you in that question," and hoped he'd give it up.

Such hestitation was rare on the part of the staff and not yet a major problem among faculty. School personnel who later became opponents of the new, affective, value-free movement in education—our own version being called the "person-centered" approach—were not yet aware that the project proposed to cancel the very profession they'd trained for. They didn't know just how irrelevant we held the work of "professing" to be. Many had entered education for a time-honored purpose, to initiate youth into the life of the mind. They didn't realize that our philosophy questioned those very notions, initiation and mind. Traditionally, educators have believed that responsible adults possess necessary knowledge. Young people who fail to listen, who fail to receive and appreciate this knowledge, become vulnerable to exploitation and finally lose their freedom. But our person-centered vision of classrooms characterized by facilitative, nonjudgmental, value-free and therapeutic commitments held no brief for traditional educational ideals.

What I implied earlier should now be confirmed: the cooperating school system collapsed. There are no more Immaculate Heart schools. TMP was the cause: Too Much Psychology, Too Many Psychotherapists. It's distressing to see that TMP has since become the hallmark of Quest; Helping Youth Decide; others called Here's Looking at You, Me-ology, Project Charlie, Ombudsman, DECIDE; and dozens more of similar origin—and to see the tobacco industry once again backing the movement.

Carl Rogers died last year. He and I and our project teammates owe the nation's parents an apology, for we alerted industry leaders to the potential for profit that lies in affective education. The surgeon general has pointed out that a healthy tobacco industry depends on getting kids to experiment with cigarettes: millions of replacements are needed each year for smokers who die or quit, and adults are no longer willing to start. Affective education turns kids into starters. The research is clear and consistent on this, with numerous studies yielding the same result: getting **facilitation** instead of **teaching** causes students to become more interested in making decisions than in doing what's right: Right becomes whatever they **decide.**

The bad effects don't end with smoking. Youthful experimentation with sex, alcohol, marijuana and a variety of other drugs—whatever's **popular** at the time—has been shown to follow affective, value-free education quite predictably; we now know that after these classes, students become more prone to give into temptation than if they'd never been enrolled.

One cause lies in an educational philosophy that calls on students and teachers alike to disbelieve in the concept of temptation. Moral absolutes are routed in affective education in favor of a psychotherapeutic imperative called "running the risks of personal growth," and this turns out to be identical with what dealers in dangerous substances and ideologies applaud. The idea of free choice for children suits them fine.

So it turns out to be a deadly scheme we hatched those 20 years ago.

Study says sex ed does not lower pregnancies

Classroom sex education alone appears to have little or no effect on altering sexual activity, promoting the use of birth control or lowering teenage pregnancy, according to a review of five studies.

"There's nothing unique about sex education as opposed to other information transmitted in school," said Dr. James W. Stout, a resident at Children's Hospital and Medical Center in Seattle and a co-author of the review.

"A person can have the information regarding their health, but it doesn't automatically translate into their behavior," he said in a telephone interview Thursday.

"A good example would be the ill health effects of cigarette smoking, which it's probably safe to say most smokers are aware of, and yet they still smoke."

Five studies from 1980 to 1987 examined the effect of classroom sex-education programs at the junior- and senior-high school level on teenagers from a variety of geographical areas and racial and socioeconomic groups, the researchers said.

The sex-ed programs had no measurable impact on pregnancy rates, neglible effect on the use of birth-control methods and insignificant influence on teenagers' decisions about when to engage in their first sexual intercourse, the researchers reported in the March issue of the journal *Pediatrics.*

"Existing data suggest that a classroom course alone cannot be expected to change sexual behavior in a direction that is in opposition to the adolescent's sexual world as it is molded by the television, motion picture, music and advertising industries, as well as peer group and adult role models," the researchers said.

"To place the burden of counteracting the prevailing forces in our society toward premarital sex on our schools alone is both naive and inappropriate," they said.

Stout and his co-author, Dr. Frederick P. Rivara of Harborview Medical Center in Seattle, pointed to 1987 findings from a comprehensive community-wide sex-education program that was much more successful than classroom education alone.

The program involved parents, teachers, ministers, community leaders and the media in a joint effort to postpone the age of teens' first sexual experience, promote the use of consistent contraception and lower the teen pregnancy rate.

AFA needs information on sex education courses

AFA is currently involved in studying and evaluating sex education courses being taught in public schools. If your public school is offering sex education, AFA would appreciate it if you could send us the name of the curriculum being used along with the name and address of the company which produces it. In the future evaluations of the various curricula will appear in the AFA *Journal* and in booklet form. Please address your information to Dan Rupert.

Religious institutions make contribution

Religious institutions use much of the money they receive in donations to provide services to society, according to a study which was conducted by the Gallup Organization for Independent Sector, a non-profit coalition of philanthropic and volunteer organizations.

Independent Sector reported that of the $48.1 billion spent by religious congregations in 1986, $19.1 billion was used for other than religious activities, in areas such as education, health, human services, arts and culture, and public or societal benefit programs.

Brian O'Connell, president of Independent Sector noted, "I am constantly aware of how much of the country's patterns of community service and advocacy relate to the earliest of churches and to the initial and continuing protections of freedom of religion. If we look at what the conscience, the meeting ground, and the organized neighborliness represented by religious congregations mean to the kind of society we are, religion takes on a different and a larger significance."

Youth becoming sexually active at younger age

According to a study by researchers at Indiana University and the Marion County Health Department, teens become sexually active even earlier than thought. In a survey of 677 seventh-, eighth-, and ninth-graders in a mostly white, lower-middle class junior high school in Indianapolis, 555 reported having had sex, says Dr. Donald P. Orr of Indiana University.

Eighteen percent said they'd had one sexual experience; 30% more than one and 7% said they have sex often. More boys than girls were sexually active at all ages.

By age 13, boys who had never had a sexual experience were in the minority; sexually inexperienced girls were in the minority by age 15.

Orr says the study showed that girls who were sexually active had significantly lower self-esteem.

Bochco...

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on his face, he continued: "Pardon my French." Mr. Bochco told every American what they can do, and in his opinion, all they can do.

However, Christian Leaders for Responsible Television feels that viewers can do more, and are planning a one year boycott of one or more of the leading sponsors of sex, violence, profanity and anti-Christian programming following monitoring of the networks during the next "sweeps" period—April 27-May 24.

CLeaR-TV has notified all companies which advertise on prime-time network television of the boycott. Approximately 50 sponsors have responded to the letter from CLeaR-TV Chairman Dr. Billy Melvin. Some requested information from CLeaR-TV, some told CLeaR-TV what a great job they are doing in selecting programs to sponsor, and others simply said thanks for the letter.

It appears that the boycott is already beginning to have an impact. According to *Daily Variety* (February 7, 1989), "Already (AFA executive director Donald E.) Wild-