THE DILEMMA OF EDUCATION

By William L. Moore

Your mind, born free, does not remain so for long. From your earliest days, earnest and sincere educators in your home, in your school, in your social life, have pronounced, "This is right! This is wrong! This is true! This is false!" You are inspired to follow down the different pathways of instruction - or inspired to react against them - to find that everything is not as you have been led to believe. Like everyone else, you come to live as a mass of contradictions which you may whimsically modify, then pass on.

Is free enterprise able to outproduce a state monopoly indefinitely? Is profit on money a good or evil thing? Is it right to own property and exclude from it all but yourself and your offspring for no reason than that your parents handed it down to you; or should everything be shared with everyone else? Is our future predetermined or is it in our own hands?

Is it evil or a mark of esteem to have four wives instead of one? Should the selection of a mate be left to the persons concerned or to more mature elders? Is it best to marry a virgin or one who has already demonstrated ability to conceive? Should marital bonds be severed at the whim of those concerned, or only by death?

Are there many gods or only One or none? Did miracles occur once-upon-a-time but no more, or do they still, or did they never? When we die will we float on clouds, burn in eternal flames, return to earth as a cow or snake, or cease to exist? Should we believe on faith or decide on the basis of reason? Should we blindly obey or should we reject the commands of authority?

The way you answer such questions is largely determined by how you have been educated and where. Officials of Communist China have stated that deviationist thinkers are re-educated until their thinking conforms. They have no doubt that it eventually will. With adults this may be very difficult. However, with young children grown up in the dictatorship of a tiny, isolated tribe or sealed within a one-point-of-view country, the very fact that the person remains alive can be assurance that, by and large, he believes a certain way.

In a more liberal society with access to all sorts of ideas, the individual may develop himself more fully, or he may flounder on the rocks of mental illness or delinquency. The security of a one-track mind is gone; the influences upon his thinking are strange and contradictory.

Formal education is forced upon you, and often you grudgingly accept what others pay almost any price to obtain. You are taught how precious is personal liberty, while your days are largely regulated. And everywhere you turn, you run into contradictions between what you are taught and what life really is.

You are told you can grow up to be President; that success is the supreme goal in life. Yet the jobs at the top are fewer than those at the bottom; tomorrow you may be replaced by a machine. If you are unemployed for long, you are considered a bum (and may even turn into one); yet your society has not yet solved the problem of unemployment. It makes many fall by the wayside.

You are told that you may exercise free speech; at the same time free speech is discouraged. You must use polite language in polite company, but in the armed forces your vocabulary must radically change. You must be careful not to speak out for Negro rights in the South, not to praise management at a union meeting, not to excuse something about Communism at an American Legion Convention, not to praise Buddha at Catholic Mass.

You are both told that you have inherent dignity and that you are a sinful creature. If you displease someone unwittingly, you are scolded and called "bad" or "stupid;" you start to feel that way, you begin to become the image others have cast you in. You are caught in a chain reaction of behavior, inviting the stigma which makes you worse.

If you are compulsive in what you seek, the object of your search generally eludes you. If you are too self-conscious, you are ridiculed, making you more so. If you believe you cannot live unless such-and-such takes place, it will probably not take place. You are taught that it is important to be loved; yet lonely people become so self-centered in their search for (or despair of) love that they fail to give it - and do not get it. If you are persecuted, you may assume the role of martyr, and become so wedded to the role that you invite martyrdom. You are told how necessary it is to fall IN love, so that you do, only to find (without realizing it) that you have entered into a state so emotional you cannot exercise judgment at a time when you need it most.

These are brief samples of the chaotic state of education. Our educators (and we are all educators of sorts) are themselves products of con-

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