

HISTORY UPEI con't from pg.1

by dull teachers who make hysteriophonic sounds without meaning."

The natural attraction which study of the past has to young people inevitably is blunted in many instances by the horrible initiation into the discipline. In an American survey made a few years ago, history was rated by high school students as the "most irrelevant" of 21 subjects in the curriculum.

But this is nothing new. Students have been resisting and overcoming poor history teaching in the public schools for generations. For some reason, however, the virus is now being carried into the university, where hitherto student interest in history has often revived strongly. So virulent has the disease become that the efforts of the occasional forceful high school history teacher are being frustrated rather than promoted at the university level.

This brings us to the second, and in my opinion major, cause of the decline of history's image as a dynamic, inspiring, creative discipline. It may be denoted by two words, "elitism" and "structuralism." If a catch-phrase is desired, it might be the "graduate school syndrome". This syndrome involves nearly all university departments, but its effect on history is especially pernicious.

Most academic departments of universities are staffed by men and women whose lifestyles and personal ideologies have been molded by th-

eir training for post-graduate degrees. This training is usually described and justified as contributing to "professionalism", but in my judgement "elitism" better characterizes it. The values of exclusiveness, condescension, righteousness, pedantry and intellectual arrogance are, if deliberately not encouraged, the almost inevitable result of immersion in the rarified atmosphere of erudition and specialized research typical of most departments in most graduate schools.

There is little cross-fertilization in graduate schools. Disciplines are self-contained, each with its father-figures, great books, specialized jargon and other identifying symbols. The young academic too often becomes, in the words of Lewis Mumford, "the servile specialist, eloquently ignorant of any department of thought but his own, and therefore fundamentally ignorant of essential relationships in his own field...."

The young teacher emerging from such a department with one of the post-graduate degrees, especially the doctorate, sees himself as a kind of missionary priest of his discipline. His apprenticeship over, he envisages his future role as apostle to the undergraduate savages whom he will be called upon to instruct at the university or college where he secures his first independent teaching appointment.

Imbued with the mystique of his discipline, he sees his

mission in life as, in part, spreading the gospel to the heathen, but also, more important, recruiting new candidates for his priesthood.

Belonging to what he regards as a noble elite, the professor is concerned with strengthening and perpetuating it. This can best be done by identifying among his undergraduate students, bright scholars, that is, students with personal qualities like his own, who can be sent up to the graduate schools, preferably his own, to become missionary priests in their turn.

Elitism calls forth structuralism. The professor, especially the young professor newly emerged from graduate school, considers himself the custodian of a body of sacred knowledge. This knowledge, he believes, can only be taught and learned in a single way. Any other approach to it profanes it with the evils of "popularism" & "unprofessionalism".

Consequently, most university professors place heavy emphasis on structure. The beginning student is presented with certain elementary theories which he must grasp which he must learn before more advanced learning is permitted. He is given a vast body of data which he is expected to commit to memory. He is told that failure to adhere to a more or less "scientific" methodology will not be tolerated. Heavy emphasis is placed upon taking courses in a certain sequence, reading specified books before others, avoiding certain authors who are out of fashion or in poor repute, using disciplinary jargon (at an elementary level, to be sure), writing research papers of increasing depth and complexity, footnoting sources in a special way, passing progressively difficult exams, etc.

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What in God's name are you doing?

Some guys can go pelting down the Road of Life like an arrow. They never hesitate, never swerve, never even slow down.

But the rest of us get gnawed by these funny little questions. They come, unasked for, unwelcome and usually about two o'clock in the morning. They can stop you cold in your tracks. Samples: Is this all there is? If everything's working out for me, why am I bugged? What in God's name am I doing anyway?

If they persist, if they make you feel like some dim-wit robot programmed by someone else, maybe you should bless the questions, take advantage of the time-out, and think.

If you're asking yourself what in God's name you're doing, why not think about doing something in God's name?

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as a dogmatic revelation of truth such a Judaic-Christian tradition could have been possible," claimed Naylor.

After the initial lecture, which in my opinion was of high calibre, a dialogue occurred. This resulted in the explication of even further and more interesting contradictions between the Greek and Judaic traditions too numerous to list in this review.

If anyone wishes to challenge Joe Naylor on his ideas concerning the origin of the separation of ideas and reality they can find him 'held-up' on the third floor of Main, philosophy section.