

# EDUCATION : A MANIFESTATION

This essay is an attempt to show why there is anti-intellectualism on campus (and in society at large); how these conditions arose and, what changes are necessary to allow for a genuine intellectual climate.

It would be proper to begin with a critique of existing social structures, values, aims et cetera, however neither time nor space will permit such a luxury; I am compelled at the outset therefore to begin with only the basic necessities for my arguments, and hope I shall not be misinterpreted.

## ALIENATING ROLES

To begin at the beginning, in my view, would be to begin with the child. The first role assigned the child is a familial one, i.e. son, daughter, first-born et cetera. This role is simply defined and relatively easy to actualize--indeed, his first reminiscences are as father's "son" or mother's daughter" and so on. It is hardly possible for the child to escape the role at this age (0-6 approximately) since he seeks identity and is unable to choose for himself an identity of his own. Parental authority confers identity upon him, and, due to lack of awareness of alternatives, he has no other recourse but to accept.

And, in so accepting, he becomes that which the role signifies. Whatever social, economic, and religious connotations the role has will determine how this individual (who, of course is not yet aware that he has a self.) will adapt to the role.

When the child enters school, usually at age 6, he will be introduced to his second major role--Student. Now, it is to be kept in mind that it is not the individual who suddenly becomes a "student", rather, it is the individual who is a "son" who now becomes a "student". As a matter of fact, strictly speaking, there is no notion as yet of "individuality"--it would be more accurate to say then, it is the "son" who is now a "student".

The role of "student" has a more significant social connotation than the more familial roles. No doubt of course familial roles possess social significance, but they are primarily actualized in the particular familial setting. The "student" role on the other hand is more specifically socially defined since it brings the "student" into more intimate and active social participation. The effects of this role on the

student are to affect greater socialization--peer groups, loves, norms, and mores which he might not experience as a "son" only. The higher up the school grades he goes, the more specific his role becomes--and the more exclusively "student" he becomes--not through being studious rather through role-identification. That is to say, the more intense his identification with the role becomes. As he progresses to High School, and University, he will experience many and varied changes, but these changes will be in terms of the role of "student"--there will be no major role change.

This process may continue for up to 20 years or more (dependent whether or not he passes each year and goes as far as the Ph.D. level); needless to say, by this time the individual who is the "student" would find his only true role--individual or "self"--an alien entity. My thesis at this point is simply that because of the long process of cultivating and identifying with the role of "student", the "Self" is alienated from its "Self". It may be argued at this point that true alienation does not in fact occur because alienation presupposes an original "oneness"--I agree but, in this case, the "Self" has not as yet been found as such, and until it has, the term "alienation" may be used to signify that one is not a "Self" due to lack of awareness of a "Self" and, because these roles cover up for the most part any awareness the individual may have of "Self"hood.

## SELF VS STUDENT

The "Self" then is rendered obscure because of the various roles the individual is placed in by the various socio-political and religious institutions.

The "student" role is varied and flexible in definition and in future projection. For example, the "student" who succeeds in attaining the grade 8 level has a limited number of possibilities as compared with the university graduate whose possibilities are more numerous and at a higher social level (economic-status). Furthermore, the higher the educational level the more varied the possibilities for future careers. Grade 8 points to labour (unskilled) grade 10-12 points to labour (skilled), University points to the professions. "University Student" means, therefore, "one who is preparing for a future

profession".

The various education "student" roles determine what "profession" the "student" will move into which will constitute the next major role change.

However, all the while this very long complex system of role variations and changes occur, the "Self", that more primordial phenomenon which makes these roles possible, gets passed over. The "Self" as such is hidden.

Now consider the absurdity. Throughout the growth and development of the individual-- during his most influential period -0-21+ that which is most his own--his "self"-- is pushed aside, so to speak, in favour of roles which have been determined by society and its institutions. He has been encouraged to become what he is not! No man is any role! What would be sensible indeed would be to cultivate a climate in which the "Self" of the particular individual could become known to itself and cultivate as its "Self"

## "Self"

How can a man be strong and self-assured if he knows not himself. Is he not at odds with himself--divided within himself--When he is called upon to be what he is not and to be as a man when to be a man ("SELF") is snatched away from him through the subtle process of "covering up" which society is so adept at doing?

There is no question that society and its institutions (especially its educational institutions) are putting the "cart before the horse", and thereby preventing true social cohesion from becoming a reality i.e.

the man divided within himself cannot contribute to a healthy society as the man who, through awareness of himself as a "self" can as united with himself.

The educative process as it is today is cultivating individuals to fill socially-prepared slots for itself rather than providing a milieu for the growth and development of the individual as individual or "self".

So far as this university is concerned the "professors" are incapable of providing this form of milieu because as "professors" they are conforming to their socially defined roles by preparing individuals for society's slots; and so long as they function from within this role they will have

as their object for instruction, "Students" -- not individuals; and alas, they will relate and advise them as such. "Students" will be treated as "student" and be perpetuated thereby. In the same process, "professors" will behave as, and be treated as, "professors" and likewise will be perpetuated thereby. Roles are relating to roles--not "Self" to "Self" as it must eventually become.

There is considerable concern as to why students are not intellectually motivated; why they are more interested in the future job than in intellectual cultivation; and why they are so apathetic and undecided regarding course participation, etc.

The reason for this is quite simple in my view: the "Student" is expected to be that which only the "Self" can be -- interested, committed, self-assured, purposeful.

When the individual is denied his "Self", he cannot comport himself toward life because he is constantly longing for the return to "Self"-- indeed, it is only the "Self" that can truly "live". A role can function, but it cannot live. Furthermore, only the "Self" as such, can be interested, committed, self-assured, etc. because it itself and as such is involved in its particular projects; whereby roles are prescribed from without and are designed to serve social rather than individual ends.

The phenomenon "apathetic student" is none other than a manifestation of a lost "Self" seeking its "Self" while at the same time is pressured to be what it has been designated to be, by society in a broad sense.

While alienated from itself, the "Self" which seeks itself, must, in the meantime, comport itself in the manner prescribed for it by the role in which it has been cast.

A tension is created between the "Self" which desires itself, and the role which has strong social prescriptions, etc.

The liberated individual is he who rises above these social roles and strives for his "Self".

It is usually not until early adolescence that the individual experiences the existential "Moment". That "Moment" is when the individual suddenly discovers that he has a "Self", is an "I". No longer is he just an object among objects, or an extension of his parents--