

# Ray Peat's Newsletter

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I wrote this several years ago, but each month there was always something more topical to send out. Every day, the mass media publicize and promote dangerously mistaken ideas, so there was always a more urgent seeming topic.

I always try to place concrete subjects in their most appropriate context. As a person who studied and worked in linguistics, literature, and art before concentrating on work in biology and physiology, I realize that language, imagery, and metaphor always work within a specific cultural setting. Seemingly infinite amounts of money can be mobilized by strong metaphors. The War on Cancer, the War on Drugs, the Genome Project, are examples of using language deviously to manipulate the public. Every issue, scientific or political, to be considered sanely, requires that we look critically at the contexts, and the contexts include the words, the concepts, and the metaphors that we use to communicate with.

*Culture is the context for political power.* I have often discussed topics in biomedical research which reached their highest achievements in the first half of the 20th century, and then declined in the second half of the century, under the influence of the pharmaceutical industry, and its servant, the U.S. F.D.A., but this was only one aspect of a general process.

A great and deliberate pollution has been spread through world culture. While the U.S. Government was secretly using Americans as guinea pigs for experiments with radiation and germ warfare, it was secretly spending vast amounts of money (most of it from the Marshall Plan) to support Abstract Expressionism in painting, and parallel movements in other arts and sciences. The CIA-funded Congress for Cultural Freedom was representative of the way this public money was used to eliminate freedom of expression. "Liberals" and "progressives" were special targets for this manipulation, but even conservatives such as Henry Luce (publisher of *Time* and *Life*) were induced to stop ridiculing Abstract Expressionism, and to begin supporting it.

The suppression of critical judgment in art makes it easier to suppress it in science, medicine, and politics.

## I. Public Passivity and the Screw II. Phenomenology of the State: Marxism according to Groucho III. Education for the Primacy of Paranoia

### I.

The sports hero, the "world class performer," the producers of grand spectacles, by definition are "excellent," better than everyone else at what they do. When the culture is filled with grand achievements, admiration is an appropriate reaction, and participation isn't. Almost the whole population falls between the Olympics and the Special Olympics, in all sorts of abilities, but their culture is created from the top down. Similarly, small businesses are squeezed out by monopolies, craftsmen are replaced by computer programs, insurance companies regulate the professions. And as excellence becomes a theoretical standard, everyone's performance is debased. The "quality" that people like Donald Trump admire is unlike the qualities that people used to enjoy.

**"Freedom is not a concept in which people can do anything they want, be anything they can be. Freedom is about authority." Mayor Giuliani, *New York Times*, March 17, 1994**

Several years ago our local newspaper and television music critics raved about the "acoustics" of the city's new 22 million dollar concert hall. I had always wanted to hear Yehudi Menuhin play, so when he came to town I got a seat up near the ceiling, where I was startled to find that the sound was coming out of loudspeakers mounted in the ceiling. Electronically processed sound, generated by vibrating metal and plastic loudspeakers, can be heard even better at home, without the "acoustics" of the concert hall.

The "quality" is in the minds of those impressed by the cost of the building.

The words "client" and "patient" express the passivity of the customer in relation to the lawyer or physician. The same passivity exists wherever "expertise" replaces self-reliance. The individualism that was idealized in America has been replaced by a client mentality.

The authority of power can't be questioned if the people don't have their own knowledge, ability, and power.

## II.

History attempts to make time coherent, logic tries to transcend the incoherence of history, and phenomenology tries to find meaning, purpose, and motive in the incoherence and illogicality of our social experience, primarily by eliminating false assumptions. Governments and their educational systems are in the business of preserving false assumptions.

The theory of monarchy is that only one person has to think, so the citizen-subject can be thoughtless. Other political philosophies are one-thoughted, two-thoughted, etc., depending on how little reality they admit. Hegel tried to get complexity organized into the simplifying monarchy of the thought of god. Marx took the idea of the dialectic, and used it to generalize reality, but underestimated the difficulty of clearly defining generalizations such as capital, when the boundaries of the system were in a continuous process of reformation.

When knowledge and culture become important parts of capital ("intellectual property," and judicially recognized "expertise" for example), the ambiguities demand that the contributions of Groucho Marx be considered as an extension of classical marxism. Groucho said he wouldn't want to belong to any club that would have him. To recognize the ambiguities of class and power is to begin to grasp the phenomena of society. Identity and belonging, language, concepts, names and origins seem more important than physical realities. And that fosters the growth of a culture of fraud and deception. Advertising, lobbying, and bribery blend smoothly with art, science, and law.

Any statement, no matter how clear and logical, depends on context--even scientific and mathematical statements. Goedl's principle and computer-program glitches illustrate the idea. Any statement demands a clarifying context, and therefore a dialog. That's the meaning of the "dialectic" introduced by Hegel and expanded by Marx. Everything has to be made clear by discussion. Reality is more complex than any attempt to formalize it. The reality is that laws and contracts function primarily as traps, to give the appearance of reason to acts of power. Contracts with insurance companies, publishers, and state agencies are famously meaningless, but *any* contract or law of importance is nothing but an opportunity for powerful groups to use the force of money and the courts (or police and their weapons) to defeat those who would assert some "right" under the law or contract.

**"The most important Manhattan Projects of the future will be vast government-sponsored inquiries into . . . the problem of making people love their servitude."**

**"To make them love it is the task assigned, in present-day totalitarian states, to ministries of propaganda, newspaper editors and schoolteachers. But their methods are still crude and unscientific."**

**Aldous Huxley, 1946**

People who consider themselves to be the state (whether or not they say "the State, it's Me") have almost an identity with the Law. Laws were written in the past, and since the past isn't accessible, it's almost as though a foreign power ruled us from a distant imperial capital, and sent its agents among us to apply the law to us as they see fit. They are agents of the state, interpreting the law for us, so that we may be bound to it. As soon as they perceive themselves to be agents of the state, their thought becomes the law.

The problem relates to social workers and lawyers as much as it does to presidents and attorneys-general--their subjectivity fills not only their world, but it intrudes into everyone else's

world. Lawyers and presidents lie, not just because they can get away with it, but because it has become part of the job description.

The basic question about the state is where its legitimacy comes from. The monarch used to speak for god, and his clergy backed him up. Republics kept the basic idea of the state, and invented a new story about its legitimacy. But the new government is always founded by traitors to the old government. Treason is the essence of the state. Treason is legitimacy.

The official implementation of the policy of Loyalty Oaths made it clear that the government of the United States aspired to totalitarian perfection. The same government had secret policies, secret laws, secret programs, and acknowledged that it had to lie to its citizens. Citizenship amounted to an arranged marriage between an eight year old virgin and a syphilitic pirate.

If everyone who is now in prison were released, and put into the jobs of government officials, filling them from the top down, and deciding among themselves who would go to congress, who to the executive branch, to the courts and state governments, nothing would get worse, and it might get better, because the question of legitimacy would be settled, and the cost of bribes and campaign expenses would be smaller.

Jury nullification is one of the few situations in our democracy in which democracy and reason can sometimes be seen in action, but it is limited by the way juries are constituted. People who are homeless can't serve on juries, and neither can people who need more to pay the rent than the \$10 per day jurors commonly receive. Under Jim Crow laws, white people always tried black people. If juries really reflected the population in general, or if they were actually chosen from the peers of the accused (most prisoners are poorer than those who condemned them), fewer of those accused would be convicted.

Capital punishment, under our system, never punishes capital. If a corporation's officials deliberately take actions that they know will kill people, it has committed first degree or aggravated murder, and so its capital, all of its capital, should be taken from it, as well as from those who took

the action. It is protested that "innocent investors would lose their money," but the protest makes evident the truth that corporations are designed to let people get away with murder for profit. If a corporation is to be anything but a conspiracy against the public, it must be fully responsible for its actions. Investors, to protect their money, would have to know what was going on in the corporation. This is exactly the principle that is now in practice regarding the confiscation of property involved in certain crimes, primarily drug crimes, but the reasoning would be even clearer if it were applied to the corporate property involved in corporate crimes.

The principle that no valid contract can be made to do something illegal takes legitimacy away from corporations--and governments--which are used to commit crimes, with simpler logic than that used in confiscating airplanes used to smuggle drugs. Likewise, a clause or implication of a contract which is secret from one of the parties to the contract is a logical impossibility, and makes the contract a nonentity.

If a corporation is a conspiracy against the public, with a prerogative to keep secrets for its own profit, any government which has any secrets from those it rules, is a conspiracy against them, for whatever reasons it might have. The right to have secret information is the right to lie, to rob, and to kill, and those who assent to such governmental power have no claim to legitimacy as citizens. Any governmental action which is kept secret constitutes evidence of the government's illegitimacy.

If power must be open to be legitimate, then the power to determine the intellectual content of any educational curriculum must be open. Governmental power is behind every recognized educational institution, but nearly all decisions about the accreditation of those programs are made in private. **If the reasons for imposing certain curricula were open to full discussion, then the educational programs would also be more likely to incorporate the principle of responsibility and evaluation.**

As funding for education shrinks, the state is seen to be exercising thought-control, in a simpler and more direct way, when it specifies the

curriculum that must be followed in home-schooling. When the state accredits educational programs, or establishes private accrediting agencies, it is delegating thought-control to the accredited, or accrediting, agencies.

If the state, through its accreditation system and its court system, can define what an expert is, then it can define what knowledge and truth are. The loyalty oath was the blunt object used by Adolph Hitler, Strom Thurmond, Richard Nixon, et al., to keep people in line. Education and its accreditation, backed up by a prison system, are the high-tech equivalent of the loyalty oath, controlling the intellectually limited public as effectively as the old system controlled the morally atrophied.

Approved knowledge is made tantamount to citizenship. Even beauticians have to be licensed by the state. Schooling is the moral equivalent of syphilis, but piracy is the prerogative of the corporate-bureaucratic elite.

As long as knowledge is power, and power is (able to define) knowledge, secrecy and ignorance will be promoted and knowledge will be rationed.

**Schools are already in the business of rationing knowledge. The idea and practice of "challenging examinations," being able to get credit in a course if you already know what the course is supposed to teach, has essentially disappeared, because, as Oregon's Secretary of Public Instruction Gubser told me, "what students know doesn't have anything to do with education."** In my dealings with other state, federal and private accreditation officials, I understood that to be their functional attitude, but when I heard the state's top official blurt it out after her evasions had failed to dissuade me, I realized that the system was consciously conspiring against knowledge. If people could get their diplomas just by proving their (conventionally recognized) knowledge, they would have too much time to spend learning about reality.

I have heard many teachers say that it is impossible to measure how much a student knows, and my question has to be, "then how can you know that?" And why are exams used to choose candidates for college admission, or to enter the practice of medicine or law, or to get a

driver's license? Teachers, for whatever reason, function as part of the mystification that creates the knowledge rationing system. Alfred Jarry was describing schools and governments when he wrote about the "debraining machines."

The great danger now is that critical consciousness is becoming so rare, that the State will be able to extend the concept of "contempt of court" to the administratively punishable offense of "contempt for the legally constituted knowledge." The mechanisms already exist for doing this. Forty years ago, Wilhelm Reich was imprisoned, and his books were burned. *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, which analyzed the dirty little character defects of authoritarian officials, was destroyed as a "label for a medical device." *The Murder of Christ*, *Listen Little Man*, *The Function of the Orgasm*, and other books about the nature of social oppression and violence were not even available to graduate students in psychology. The academic apparatus in its entirety conspired to maintain the official silence while Reich died in prison.

At least until it is illegal to do so, we should continue to ridicule, criticize, satirize, and condemn the state power which is in itself an abuse of reason and justice. Let there be a new world disorder!

The attitude toward the past is everything. The past, by definition, is unalterable, and can't be present again. Examining the record, we can see how we got where we are, but knowing where we are going is part of the life process itself. Blake said, "Imagination has nothing to do with Memory."

Those who try to "preserve the past," by trying to make it live again, in effect are trying to gain immortality by imposing death onto life.

Institutions are things that persist from the past, in someone's way of life and attitude, that are imposed onto life, over and over. Circumcision is a metaphor for every institution. The living flesh is trimmed, pain is inflicted, attitudes are repeated. "As the caterpillar chooses the fairest leaves to lay her eggs on, so the priest lays his curse on the fairest joys."

Logic that works for established knowledge can't work for projecting the future. Logic

clarifies and orders the past, but lived intelligence, imagination, is the mental tool that is appropriate for the future, which is the only place we can live.

We can get along very nicely without the debraining machines.

### III.

If the schools and universities have the purpose of training people to be good employees, then only the first two years should be required, to teach reading and counting. At the age of 8 or 9, the practical career studies could begin, in engineering, medical services, judicial and military services, food preparation, and entertainment services.

But, if people were to be prepared to function as citizens, to make decisions about how their lives were to be lived, then the process of education would be based on criticism, evaluation, and on seeing things in all the relevant contexts that can be imagined. And the process of education and criticism would move toward the center of our lives, and would be continuous, from infancy to old age.

A wonderful variety of stupid beliefs has been propagated from the centers of academic power, and each type of stupid belief has tended to reign for a generation, until a new, more oppressive stupidity has been invented and imposed in its place. The impossible ideas can be propagated, because the educational system never learned how to teach people to recognize when the emperor's new clothes don't exist, and to say so.

When everyone is talking about the emperor's new clothes, the person who trusts his senses will perceive that a false belief is being propagated when he sees that the emperor is naked. To talk about the imposition of lies is to risk being classified as a "paranoiac." If everyone discussed the alternative interpretations that seem reasonable, then evidence would be evaluated in relation to theories and assumptions. **The basic violation of reason then would be the authoritarian refusal to discuss the issue.** Secrecy for national security would be recognized as the equivalent of a coup d'etat, taking authority away from the public.

The culture of computation is a development of authoritarianism. Computers were conceived as

mathematical machines, to work out the implications of premises. Mathematics was always popular with the established powers, because it never questioned assumptions. The computers that have been developed into manipulators of images also make the manipulation of people easier.

The "critical paranoia" that Salvador Dali described was the basic mental process that used to be called "wonder," guided by the critical evaluation of alternatives. The questioning curiosity aroused the speculative imagination, and the quality of the perception--the richness of the discovery--was suggestively related to its truth and significance.

To be concerned with the meaning of life and the quality of life is to wonder whether "this is all there is," and to live in a state of exploration. An educational system that is dedicated to the preservation of things as they are, must stifle that natural exploratory impulse. Because if it isn't stifled, that impulse will look for a better way of living. Our nature, so far, has been extremely antagonistic to our nurture, and from that opposition the system has created the ideas of original sin, corruption of the body, bad instincts, genetic determinism, neokantianism, professional training, and all of the other denials of essential human intelligence.

The nature of our biological development requires that the organism function and interact with the environment as it grows. Education of the intelligence is intrinsically related to the proper growth and function of the organism which is the person. The lack of stimulation or the wrong kind of stimulation makes us sick, ugly, and stupid. Schooling plays its part in degrading intelligence, but the whole culture is structured to warp our growth into forms that are convenient for the functioning of the system as it is.

The argument for realism and bottom-line practicality is often made, that accountants must be trained to help corporations grow, and that people would naturally prefer to learn something more pleasant than accounting, and so there must be extrinsic inducements and coercion. But the higher realism and practicality argues that human consciousness and existence must have priority

over any of the economic mechanisms that might support a particular way of living.

The priority of human intelligence specifies the means that are appropriate for education in any setting. Intelligence is, by definition, responsive, and responsive intelligence is necessarily responsible. The sources of power in a society are always integrated with the educational process, and the manipulative use of control has always made the process of education disappear.

The free use of education amounts to the attempt to solve the problems of society, and so education and intelligence would be of service to society. The universities in third-world countries have always been recognizable as servants of the ruling classes or imperialists, but Europe and the United States have fostered a perception that universities existed to serve the public and to educate for democracy.

If there were no secrets, power would be administered in the open, and there would be no conspiracies, or rather, the ubiquity of the process would be evident, and a different term would be used. But general awareness of the exercise of power--stupid as power's actions have always tended to be--would make things hard for those in power. And so any factor that fosters a suspicious, critical, imaginative, exploratory awareness and questioning of the world tends to weaken the concentration of power, and to share in the exercise of power. Intelligence, as far as it exists, tends to be revolutionary, and so education (if it is essentially an exercise and development of intelligence) must be devoted to the overcoming of stupidity, especially when stupidity rules.

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Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta Books), 1999; *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*. New York: New Press, 2000.

Pages 397-404: Tom Braden, director of the International Organizations Branch of the CIA, said that by 1953, "we were operating or influencing international organizations in every field" (page 398). When the source of their funding was revealed many of the

people claimed not to have known, but Braden shows that they had to have known.

A. C. Higgins, State University of N.Y., Albany, commenting on *Creating the Cold War University: The Transformation of Stanford*, Rebecca S. Lowen, Berkeley, California: The University of California Press, 1997:

"There's not a word in this book about fraud and dishonesty in science. What is abundantly clear however is the transition from the 20th century university to the "Cold War University," a transition which is necessarily accompanied by the loss of idealism and the core values of science. This new science is a prostitute variety, ready for any comer on the open market. What is important to the academic administrator of the Cold War University is the bottom line. Why should anyone expect honesty in such an institution? Indeed, it's no wonder that fraud and dishonesty are as common as they are. What is amazing is that honesty and morality remains at all! It's now been 40 and more years since "entrepreneurial science" was substituted for the older stuff. After 4 decades, is anything of pure science left? Should we be surprised at anything that happens?"

Ivan Illich, from the introduction to *Tools for Conviviality*, 1973:

"Our analysis of schooling has led us to recognize the mass production of education as a paradigm for other industrial enterprises, each producing a service commodity, each organized as a public utility, and each defining its output as a basic necessity. At first our attention was drawn to the compulsory insurance of professional health care, and to systems of public transport, which tend to become compulsory once traffic rolls above a certain speed. We found that the industrialization of any service agency leads to destructive side effects analogous to the unwanted secondary results well known from the overproduction of goods. We had to face a set of limits to growth in the service sector of any society as inescapable as the limits inherent in the industrial production of artifacts. We concluded that a set of limits to industrial growth is well formulated only if these limits apply both to goods and to services which are produced in an industrial mode. So we set out to clarify these limits."

"The only source of knowledge is experience."

Albert Einstein