

JOEL SPRING



# A PRIMER OF LIBERTARIAN EDUCATION



# INTRODUCTION

LIBERTARIAN THEORIES of education are a product of the belief that any successful radical change in society partly depends upon changes in the character structure and attitudes of the population: a new society cannot be born unless a new person is born that can function within it. Radical pedagogy is concerned with new forms of socialization that will encourage non-authoritarian and revolutionary character structures. Thus, radical pedagogy encompasses not only traditional modes of learning within the school but also methods of child rearing and the organization of the family.

In considering radical forms of education it should be recognized that they have stood *outside* the dominant streams of educational development, which have been directed at reforming society rather than radically changing it. For instance, public schools attempt to eliminate poverty by educating the children of the poor so that they

can function within the existing social structure. Radical education would attempt to change the social attitudes which support this social structure. The questions raised by radical education are very different from those raised by a reform-oriented education. The distinction is very much like the one Wilhelm Reich made between radical and reactionary psychologists: a reactionary psychologist, when confronted with poor people who are thieves, would ask how one could end their stealing habits; a radical psychologist would ask why all poor people do not steal. The first approach would emphasize changing behavior to fit into the existing social structure while the second would try to identify those psychological characteristics of the social structure which keep most poor people under control.

Public schooling and radical education are almost contradictory notions. Public schools are supported by the dominant social structure and in turn work to support that structure. Public schools can reform and improve but they do not attempt to make basic structural changes. The rejection of the public school represents one of the important themes in the historical development of radical forms of education—from William Godwin in the eighteenth century to Ivan Illich in the twentieth—and has been premised on the idea that schools came into being as a means of shaping the moral and social beliefs of the population for the benefit of a dominant elite. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this tradition of criticism has been interwoven with practical attempts by radical groups to create a system of education that would free people from ideological control.

This volume focuses on the major radical educational ideas flowing from anarchism, Marxism, and the Freudian left. Anarchism represents one important radical tradition which has attempted to develop techniques for making people free of all domination. As the anarchist Max Stirner emphasized in the nineteenth century, the primary prob-

lem is getting people to the point of truly owning their minds. Another radical tradition has sought to achieve freedom from ideological control by raising levels of consciousness and linking thought and learning to social change. This stream of thought has made the overcoming of human alienation in the modern industrial world the first step in radical change. It has its origins in Marxist thought and is best represented in the modern world by the work of Paulo Freire. A third tradition, that of the Freudian left, including people like A.S. Neill and Wilhelm Reich, has emphasized the necessity of changing character structure. All radical educators in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, of course, have placed some emphasis on the necessity for changing the family structure and liberating women; for some, like Reich, the elimination of the traditional family and the development of free sexual relations were to be the first step in radical education.

All of these groups and ideas have formed a tradition of radical education in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is a tradition which has not necessarily been held together by common contacts, though this did occur, nor by common institutional connections. Rather, its cohesion derives largely from a common belief that power and domination by social structures depend on child-rearing practices and ideological control, that the power of the state and economy rests on a submissive population. Radicals within this tradition have not only a shared critique but a shared alternative vision as well, emphasizing women's liberation, sexual freedom, new forms of family organization, and the importance of autonomy.



# THE RADICAL CRITIQUE OF SCHOOLING

AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT of radical concern about education has been the reaction to the rise of mass schooling in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. During this period there was a steady trend toward universal compulsory schooling in state-supported and regulated schools. The purpose of mass schooling has been to train the citizen and worker for the modern industrial state. It is only natural for those who seek a radical transformation of society to have adopted a highly critical posture toward systems of schooling which are organized to maintain that society.

The major themes of radical criticism have centered around the political, social, and economic power of the school. One concern has been that public schooling under the control of a national government inevitably leads to attempts by the educational system to produce citizens who will be blindly obedient to the dictates of that

government, citizens who will uphold the authority of government even when it runs counter to personal interest and reason and who will adopt a nationalistic posture of "my country, right or wrong." Another theme of radical criticism has been that systems of schooling have been used to produce workers who are trained by the process of schooling to accept work which is monotonous, boring and without personal satisfaction. These workers accept the authority of the industrial system and do not seek any fundamental changes in that system. Still another concern has been the myth of social mobility through education that has accompanied the development of mass schooling. This myth has led to the acceptance of educational credentials as a just measure of social worth and as a basis for social rewards, and yet these credentials have been distributed according to existing social class divisions. Rather than increasing mobility, education has added more cement to the divisions between social classes.<sup>1</sup>

These themes are illustrated by the work of three major critics of education: William Godwin, Francisco Ferrer, and Ivan Illich. Godwin was one of the first critics of education to argue against the political power the state would derive from its ability to spread its particular ideology in the schools. Francisco Ferrer directed his concern toward mass public schooling and its role in producing well-trained and well-controlled workers for the new industrial economies of the nineteenth century. Ivan Illich represents one of the most recent critics of the relationship between schooling and the social system. All of these themes will take on added meaning in later chapters because in one sense radical theories of education have been attempts to produce the *opposite* of the very things these critics are attacking. Radicals have searched for an educational system and a process of child rearing that will create a non-authoritarian person who will not obediently accept the dictates of the political and social system and who will demand greater personal control and choice.

DURING THE LATE eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Western societies were feeling the tension of the shift from monarchical to republican forms of government. During this period the close relationship between the political process and mass public schooling was developed. It was at this time that William Godwin wrote his trenchant critique of mass schooling. The French and American revolutions symbolized the eighteenth-century faith in individual reason and its ability to guide government. But there were certain inherent contradictions in these political changes. Faith in individual reason could lead to an argument for no government at all rather than a republican form of government. For William Godwin, born in 1756, the reduction in the power of monarchies seemed to be followed by the increased power of a *new* ruling elite. To change the form of government meant very little as long as any government existed which could be used in the interests of a controlling group. For Godwin faith in the power of human reason implied a society where each person could be sovereign rather than a republican society with periodic changes in the ruling class.

Godwin was born into a family of non-conformist ministers in England. He was trained for the church, but rejected the ministry and in 1783 attempted to open a school. When his school did not succeed, he tried his hand at writing. In 1793 he published an *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* which is considered the first modern anarchist attack on the concept of the state. Four years later he published the first modern libertarian text on education, the *Enquirer*. In 1796 he married Mary Wollstonecraft whose book *The Vindication of the Rights of Women* is still a classic treatise on women's liberation and the method by which education is used to enslave women to men.<sup>2</sup>

Godwin's ideas must be understood within the framework of the Enlightenment's faith in progress as a product of the unfolding of human reason. He feared that the two

most striking phenomena of his time—the rise of the modern state and the development of national systems of education to produce citizens for that state—would have the effect of dogmatically controlling and stifling human reason. In the pamphlet he issued at the opening of his school in 1783, he argued that the two main objects of human power were government and education. The most powerful of the two was education because “government must always depend upon the opinion of the governed. Let the most oppressed people under heaven once change their mode of thinking, and they are free.”<sup>3</sup> Any mode of government gains its legitimacy from the recognition and acceptance of people. Control of public opinion through education means continued support. Despotism and injustice can therefore continue to exist in any society in which the full development of human reason has been denied within the walls of the schoolhouse.

The power of national education was clearly defined in Godwin's study of government, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*. He warned that “before we put so powerful a machine under the direction of so ambiguous an agent, it behooves us to consider well what it is that we do. Government will not fail to employ it, to strengthen its hands, and perpetuate its institutions.” Godwin believed that the content of national education would be shaped to conform to the dictates of political power. He argued that “the data upon which their conduct as statesmen is vindicated, will be the data upon which their instructions are founded.”<sup>4</sup> The concern about national education was a reflection of his own suspicions about the nature of government. First, Godwin felt that political institutions favored the usurpation of power by the rich and tended to aggravate the differences between the rich and the poor. Legislation protected the property of the rich by unfair laws and systems of taxation. Law was administered by the government to the advantage of those with economic power, and government enhanced the power of wealth by



translating it into social and political power. Second, Godwin believed that the growth of large centralized states would result in the promotion of values, such as a quest for national glory, patriotism, and international economic and cultural competition, which would be of little benefit to the individual:

The desire to gain a more extensive territory, to conquer or hold in awe our neighbouring states, to surpass them in arts or arms, is a desire founded in prejudice and error. . . . Security and peace are more to be desired than a name at which nations tremble.<sup>5</sup>

National education would be used to support chauvinistic patriotism and the political and economic power of the state.

Godwin had other objections to national education. He wrote,

It is not true that our youth ought to be instructed to venerate the constitution, however excellent; they should be led to venerate truth; and the constitution only so far as it corresponds with their uninfluenced deductions of truth.<sup>6</sup>

Godwin was convinced that a just society could only be the result of all people freely exercising their reason. Since people were constantly improving their reasoning powers and their understanding of nature, their understanding of the natural laws of conduct was constantly changing. Constitutions and other political institutions which tended to make laws *permanent* could only hinder the unfolding of people's understanding of how life should be regulated.

It was for this reason that Godwin objected to a national education which taught the laws of the land. Most people, he argued, could understand that certain crimes were injurious to the public. Those laws which stood outside the realm of reason and had to be *taught* rather

than understood were usually laws which gave advantages to some particular group in society. Godwin wrote, as an example, "It has been alleged, that 'mere reason may teach me not to strike my neighbour; but will never forbid my sending a sack of wool from England, or printing the French constitution in Spain.'" He maintained that "all crimes, that can be supposed to be the fit objects of judicial administration, are capable of being discerned without the teaching of law." He admitted that "my own understanding would never have told me that the exportation of wool was a crime," but, he added, "neither do I believe it is a crime, now that a law has been made affirming it to be such."<sup>7</sup> In this statement Godwin was expressing his own revolutionary conviction that people should not obey laws which did not conform to individual reason.

Godwin warned,

Had the scheme of a national education been adopted when despotism was most triumphant, it is not to be believed that it could have for ever stifled the voice of truth. But it would have been the most formidable and profound contrivance for that purpose, that imagination can suggest.

Even in countries where liberty tended to prevail, he argued, people should be wary of national education because of its tendency to perpetuate error. In one of the most striking expressions of the case against modern schooling, Godwin declared: "Destroy us if you please; but do not endeavor, by a national education, to destroy in our understandings the discernment of justice and injustice."<sup>8</sup>

Godwin, however, was unique in raising such strong objections during a time when national education was considered one of the most advanced social causes. Even Mary Wollstonecraft favored a national education as a means of eliminating the social advantages of men over

women. Godwin's critique was borne out by the facts: most government plans for education *were* directed at maintaining political and social order by instilling particular conceptions of law and morality; most of them *did* place emphasis on building national spirit and patriotism and were viewed as the bulwark of government. Yet most reformers and revolutionaries of the period supported national education plans because of a belief that schooling would sustain individual freedom.

Throughout Western society the modern national state instituted citizenship training in the school. In Prussia, Johann Fichte argued that the state should expend as much money on education as on national defense because,

The State which introduced universally the national education proposed by us, from the moment that a new generation of youths had passed through it, would need no special army at all, but would have in them an army such as no age has yet seen.<sup>9</sup>

Fichte believed that the school would not only be an instrument for instilling the law of the land but would prepare individuals to sacrifice themselves for the good of the community.

In the United States the prophets of the common school movement argued that a common school would create a consensus of political and social values and effectively reduce political and social unrest. They exhibited an almost limitless faith that the school, regardless of its political control, would become a great engine for freedom and human progress. For example, Henry Barnard, one of the great American common school reformers of the nineteenth century, expressed awareness of the problems caused by state control of the schools, but dismissed them arguing that in the end education always led to freedom. In poetic terms he expressed the faith of the nineteenth-century schoolman in the power of learning once it is set loose in a society. "It would be easier," he

wrote in reference to the government stopping the well-schooled individual, "to return the rain to the clouds, from which it is falling, before it has freshened hill-top and valley, mingled with the waters of every rising spring, and reached the roots of every growing plant."<sup>10</sup>

The faith of the nineteenth-century schoolman was certainly crushed in the twentieth century with the rise of Nazi Germany. Schooling in Germany during this period exemplified all the evils Godwin had foreseen in the eighteenth century. Schools were used to spread a particular ideology and a brand of nationalism linked to territorial expansion and to the glorification of the country's leaders. The Nazis implemented changes in the school curriculum, with compulsory training in racial biology and increased emphasis upon German history and literature. Five hours a day of physical education were required for building character and discipline and as preparation for military training. Highly propagandized textbook material was introduced. An order from the Minister of Education in 1935 gave specific instructions to begin racial instruction at the age of six years, to emphasize the importance of race and heredity for the future of the German people and to awaken in the students a pride in their membership in the German race as the bearer of Nordic values. The instructions stated, "World history is to be portrayed as the history of racially-determined peoples."<sup>11</sup>

While Nazi Germany might represent an extreme example of what Godwin had warned against, his criticisms also proved prophetic in the case of the United States—the system of schooling that Leo Tolstoy referred to as the "least bad." Patriotic exercises in U. S. schools reached a fever pitch during the 1920's under pressure from such groups as the American Legion and the Daughters of the American Revolution. Radical labor unions complained about their inability to get union information into the schools and about the schools' emphasis on an economic

philosophy opposed to unionization. Upton Sinclair, after touring the public schools in the 1920's, complained that they were not furthering the welfare of humanity but were designed merely to keep the capitalists in power. One of the directors of a radical education program in New Jersey in 1925 declared that

the public school system is a powerful instrument for the perpetuation of the present social order with all its injustices and inequality . . . and that, quite naturally, whatever is likely to disturb the existing arrangement is regarded unfavorably by those in control of the public schools.

Radicals argued that in each community, elected school boards were controlled by a business and professional elite. Studies throughout the century tended to support this conclusion.<sup>12</sup>

Whether in Nazi Germany or in the United States, clearly the school by its very nature had become an institution for political control. Since it was an institution consciously designed to change and shape people, it was continually being sought as a weapon by different political factions. By the twentieth century all political groups wanted to use the school to spread their particular ideology and mold their ideal of the modern individual. The problem for radicals was that they usually lacked the power to compete for control of the schools; hence, the schools tended to become bastions of conservatism.

BY THE END of the nineteenth century it seemed that the schools were also beginning to function as appendages to the new industrial economies. It was charged that the schools produced obedient servants of both the state and the corporation. One of the leading critics to make this

argument was the Spanish anarchist and educator Francisco Ferrer, who founded the Modern School in Barcelona in 1901. Ferrer's work gained international recognition in 1909 when he was accused by the Spanish government of leading an insurrection in Barcelona and was executed. His execution elicited a cry against injustice from many groups in Europe and the United States and sparked interest in his career and ideas. In the United States a Ferrer Society was organized and a Modern School established in Stelton, New Jersey as well as in other places. In Europe the International League for the Rational Education of Children, which had been founded by Ferrer, was reorganized after his death with Anatole France as its Honorary President. The International League attempted to continue the publication of Ferrer's review, *L'Ecole Renouée*, and distributed information and manuals on the Modern School. In the United States the Ferrer Society published a journal called *The Modern School* which became a vehicle for radical criticism of the schools.

"They know, better than anyone else," Ferrer wrote in reference to government support of schooling, "that their power is based almost entirely on the school."<sup>13</sup> In the past, governments had controlled the masses by keeping them in a state of ignorance. With the rise of industrialism in the nineteenth century, governments found themselves involved in an international economic competition which required trained industrial workers. Schools triumphed in the nineteenth century not because of a general desire to reform society but because of economic requirements. Ferrer wrote that governments wanted schools "not because they hope for the renovation of society through education, but because they need individuals, workmen, perfected instruments of labor to make their industrial enterprises and the capital employed in them profitable."<sup>14</sup> Ferrer recognized that the hierarchical structure of capitalism required certain types of character traits in workers. They had to be trained to accept the boredom

and monotony of factory work and to conform obediently to the organization of the factory. Workers needed to be punctual, obedient, passive, and willing to accept their work and position.

In Ferrer's mind the schools had accomplished exactly the things Godwin had warned of in the previous century. In becoming the focal points for maintaining existing institutions, schools came to depend on a system and method which conditioned the student for obedience and docility. This, of course, was a charge leveled at the schools by a variety of critics; from Ferrer's point of view, however, it was an inevitable result of a school controlled by the state. "Children must be accustomed," Ferrer wrote, "to obey, to believe, to think, according to the social dogmas which govern us. Hence, education cannot be other than such as it is to-day."<sup>15</sup> For Ferrer one of the central problems was to break government's power over education. Reform movements that tried to work within the system could accomplish nothing toward the goal of human emancipation. Those who organized the national schools, Ferrer claimed, "have never wanted the uplift of the individual, but his enslavement; and it is perfectly useless to hope for anything from the school of to-day."<sup>16</sup>

For Ferrer it was inconceivable that a government would create a system of education which would lead to any radical changes in society. It was therefore unrealistic to believe that national schooling would be a means of significantly changing the conditions of the lower classes. Since it was the existing social structure which produced the poor, education could eliminate poverty only by freeing people to change the social structure in a radical direction. Writing in a bulletin of the Modern School about the mixing of rich and poor in the schools of Belgium, Ferrer stressed that "the instruction that is given in [the schools] is based on the supposed eternal necessity for a division of rich and poor, and on the principle that social harmony consists in the fulfilment of the laws."<sup>17</sup> What

the poor were taught, according to Ferrer, was to accept the existing social structure and to believe that economic improvement depended on individual effort within the existing structure.

Ferrer's criticisms were directed at the very existence of national systems of schooling. Like Godwin, he saw the inevitable use of the school as a source of political control. Schools were becoming a great battleground in which each faction attempted to use the schools for its own ends. "All sides know the importance of the game," he wrote, "and recoil at no sacrifice to secure a victory. Everyone's cry is 'for and by the School.'"<sup>18</sup> The two dominant groups in this battle were government and industry. The government wanted the schools to produce loyal citizens, and industry wanted obedient and trained workers. From Ferrer's point of view these demands were not in conflict. Like Godwin, he believed that the state existed to protect the interests of the rich and that the needs of industry found expression through the state. The differences between the criticisms of Godwin and Ferrer reflect the social differences between the late eighteenth and late nineteenth centuries. The late eighteenth century witnessed the triumph of the nation state, with its demand for loyal citizens. The late nineteenth century witnessed the triumph of the industrial revolution, with its demand not only for trained workers but also for workers who would perform hours of tedious drudgery on the assembly line of the factory. Within this context the goals of schooling were to be accomplished both through the *content* of the material taught in the school and the *method* of presentation.

THE QUESTION OF METHOD became a central concern for these educators. They held that there was a direct link between methods of teaching and school organization, and the type of character molded by the school. Godwin, for



instance, argued that it was the method of discipline and the techniques of teaching that undermined reason and eroded human freedom. He made a direct link between the form of motivation used by the teacher and the power of the government. A teacher used *extrinsic motivation*, presenting material to the student "despotically, by allurements or menaces, by showing that the pursuit of it will be attended with . . . approbation, and that the neglect of it will be regarded with displeasure." Extrinsic motivation was defined as that which is connected to a thing by accident or at the pleasure of some other individual such as grades, or threats of punishment. Government, Godwin believed, also depended on extrinsic motives to assure that people acted in a certain manner. Laws and police were the despotic means by which government assured that people would act in the interests of the state. An education based on the despotic methods of extrinsic motives prepared the individual for a government of despotic laws.<sup>19</sup>

In the United States the great debate at the beginning of the twentieth century centered around the type of social and economic characteristics produced within the classroom environment. Liberal educators rejected competition and individual work as promoting *laissez-faire* individualism. They sought a greater emphasis on group activity and group projects. This method of teaching, it was argued, would mold the type of character required by the new corporate state. Radicals in the United States rejected not only the traditional classroom but also the liberal quest. Both sought to mold the student in accordance with the needs and authority of state and industry. One of the directors of the Modern School in New Jersey wrote in the 1920's,

From the moment the child enters the public school he is trained to submit to authority, to do the will of others as a matter of course, with the result that habits of mind are formed which in adult life are all to the advantage of the ruling class.<sup>20</sup>

The question of the type of methods used in the classroom includes the degree and nature of authority. The schools of the twentieth century have developed a form of anonymous authority which prepares students for manipulation by a bureaucratic and propagandistic society. The traditional classroom exemplified *overt* authority where the teacher directly confronted the students with his or her power and students were at all times aware of the source of power. The redeeming factor in this situation was that if students wished to rebel and claim their freedom, they could identify the source of power and react to it. In the twentieth century anonymous forms of authority were introduced into the classroom through the use of more sophisticated psychological techniques for control. These forms of control have made the realization of manipulation and identification of the source of control extremely difficult.

The issue of the methods of the modern classroom and its relationship to control and authority is elucidated in the writings of Ivan Illich. Illich accepts the radical argument that the techniques used in the classroom in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were related to shaping a character that could be manipulated by the existing institutions of authority. The changes in classroom techniques were directly related to changes within these institutions. Illich argues that a modern consumer-oriented society requires a type of character which is dependent on the advice of experts for every action. Modern society depends on the consumption of expertly planned packages. The school prepares the individual for this society by assuming responsibility for "the whole child." By attempting to teach automobile driving, sex education, dressing, adjustment to personality problems, and a host of related topics, the school also teaches that there is an expert and correct way of doing all of these things and that one should depend on the expertise of others. Students in the school ask for freedom and what they receive is the lesson

that freedom is only conferred by authorities and must be used "expertly." This dependency creates a form of alienation which destroys people's ability to act. Activity no longer belongs to the individual but to the expert and the institution.<sup>2 1</sup>

RADICAL CRITICS HAVE also been concerned about the type of character that is developed within the educational process; this concern goes beyond the classroom and into the whole area of child rearing and the nature of the modern family. For instance, psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich believed that the basic problem in character formation was the structure of the middle-class family. In discussing the rise of fascism in Germany, he linked the authoritarian personality with the process of child rearing within the middle-class German family. Significant social change, he argued, could only take place by changing the family. This theme was echoed throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and, as we shall see later, was an important ingredient in many radical education plans.<sup>2 2</sup>

Criticism was also leveled at the school insofar as it tended to reinforce and strengthen the social class structure of a society. This problem was debated in almost all educational circles in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the United States educators continually wrestled with the problem of organizing an educational system that decreased the separation between social classes. American educators in the nineteenth century were always quick to criticize European systems for providing different schools for different social classes. Horace Mann, the great common school reformer of the nineteenth century, hoped to overcome this problem by establishing a common school that would be attended by children of all classes. Mann thought that with the rich and the poor rubbing

shoulders in the common schoolhouse, class distinctions would melt away. The problem with the common school approach was that not all children entered the school with the same cultural background and intellectual tools, nor did they intend to use their education for the same purposes. In other words, the common school provided the student with *too common* an education. By the end of the nineteenth century American educators were trying to overcome this problem by "individualizing instruction" and "meeting individual needs."

The attempt by American educators to solve the problem of social class highlights one criticism made by Ivan Illich, namely, that the public school as a central institution of socialization tends to *reinforce* the social organization of the surrounding society. In this particular case the school tends to increase social stratification. The attempt to meet "individual needs" in American education—through ability grouping, vocational tracking, and special programs—raised all the contradictions and problems inherent in the school. Ability and vocational grouping were based on intelligence tests, interest and achievement tests, and counseling, with the result that by the middle of the twentieth century there was great concern that American education was discriminating on the basis of social class and race. During the 1940's sociologists studying a small American town found that there was a direct correlation between social classes and vocational tracks in the high school. Children of the town's upper class dominated the ranks of the college preparatory program and children of the lowest class in town filled the vocational track.<sup>23</sup> This pattern appeared throughout the United States. And when children were separated according to ability as defined by standardized tests they ended up being grouped according to social class and race. In America children were schooled into their social places almost as if there were separate schools for each social class.

For Ivan Illich this process of social stratification is inherent in schooling and is one of its most destructive features. During the 1960's, while Chancellor of the Catholic University of Puerto Rico, he realized that despite the amount of money the underdeveloped countries of Latin America were spending on education, the poor were not reaping the full benefits of these expenditures. For people to get a full return on the educational dollar they had to go through the whole process of schooling, from the early grades through the universities.

The poor are led to believe that schools will provide them with the opportunity for social advancement, and that advancement within the process of schooling is the result of personal merit. The poor are willing to support schooling on the basis of this faith. But since the rich will always have more years of schooling than the poor, schooling becomes just a new way of measuring established social distances. Because the poor themselves believe in the rightness of the school standard, the school becomes an even more powerful means of social division. The poor are taught to believe that they are poor because they did not make it through school. The poor are told that they were given the opportunity for advancement, and they believe it. Social position is translated through schooling into achievement and underachievement. Within the school the social and economic disadvantages of the poor are termed underachievement. Without the school there would be no dropouts.

Like Francisco Ferrer, Illich views the school as a prostitute of power. The ultimate power, he believes, is the school's effect on one's self-concept; that is, education teaches individuals about their own personal ability and character traits. People learn to think of themselves as stupid or bright, as being worthy or as being failures. Assuming that an adequate self-concept depends on acceptance and on ability to function in a social context, the psychological power of the school is obvious. The

school dropout is told essentially that the school—that most helpful and democratic of institutions—has given him or her all opportunities and she or he has failed. The dropout cannot help but accept this failure and conclude that there is little he or she can now do to get ahead. Rejection by the school leads to submission, apathy, and in the end to complete helplessness and social stagnation.

The authority of one social class over another is also strengthened in this process. The school teaches that those with more schooling are better people. Illich argues that the poor learn in school that they should submit to the leadership of those with more schooling, namely the upper classes.

Ivan Illich describes the school as the new church. Society's support of schooling as a religious faith reflects one of the central concerns of radical critics. The school derives its great power from the fact that it has become the central child-rearing institution in modern industrial societies. Early childhood education and day-care centers are slowly increasing the power of this institution, while the role of other institutions in the process of child rearing, such as the family and church, has slowly been eroded.

IN SUMMARY, the very existence of the school allows for its use by a particular political and economic ideology. The content of what is taught depends on who controls society. But the power of the school extends beyond its propagandistic role. The socialization process of the school shapes a particular type of character which meets the needs of the dominant power within the society. For critics like Godwin and Ferrer, the socialization process of the school molds citizens who will submit to the authority of the state and function as loyal workers in the new industrial society. And the socialization process schools

people into an acceptance of their social position and makes them dependent upon an irrationally organized consumer society.

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"I find it powerful and liberating. . . . I think this is a very valuable and important book; it has done a great deal to intensify, correct and further radicalize my thoughts."

—Jonathan Kozol

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"Spring's book is unique. It stands serenely outside the muddy stream of literature spawned by the recent wave of criticism to compulsory schooling. In the midst of paper-mountains 'pro' and 'con,' Spring places the radical challenge into its own tradition of libertarian anarchy, and of concern with law and freedom. This is the only readable book I know which does so in simple language and with the clear-sightedness of the competent historian. Students of contemporary education cannot avoid this one."

—Ivan Illich

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