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Unlearning the Untruth

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The main purpose of a teacher, so we are told, is to teach. For example, here are statements from actual teachers:

- "My philosophy on teaching, is that as a teacher you want to help others learn. That in itself is the main purpose of a teacher."
- "I believe that the purpose of a teacher is to educate students by integrating the curriculum with the realities beyond the classroom."
- "The purpose of a teacher is to assist the student in their progress towards knowledge construction and self realization."

So, we have "help others learn," "educate by integrating ," and "assist in progress " as the proper functions of a teacher. Right?

"And what do you mean by hatred? And what's wrong with hatred, by the way? I hate rapists and murderers. Do you?"

Wrong.

The main purpose of a teacher is to unteach, unlearn, undo; to strip from the misguided minds under his care the net of illusions, lies, and propaganda which stick like glue to those minds. Think about it. If your students heads are filled with falsehoods, how do you propose to teach them anything of worth and not have it become a falsehood as well? Now, I'm talking not only about sociological and political matters here, but "factual" subjects. Take math for example. Most people are taught all sorts of vapid ideas about math. Once they learn those ideas, most people are gripped with terror at the thought of "doing math."

Consider the following proposition: "Two plus two makes four." Makes? Two plus two "makes" nothing. It is the nature of four to be divisible into two (but also ones). In other words, it is the nature of experience, or reality, that four is what it is. That you can deconstruct it into halves or ones does not mean that the halves or ones "make" four; it's the other way around: four makes the halves and ones. "Four," in other words, is simply a class term we give to the sum of two plus two or three plus one.

"Teaching is, foremost, the process of removing psychic detritus from propaganda-laden minds"

Or how about: "An English sentence is made of a subject and a predicate."

It is true that English sentences always have a subject and a predicate, that is, the thing about which you are talking (subject), and what you say about that thing (predicate). But an English sentence, whether written or spoken, generally is supposed to mean something. If English sentences have any meaning (excluding gibberish), then the subject/predicate structure is false. False because

subject and predicate in the "real" world do not exist apart one from another. "John is tall" is a simple example of a subject and a predicate. But in actual experience, which is to say "in reality," there is no John separated from his height. John and tall go together. They are an organic whole. It is language that insists on chopping the truth up into a subject and a predicate, because in reality subjects and predicates are never separate. Never. But what teacher ever taught you that language itself is consistently deceiving you?

These examples probably seem mundane to you. But think of examples not so mundane.

> "The battle flag is a symbol of hatred."

To whom? And why? And what is a symbol in the first place? And what do you mean by hatred? And what's wrong with hatred, by the way? I hate rapists and murderers. Do you? I hate black widders also (that's Okie for "black widows").

To combat the overt idiocy of politicians and to teach the truth about any subject, including math or English, a teacher must first "unlearn" his students from the misconceptions that bind them, like Sisyphus, to the rock of lies. Interestingly enough, that's what we columnists attempt to do: steer people away from their commonly held illusions to a more accurate way of looking at things. Whether we actually do this or not is up for acerbic debate, of course.

But here's the problem with everything I've just written. Barely any teacher in the world understands anything beyond the accepted "truths" he was taught. What the average teacher of any sort knows is simply a pile of handy facts. He conceives his job as attaching these "facts" to the pliable gray matter of his students, completely unaware that the majority of these "facts" are not facts at all, but hand-me-down platitudes and worn-out theses. That is not what teaching is. Teaching is, foremost, the process of removing psychic detritus from propaganda-laden minds.

Unteach, unlearn, undo. After you have accomplished that mission, you might be able to impart some facts to your students. Until then, you are merely treading the waters of ignorance.

Some propositions to chaw on:

- Any teacher who doesn't understand the underlying ideas behind his "facts" isn't worth his weight in caps, gowns, and other googaws.
- And any parent who assumes his children's teachers know how to teach is (usually) wrong.

Conclusion? Take your children out of public schools and (un)teach them yourselves. Public school teachers, and I was raised by two of them, are themselves victims of the mental baby food taught to them by *their* teachers. Nor is there any hope of imminent change. Schools in America, including universities, are rotten from within. A bright student can learn some things of value from them, but at a terrible and long-drawn-out price: unlearning the pablum afterwards.

The best teacher, if you can find one, is the one who will first unlearn himself from his "education," then unlearn his students from theirs.

Unfortunately, these people are hard to find. They're usually busy writing columns.