

The Social Scientist's Responsibility for Values
in a
Democratic Society

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Responsibility for values in our mid-20th century dilemmas needs far more attention than scholars in *democratic* societies are prone to give. This is especially and crucially the case in the social sciences. Two major factors motivate professors to "lean over backwards" or away from the values problem. First, academic freedom which accords to each the right to think, believe and speak according to his own lights makes scholars overly cautious in presenting their own ideas with *conviction* in the classroom lest they seem to be imposing their ideas on others. Second, the struggle of scholars in the social studies to become recognized scientists in the traditional sense encourages preoccupation with scientific method in the discovery of truth, but, denial of responsibility for values. This is true of scholars in many other disciplines. But our concern in this paper is with the social scientist's responsibility for values.

Almost invariably, pundits writing about the potentially cataclysmic current world conflict characterize it as a struggle for the minds of men: a struggle over what men are willing to work for, sacrifice for, live for, die for; a struggle to influence values that serve as ends and shape means.

The crucial question in democratic society is whether or not scholars can afford the luxury of academic freedom without accepting responsibility for values basic to that freedom and whether or not they can accept the role of scientist and abdicate responsibility for the value consequences of their discoveries.

Are the dangers of indoctrination so inherent and pervasive as to preclude taking a strong position worth defending and promoting? Free scholars lost their freedom by default in Germany and other countries during the thirties. Others rose up to defend their freedoms in time of crises. Is it permissible to indoctrinate values basic to freedom only in times of crisis?

If the pundits are correct a crisis now exists. One camp in the present world conflict holds that a self-established and self-perpetuating elite of the proletariat shall determine the goals and shape the ends which all must accept and that those who do not submit may be rendered impotent or liquidated. Their indoctrination is deliberate, calculated, systematic, comprehensive and severely disciplined. In essence the state under the domination of the elite becomes the end, the individual the means. When the individual becomes the means the governing become the masters. And the masters become a class, albeit, under the guise of developing a classless society.

To state the basic question again: Can democracy that emphasizes the worth and freedoms of the individual survive without persistent, continuous and systematic indoctrination on some fundamental values? For example, does academic freedom permit freedom to destroy that freedom? The answers to either the general or the more specific question are not easy. Micklejohn in his recent book, *Political Freedom*⁽¹⁾, says yes to the latter question.

However, the University of Washington some twelve years ago, in considering the status of three professors, established first the principle that the right to teach is something more than the right to citizenship. The teaching profession in a democracy rests squarely on academic freedom. Hence any professor who joins an organization in which those in authority prescribe the boundaries within which he must interpret truth has broken faith with the profession.

(1) Micklejohn, Alexander, *Political Freedom* (New York: Harper & Bros.) 1960.

and has thus jeopardized his status in the profession. This premise would imply that academic freedom does not accord freedom to destroy that freedom.

Dr. Miekeljohn is entitled to his position on non-indoctrination. A democratic society should accord him the freedom to "indoctrinate" in the doctrine of non-indoctrination. He is dynamic and positive in his defense of the fundamental values of freedom. Furthermore his position may have a large degree of validity in a society established by those seeking freedom of belief and expression and somewhat matured by successive generations seeking to maintain and extend those freedoms. On the other hand sensitivity to the dangers of freedom to destroy freedom may not be sufficient in a society relatively immature in the values and processes of democracy. Democratic convictions in Germany under the Weimar Republic were adolescent in the face of long-standing Teutonic traditions of authoritarianism. Thus Nazism, with relative ease, replaced freedom, including a long-standing tradition of academic freedom with authority.

Values of democracy are broader than academic freedom. Admittedly it is difficult and it may be impossible to derive a basic common denominator of values acceptable to all who claim an affinity for democracy. Those who readily compromise freedom with authority will take a relative view of indoctrination; those who attempt an absolutist view of freedom will resist indoctrination of every kind.

It is significant however that the relativist and the absolutist in countries with long-established comprehensive democratic traditions all joined forces in the common cause of defending the common values of democracy when threatened by war. It was equally significant that war itself imposed a high degree of authoritarianism within the relatively democratic society. And it is even more significant that the absolutist joined the relativist in indoctrination to the cause of defending basic democratic values in the crises of

war.

In the U.S.A., during World War II, a spontaneous group of the nation's leaders in business, public affairs, and the professions fearful that basic democratic values might be lost sight of in time of war and that return to them after the war might be difficult, met regularly to think seriously about the basic values of democracy. The result of their deliberations was published under the aegis of Common Cause, Inc. The following paragraphs are quoted from their statement, "This is Democracy."

Democracy means personal worth: Every human being is precious in his own right and is always to be regarded as an end, never as a means merely... The state is made for man, not man for the State. Here is the foundation of all humane conceptions of life and the ultimate source of the other articles of our faith.

Democracy means freedom; ... Every man should be free to think and speak, to write and create... to improve his condition... to follow the dictates of his conscience, to pursue in his own way truth and happiness...

Democracy means equality; ... recognizes no orders commissioned by God or qualified by their own attributes to exploit, govern or enslave their fellow human beings.

Democracy means individual opportunity: It means a... society in which any man can make his way according to his own talents, inclinations and beliefs—a society which makes available to all an abundance of opportunity in work, in health, in education, in social relationships, in human enlightenment, in all the arts and sciences of life.

Democracy means individual responsibility: All men should be disciplined by a sense of common brotherhood, a devotion to the general welfare and a love of truth and justice. If (men)...

are callous to wrongs and inequalities, if they are indifferent to the public good, they will surely sink back into bondage...

To these concepts of democracy Abraham Lincoln's earlier definition gives inescapable meaning: "As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from it to the extent of the difference is no democracy." Thus Lincoln casts leadership in the role of servant rather than master, service rather than power. Perhaps this concept could be added to the list.

Roles of the majority and minority have not been mentioned. Perhaps they have a place here, recognizing that the majority vote is a tool rather than a basic value. And it is the only effective tool, discovered thus far, for implementing the basic values and at the same time protecting them for the greatest number in society. Tyranny of the majority is avoided by assuring the minority freedom to continue the educational process toward their point of view so long as the will of the majority is not blocked or destroyed. If the minority succeeds in blocking the will of the majority, then government is by tyranny of the minority and the freedom of the majority is in jeopardy. So is democracy.

It is the thesis of this paper that one of the responsibilities of education, of teachers, and especially of social scientists in a democracy is to seek continuously to clarify basic values of democracy and to extend and protect them in all units of society: the home, school, church, local community, the state and the nation.

This does not mean that a tribunal prescribes a definition of the basic values of democracy or that a definition of wide acceptance has the same meaning for each citizen. But it does mean that each professor in the social sciences would be persistent in his concern for the question; "Knowledge and skill for what?" He would be diligent in his efforts to clarify ends and means. And he

would help students to try to draw from his courses—his lectures and the wider readings—that which would help them develop concepts of reality in which they have confidence and value orientations that would have clear meaning and influence as they take positions on issues and make crucial decisions in the interest of individual and group welfare.

At this point it is appropriate to make some observations on some evident conditions in education relevant to the role of values.

Throughout the world, *universities* are growing by leaps and bounds in number and in size; in faculty and students. Research and researchers are increasingly abundant. There are more countries with extended compulsory school attendance requirements and opportunities in *public* education. More *books* are published and read. *Libraries* are growing. *Magazines* and *newspapers* have greater circulation. *Radio* and *television* provide new mass-media for learning.

Paralleling this previously incomparable growth is increasing confusion, conflict, frustration, and fear throughout the world. It is the countries with the greatest breadth of education and depth research that threaten the destruction of "civilization." Why? Perhaps it is because, to a considerable and dangerous extent, professors have assumed that knowledge and skill are the ultimate goals of education and have abdicated responsibility for that aspect of educational development that determines whether knowledge and skill will be used for the benefit or destruction of mankind.

Knowledge is power—to create or to destroy. Whether it creates or destroys depends on the values that serve as ends and shape the means.

Many in the academic profession stand forthrightly on the traditional or proverbial statement that *truth makes free*. Thinking under this umbrella runs something like this: "As a scholar, my tool is research—my goal the discovery of truth." "As a teacher, my responsibility is to communicate truth to students."

"Truth is not moral." "It is truth regardless of religion or secular ideology." "Truth is universal." "The function of the university is the discovery and dissemination of universal truth." This then tends to be the sum and substance of the university professor's responsibility.

But is truth synonymous with wisdom? Wisdom involves the selection of those truths useful in solving problems. Solutions of problems usually involve a choice of directions. Directions imply goals. And the difference between goals is a difference in values. If a professor includes in his definition of truth, understanding to the end of creating wisdom, he assumes responsibility for values. If he excludes understanding and wisdom from his definition of truth, he abdicates responsibility for values. The facts of our mid-20th century dilemma as stated above would indicate inadequate concern or responsibility for values. Let us therefore analyze this problem in some detail.

Many history professors; anthropologists, political scientists, economists, sociologists and psychologists are satisfied with being historians of their disciplines, *backing into the future*. This is not to quarrel with history. Cicero was right; "To be ignorant of the past is to remain a child." But it might be equally pertinent to add; "To forget to turn and face the future is to remain an adolescent."

For six decades, physical scientists, conscientiously attempting to achieve and maintain their emancipation from philosophy, denied responsibility for values.

This leaves responsibility for values in our universities to the philosophers. But scholars in the fields of philosophy (including political and economic and social philosophy) cannot continue to escape their responsibility as they have been doing for the past half century.

The charges against philosophers in the several disciplines are mainly three. First, they (except for the more creative ones) find

it more comfortable to be historians of their discipline than to help students to develop, for themselves, concepts of reality and values that will serve as goals to reach for criteria to live by.

Secondly, they are becoming a cult of logical analysts. Like many scientists they raise their eyebrows at what they consider the superficiality or "do-goodism" of a colleague whose sense of responsibility reaches into the realm of prophesy or beyond what is approved by the cult.

Third, many philosophers unwittingly have placed a *purely* intellectual emphasis on their value constructs. Behavior controlled by the viscera (below the ears) tends to be vegetative, reflexive, according to habit pattern without conscious value. Behavior controlled by the intellect is cognitive, rational, selective within the rationale.

It is with the latter that most philosophers have been preoccupied. As, with the scientists in search of true objectivity, emotions must be completely subordinated.

This was true of John Dewey. Needless to say his knowledge of psychology was extraordinary, and he penetrated the depths of democratic values and processes. But his insistence on non-indoctrination fell short of the reinforcement of intellectually derived values with conviction. This perhaps applies with much greater validity to his disciples than to Dewey himself.

Behavior nurtured and controlled below the ears is powerful but dangerous, for example, the Nazi's annihilation of the Jews. Behavior controlled from the ears up may be rational but without force. Episodes marking great strides in the evolution of social behavior in the solution of major conflicts have at their base creative intellectual direction and control, driven by the power of emotions, sustained by strong conviction.

Leaders of church and state in the U.S.A., in a misguided concept of separation of church and state, have been greatly influenced by Dewey's convictionless doctrines of non-indoctrination.

Consequently every teacher in the public schools (and many in private, even church related schools) is employed with either a "legal" restriction or tacit understanding that he must leave a major source of his values and indeed all religious values on the outside of the door as he enters the classroom. Those who seek to implement Japan's post-war regulations on separation of religion and government are prone to the same error.

What is the error? It derives from confusing the separation of church and state as organizations, which is possible without destroying either, with the separation of religion and government as systems of values which is impossible without weakening either. A man's value system is not divisible into discrete parts without creating a multiple or schizoid personality or the submergence and eventual atrophy of some of the parts.

The integrated, whole, effective, creative personality is one that tends strongly toward the acquisition of knowledge, ordered in relation to clearly conceived values that serve as goals and shape processes, resulting in behavior sustained by force of conviction supported with the energy of well *organized* or controlled emotions.

Goldsen⁽¹⁾ closes the Cornell study of values of students in eleven universities with the following paragraphs:

"Man today has conquered the atom and invaded space. Yet the basic problem of the human condition remains unchanged: how to live with uncertainty and make one's peace with it; how to invest the days of one's life with meaning. Perhaps these questions encompass the basic criteria for measuring the success of education."

But on the preceding page they reported:

"The religious values the students prefer seem to be broadly

(1) Goldsen, Rose K., et al., *What College Students Think* (Princeton, New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand Company)1960, pp.202-3.

dispersed, highly personal, relative and vague. These beliefs and values seem to be only weakly engaged in the opinions, attitudes and behavior they report in other spheres of life.

At the same time, we have reported certain indications that the young people on these campuses are dissatisfied with this sort of philosophical climate. Almost all the students feel, they say, a need for religious or philosophical guides to provide orientation and meaning to their lives. It is as if they were aware that empiricism, rationalism and relativism do not provide this sense of meaning; that it must be sought in a belief system that specifies irreducible standards of value, not relative ones. One senses a certain nostalgia for such absolute guides for the guarantees of certainty that only faith can provide."

Jacob⁽²⁾ after studying research on the value consequences of higher education in numerous colleges and universities concludes that courses and professors make little impact on the values of college students. Incidental (or accidental) social and extra-curricula college life does influence their values. They tend to be emancipated from the restrictive traditions of the mores without studied analyses of the values toward which they may be emancipated.

Jacob's review and the Cornell studies reinforce the validity of the observation and analysis of the posture of the social scientist toward responsibility for values as presented above.

In conclusion it may be appropriate to add another challenge. The responsibility of the social scientist for values applies to research as well as teaching. The question "Knowledge and skill for what?" is as pertinent in the discovery as in the dissemination of truth. For example, econometrics may prove just as useful to power centered leaders as to the service oriented leader, to big business as to little business, to big government as to little govern-

(2) Jacob, Philip E., *Changing Values in College* (New York: Harper & Bros.) 1957.

ment, to totalitarian as to representative government, to subjugation as to freedom, to war as to peace, to revolution as to evolution.

What democracy needs in today's crises is a social science staffed with scholars who are students of democratic values to the point of conviction that they are worth defending and promoting through research and instruction. If the freedoms of men are fundamental, the social researcher needs to be enough of a philosopher to be sensitive to the significance of his study for those freedoms. The same is true of human welfare. Much research on administrative structure and theory in the interests of efficiency has ignored consequences in relation to freedoms and welfare. Philosophers alone cannot be blamed for our present predicament. They are too few to be made the scapegoat. A free society is not long free unless all are philosophers.

Limitation of freedom has dangers—even the least limitation such as limiting freedom to destroy freedom. Who is to decide what is destructive? And once limitations start where do they stop? These are difficult questions. But they are crucial. They may indeed be the most vital questions in democracy today. This means simply that they must be seriously studied.

But the seriousness of these questions will be greatly diminished if scholars become more seriously conscious of the responsibilities that are the concomitants of the freedoms they demand and exercise. There is significant research to show that there is widespread understanding and acceptance of the freedoms of democracy but relatively little understanding and acceptance of the responsibilities attendant on those freedoms. These responsibilities are as much a matter of values as the freedoms themselves. And they should be regarded as responsibilities that are inescapable if democracy is to be dynamic and strong in the face of challenges from other ideologies that depend on strong programs of indoctrination.