# INTRODUCTION

# TO

# CRITICAL SOCIOLOGY

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71. Raymond Aron, *The Industrial Society: Three Essays on Ideology and Development* (New York: Praeger, 1967).

72. George Lichtheim, *The Concept of Ideology and Other Essays* (New York: Random House, 1967).

73. Ralf Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1959).

74. Stanley Aronowitz, *False Promises* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973). See Chapter 5, "The Formation of the Professional Servant Class, Chapter 6, "The White-Collar Proletarians," and Chapter 8 "The New Workers."

75. See Stephen Spitzer, "Toward a Marxian Theory of Deviance," *Journal of Social Problems* (Spring, 1975) for a discussion of the lumpenproletariat or the under class.

76. Stanley Aronowitz, *False Promises*, p. 292.

77. See also Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the 20th Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975).

78. Andre Gorz, *Socialism and Revolution* (New York: Anchor Books, 1973).

# CHAPTER TWELVE

# Ageism and the Status of Youth

The modern conception of youth as well as the contemporary treatment of young people are socially and historically conditioned as much as they are determined by biological facts. Such a statement may come as a surprise since it appears that "youth" is simply defined in terms of a natural process. In this chapter we hope to make clear the changing nature of age categories and the functions served by the modern subordination of youth to the adult world. We do not deny the necessity of age differentiation, but we are critical of both age stratification and theories which reduce the problems of young people today to "eternal" problems. By ageism, we mean the institutional and interpersonal subordination of young and old to the imperatives of capitalist patriarchy. As we discuss, ageism is rooted in the institutions of society (the family, the economy, and the educational system) as well as in the character structure of human beings. Although the focus of this chapter is on youth, ageist discrimination also defines the status of many of the elderly. Past the age when their labor-power is considered valuable and isolated in a society whose family structure has been considerably weakened, senior citizens are often relegated to a separate and unequal existence. Ageism not only confines the very young and very old to restricted roles in our society, it imposes rules, roles, and regulations on people of all ages.

Because of its deep psychological impact, ageism is an aspect of life which most people tend to overlook. Many analyses of the position of young people today treat the question of their inferior status as one of secondary importance. After all, each of us lives through a period of youth which lasts for only a fraction of a person's life. Yet for precisely this reason, the analysis of the status of youth cannot be relegated to a position of secondary importance. Because every one of us is socialized to be an "adult"–i.e., to repress our imaginations and conform to a hierarchical society–the period of our life designated as youth needs to be consciously reexamined from the point of view of uncovering the process of creating the human beings who live in and continually re-create society. Whether the analysis emanates from conservative patriarchs or

radical feminists, the question of youth has been examined primarily from a narrow viewpoint and rarely from the point of view of the young themselves.

Our critical analysis of the ageism of modern society is in part founded on the insights of feminist critiques, but an understanding of the oppression of youth cannot rely solely on an acceptance of the feminist perspective. Insofar as children are dominated by both parents, and women are part of the adult structures of domination, the critique of patriarchy falls short of a critique of ageism.[1] In contrast to the reduction of social analysis to the economic foundations alone, feminism has made clear how deep the cultural and psychological dimensions of capitalist patriarchy run. While the socialist analysis of everyday life has too often attempted to reduce the problems of sexism, ageism, and racism to economics, the extreme feminists have attempted to see these problems as caused by patriarchy alone. A critical analysis does not attempt to reduce social problems to one particular aspect of capitalist patriarchy but attempts to multi-dimensionally analyze the totality. The oppression of youth, a fundamental period of life for every human being, is itself part of the total system which we call capitalist patriarchy.

## A MYTH ABOUT YOUTH

Much of the ideology of the domination of youth in modern society revolves around myths of the "eternal truths." Lewis Feuer, for example, wrote that:

> The conflict of generations is a universal theme in history; it is founded on the most primordial facts of human nature, and it is a driving force of history, perhaps even more ultimate than that of class struggle.[2]

Feuer's assertion was developed from an analysis of student movements in the modern world as well as from ancient writings like the Bible, Plato, Aristotle, and Ptahhotep, an Egyptian who Feuer described as "A man of the Establishment . . . (a term Feuer borrowed from the student movement of the 60s) . . . in the twenty-seventh century B.C."[3] The stereotypes of young and old discussed through the epochs of history are used by Feuer to bear out his assertion that the youth movement of the 1960s was nothing new. The moment of truth in such an analysis is easily discerned–the young are less concerned with material wealth than their elders and more concerned with issues of morality and justice. But such

universal propositions ignore ways in which youth has changed over the ages. Similarly, Feuer treats hierarchy and "the Establishment," and not only the social inferiority of the young, as eternal truths.

The myth of eternal youthful rebellion was used by Feuer to defame the student movement of the 1960s as irrational.[4] Feuer's conclusions about the irrationality of student movements were based on the assumption that the adult world is "rational," even though this world excludes youth from full participation in the political and social decision-making processes. He based his argument on the belief that adults will always be settled into positions of power and authority which they will seek to defend. Feuer's analysis of youth "blamed the victims."[5] He attempted to explain the discontent of young people in terms of their personal problems (much like the poverty of blacks is explained by defects in their genes or family structure[6]). Rather than coming to terms with some of the social problems raised by the youth movement, Feuer would have people believe that the problem is with the young.

Modern theories of an "eternal" conflict of generations, much like theories of the "inevitability of racial conflict," neglect to consider the possibility of a society where age and racial differences are not the basis for stratification and hierarchy. It goes without saying that before social actors can engage in conflict, they must already have been separated from each other. Without prior system of social segregation, whether of the young or racial groups, there would not exist a basis for conflict. As long as young people are excluded from responsible membership in society, they will rebel. Feuer's myth is founded on the belief that the old will always dominate the young, but the patterns of life from childhood to old age have not always been the way they are today. By examining some of the differences between the meaning of youth in the ancient and modern world, we might gain some insight into the changing nature of society.

## THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF YOUTH

In ancient Greece, people were defined as "young" as long as they were strong and healthy enough to fully function as human beings. Prior to this stage was childhood and beyond it were the decrepit old. Since there was no category between childhood and "youth," the Greek world did not recognize adolescence in any way.[7] Similarly, in most tribal societies, children become adults after a short initiation period, and anthropologists who have studied tribal languages have not found a word for adolescence.

The word adolescent comes from the Latin word *adolescens*, but in ancient Rome, it was not used as it is today to denote a transition period from childhood to adult status. Rather *adolescens* was applied to young males without reference to age. Julius Caesar, for example, was referred to as *adolescentuluss* when he was about 38 years old.[*] Constantine the Great divided human life into seven stages, and he referred to the third stage as adolesence: the time in which "the person grows to the size allotted to him by Nature." But for Constantine, as well as for medieval thought in general, adolescence *preceded* youth, and people were "young" as long as they were healthy.

From ancient society until modern times, the age at which a person entered the adult world changed very little. In ancient Rome, a person stopped being an infant and became an adult when they were about seven years old. Throughout the Middle Ages, a child became an adult between the ages of five and seven, and adults remained "young" as long as they were able to work. As Philip Aries pointed out in *Centuries of Childhood*, people in the Middle Ages were generally expected to behave and work like adults after about the age of seven:

> In medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist; this is not to suggest that children were neglected, forsaken, or despised. The idea of childhood is not to be confused with affection for children: it corresponds to an awareness of the particular nature of childhood, that particular nature which distinguishes the child from the adult, even the young adult. In medieval society this awareness was lacking. That is why, as soon as the child could live without the constant solicitude of his mother, his nanny or his cradle-rocker, he belonged to the adult society.[*]

In the Middle Ages, "children were so little differentiated from adults that there was no special vocabulary to describe them."[**] Furthermore, medieval art did not draw boundaries between the everyday life of adults and youth:

> Medieval art until about the twelfth century did not know childhood or did not attempt to portray it. It is hard to believe that this neglect was due to incompetence or incapacity; it seems more probable that there was no place for childhood in the medieval world. . . . A painter would not even hesitate to give the naked body of a child, in the very few cases when it was exposed, the musculature of an adult. . . .[**]

In short, children in the Middle Ages were members of the society and participated as such in it. They learned about life in their everyday participation in society as members and were not segregated from the adults.

For a thousand years, from the sixth to the sixteenth centuries, the status of children was relatively fixed, but with the rise of the modern world system, the lives of children and adults have become increasingly segregated. An indication of the separation of the worlds of children and adults at the end of the Middle Ages can be found in the changes in children's apparel, a transition noted by Shulamith Firestone:

> The first special children's costumes appeared at the end of the sixteenth century, an important date in the formation of the concept of childhood. At first children's clothing was modeled after archaic adult clothing, in the fashion of the lower class, who also wore the hand-me-downs of aristocracy.[12]

Moreover, it was not until the seventeenth century, that a strict division between children's games and those of adults appeared. Not only was the definition of childhood changed in this period of transition, but what it meant to be an adult increasingly was defined as being serious and repressing spontaneity, developments which have had severe consequences for the quality of life in the modern world. The changes marked by the extension of childhood until a much later date than in earlier epochs help us forget the "child prodigies" of earlier days. Mozart, for example, composed music at the age of three. Louis XIII played the violin and sang at the age of seventeen months.

In the development of the modern conception of childhood, there have been two ways of viewing children from the adult perspective. In the first place, children became a source of amusement and relaxation for adults, in the words of one writer of the seventeenth century, like "little dogs or monkeys." Such coddling of children originated in the aristocratic class, among those whose wealth and comparative freedom afforded them the time and the space to play with their offspring. But when the Protestant Reformation raised the issue of original sin, moralists and teachers of that period adopted a much sterner view of how children should be treated. Their concern was to inculcate children with respect for authority—for God above all—and with the proper manners. Calvin declared that the nature of children was a "seed of sin" who should be whipped to cure their inherent wickedness. As Aries recounted this transition:

The child was no longer regarded as amusing or agreeable: "Every man must be conscious of that insipidity of childhood which disgusts the sane mind; the coarseness of youth which finds pleasure in scarcely anything but material objects and which is only a very crude sketch of the man of thought."[13]

The emergence of adolescence as a social category of existence in modern industrialized society is a relatively recent development, one which serves psychological and economic functions at the same time as it has made the problems of young people even more severe than during the initial separation of adults and children. The current usage of adolescence is only about two centuries old. In the words of one analyst:

> Adolescence was invented at the same time as the steam engine.
> The principal architect of the latter was Watts in 1765, of the former Rousseau in 1782.[14]

The increasing segregation of the young has today produced a new category of life called "teenager," a concept which has its origin in modern America, as Dwight McDonald pointed out.[15] Freed from many of the responsibilities which younger adults in previous eras were burdened with—from chores around the house to factory work—teenagers in modern industrialized societies are seen as constituting a new social type who have been segregated into a world of their own under adult supervision.[16] Whether in the family, schools, the military, or at work, teenagers live for many years in a world where their peers are their peers by age.[17] The status of teenagers in our society is not full adult status but one of subordination to the adult world.[18] The "rites of passage" which teenagers pass through on their way to adult status include getting a driver's license around the age of 16, becoming eligible to vote at 18, and being able to buy alcohol at around the age of 20. Until they are 21, young people have restricted legal rights.[19] The authority of parents is the final word in most disputes, and if teenagers refuse to obey their adult supervisors, they can be placed in juvenile halls, or for the wealthy, sent to private schools. The expression of genital sexuality in most states is illegal until the age of 18 despite growing evidence that puberty today is reached at an earlier age than in previous epochs.[20]

Having briefly surveyed the changing definition of youth, we now turn to an analysis of the modern status of youth within the major institutions of society: the family, the economy, and the educational system. We then discuss the youth resistance of the 1960s.

## YOUTH AND THE FAMILY

The patriarchal hegemony of the family has assumed two different forms in history.[21] In the first case, the patriarch owned the women and children and was free to sell or trade them as he saw fit. More recently, women and children are not legally owned, and although the authority-based family is very similar to the property-based family of earlier days,[22] there is an important difference. Within the family of earlier periods, the internal beliefs of the dominated members of the family were relatively inconsequential, but the modern family rests less on an unquestioned property status of the children than on the dominated members of the family themselves submitting to the authority of the father (or mother). In other words, the structure of domination in the modern family is reproduced within the character structure of the children, not simply maintained by external force or unquestioned belief. This insight into the psychology of the modern family was very important to such researchers as Wilhelm Reich[23] and T.W. Adorno[24] in their studies of character structure and authoritarianism.

For generations, the family served as the principal vehicle of socialization of the young, but with the weakening of family ties in the modern world, there is increasingly no substitute for the human interaction within the family. James Dean's movies "Rebel Without a Cause" and "East of Eden" dramatized the failure of adult society to provide acceptable role models for young people in the modern world, and much recent work in psychology has sought to analyze a "society without fathers." C. Wright Mills' *The Power Elite*[25] concerned itself with the rise of the authority of mass society, particularly its celebrities and rulers, and Herbert Schiller's *The Mind Managers*[26] critiqued the power and importance of the mass media in the industrialized (and nonindustrialized) nations. Habermas has noted that the contemporary state has reassumed functions of mediating everyday life, a process he has referred to as "refeudalization." By this he notes that in the early capitalist epoch, the organic links between the state and civil society, ties which had existed on the feudal manor, were severed, but under conditions of modern corporate capitalism, these links are again operative. The increasing role of the state in modern society is viewed as both cause and effect of the weakening of the family, thereby helping create conditions for the politicization of women and youth.[27]

The writings of the Frankfurt School contain a concern with the end of critical reflection in the modern world.[28] The breakup of the family in the face of the rise of mass society is a problem which reinforces the

patriarchal domination of the institutions of mass society like television and Madison Avenue. Without the family, youth on their own have little thought of meaningful long-term human interaction. Rather, "action" like drugs and sex become "where it's at." The reduction of the ego occurs whether or not the ego is developed from loving parents who support the autonomous development of their child or from strict parents against whom one rebels in the course of ego development. Thus "being here now," as the modern child increasingly is, leaves the individual in a social and historical void.

In his essay "Art and Mass Culture," Max Horkheimer diverged at length into a rare discussion of childhood. Commenting on the subordination of private life to the needs of industry in the late nineteenth century, he went on to make an appraisal of the changing role of the family:

> In the twentieth century, the population is surrounded by large trusts and bureaucracies; the early division of man's existence between his occupation and family (always valid with reservations so far as the majority was concerned) is gradually melting away. The family served to transmit social demands to the individual, thus assuming responsibility not only for his natural birth but for his social birth as well. It was a kind of second womb, in whose warmth the individual gathered the strength necessary to stand alone outside it.[29]

No longer brought up to inherit the family business or profession as had been the case for centuries, children today leave home fully on their own as in no other historical epoch. While this theme—being on one's own—may be an important advance over the rigid social structures of the past, there is simultaneously a problem of resisting the kinds of personal escape into mass society which are available in the modern world.

One of the most common forms of escape in the modern world (and one of the principal vehicles of socialization today) is television, a relatively recent invention whose effects have been dramatic. In 1978, 97 percent of households in the U.S. had televisions, and they were on for an average of 4½ hours per day.[30] The TV is a cheap babysitter for young, middle age and old alike. The effects of TV—its forms (passivity, spectacle) and content—are to maintain our society as it is now by those specialists on Madison Avenue who are well-paid to manipulate our conscious and our unconscious minds.[31] The socialization process of the mass media gears all of us, and especially the young, to appreciate certain kinds of human relationships—violence, action, spectacular events, and instant coffee-type consciousness.

There are few examples of real group interaction within the major institutions of our society. Television is an extreme example of one-way communication, to the point where the gestalt of watching TV resembles a state of hypnosis. Movies, concerts, and sporting events all relegate us to a passive posture both physically and mentally, although generally not to the same extreme as television. Similarly, working in a factory requires energy and care to avoid being injured, but generally speaking, the workers have little control over the products they produce (guns, automobiles, or deodorants) or the process of production. The worker merely keeps up with the pace of the assembly line in most factories, which means he or she has his/her activity on the job regulated by a machine. Rather than the person having the machine work at the individual's request, the individual is subjected to the rhythm of the machine.

## YOUTH, SEXUALITY, AND CHARACTER STRUCTURE

The routines of mass society and the tremendous power of centralized culture have intensified the repressive requirements of the social order, producing a conformist character structure which reached an extreme form with the rise of fascism in Germany in the 1930s. In analyzing the development of authoritarian character structure, Wilhelm Reich rooted it in the sexual repression required by the development of the patriarchal nuclear family:

> [T]he patriarchal authoritarian sexual order . . . becomes the primary basis of the authoritarian ideology by depriving the women, children and adolescents of their sexual freedom, making a commodity of sex and placing sexual interests in the service of economic subjugation. From now on, sexuality is indeed distorted; it becomes diabolical and demonic and has to be curbed.[32]

Reich's analysis of sexuality, like Freud's discovery of infantile sexuality, was initially greeted with much derision from his colleagues in psychology as well as from the public at large. Over the decades, of course, Freud's psychoanalytic insights have become generally accepted, resulting in (among other changes) a reevaluation of spankings as a positive factor in childrearing. Since the Protestant Reformation, violence against children had increased, and although children continue

to be abused within many families, there exists a general consensus today that violence is not a productive means of socialization. Freud's understanding of the significance of infants' sexual desires was further developed by Reich, who put forth the view that the repression of sexuality among children was one of the principal ways in which patriarchal and authoritarian values are transferred from generation to generation:

> Childhood and adolescent sexuality, which were given a positive value in the original matriarchal work-democracy, fall prey to systematic suppression. . . . As time goes on, this sexuality, which is so distorted, disturbed, brutalized, and prostituted, advocates the very ideology to which it owes its origin. Those who negate sexuality can now justifiably point to it as something brutal and dirty.[33]

Sexual repression, especially in the family, continues to be an important aspect of our social order. Infidelity, although glorified by swingers and "wife swappers," is still legal grounds for divorce in the United States. Child sexuality is perhaps the most misunderstood of all aspects of human sexuality today. It is illegal for people under 18 to have intercourse or to cross state lines with a member of the opposite sex (to say nothing of the antihomosexual laws of our society for all ages).

The sexual repression imposed on youth has severe consequences for adults as well. Repressed sexual needs are destructively desublimated-–released in such a way as to increase the frustrations of the individual–through various means. Buying a car can easily become a means of sexual satisfaction, especially since the sales pitches from Madison Avenue depend upon manipulating the latent sexuality of human beings.[34] In *Eros and Civilization*, Herbert Marcuse critiqued this "repressive desublimation" and investigated the possibilities of a liberated human character structure founded on a "resurgence of pregenital polymorphous sexuality and in a decline of genital supremacy." As Marcuse put it:

> This change in the value and scope of libidinal relations would lead to a disintegration of the institutions in which the private interpersonal relations have been organized, particularly the monogamic and patriarchal family.[35]

Far from posing the family as we know it today as an eternal institution, Marcuse and the Frankfurt School clearly indicated that the conditions for a free society include the development of new forms of socialization. Marcuse's call for "polymorphous sexuality" is, in a sense, a call for the construction of a society founded on the vital energy of youthfulness.

## YOUTH AS A CLASS

Young people in the United States today play an increasingly important role in the functioning of the economy, particularly in many of the new service industries which profit from the fact that most young people have little choice but to work for the minimum wage. In the two sectors of the economy which have grown most rapidly since the end of World War II–the military and educational establishments–young people's energy constitutes the driving force and, as some argue, the very reason for existence of such a large educational apparatus. The rise to world power of U.S. corporations necessitated the expansion of the Defense Department, defense-related industry, and the size of the army in a time of "peace." The development of technology has brought about the vast expansion of higher education and the integration of the educational establishment into the center of the system as a whole. Within both these institutions, large-scale youthful uprisings took place in the 1960s and 1970s. As with the "conflict of generations" thesis, the historical and social nature of the United States was not generally considered to be an important factor behind the youth movement. But in their article, "Youth as Class," John and Margaret Rowntree challenged the view that Feuer had put forth:

> The tremendous power of the youth movement today is that it is not a "generational conflict" but a social conflict. To the old generational consciousness there has been added a true class consciousness among young people. . . . Domestic economic viability is being maintained by the rapid growth of the defense and education industries, industries which focus their exploitation on young people. . . . This is our thesis: that youth as youth, employed as students and soldiers, have become the potentially revolutionary core in the United States today.[36]

The Rowntrees saw the student movement and the counterculture as movements where youth constituted themselves as a class-for-itself in reaction to their being constituted as a class-in-itself by the exploitation of

adult society. They developed this theme along four levels of analysis: the society as a whole ("Capitalism as conflict-ridden system"); historically ("the change of class actors" from the trade unionists of the 1930s to the youth of the 1960s); the social and psychological recruitment to the youth class; and the forms of organization and expression of class consciousness. Their empirical analysis of the status of youth within the modern capitalist system revealed that the defense-education complex, which accounts for more than one-sixth of the Gross National Product of the U.S., plays a "very important role in absorbing surplus peoplepower—especially young peoplepower."[37] The problem of the absorption of the surplus capital—the difficulty the system has in continually reusing the vast resources at its disposal (as we discussed in Chapter Seven) has largely fallen on the shoulders of the young.

> Students absorb surplus by "investing in their futures," that is, by staying out of the labor force during an increasingly long enrollment in school. . . . Students absorb surplus that has already been produced; and they refrain from producing still more surplus product that must be disposed of profitably; instead they labor but do not produce a tangible product . . . a total of about 10 percent of potential GNP [is] absorbed by education.[38]

Today, in the United States, we have more and more young people staying in college because there are not enough jobs. Why are there not enough jobs? One of the major reasons is that of the needs of the system to make profit, not to produce for human use. Making profits means that a cheap source of surplus labor is needed—a need which young people provide both by those who work for the minimum wage and by those who go to college and graduate only to become a reserve army of labor for white-collar employers.[39]

Within the work force, young people are a source of low-paid, unskilled labor. They constitute a huge human resource which can be mobilized to fight wars or to sell hamburgers. In 1976, the 3500 MacDonald's stands around the globe employed 150,000 teenagers (about the same number of coal miners in the U.S.) at the minimum wage who prepared and served about three billion hamburgers a year. Since he started the MacDonald's franchise in 1954, the traveling salesman Ray Kroc became a multimillionaire worth $450,000,000.[40]

More than half of the people between 18 and 21 in the U.S. today are in college.[41] If we were to return to the 1950 proportional level of enrollment of young people in the military and colleges, nearly ten

million additional people would find themselves unemployed.[42] Given the high unemployment rate today, could the economy stand up in such a situation? Of course, we have no way of knowing the answer to this question, but by posing it, we hope to make clear the dependence of our modern economy in the U.S. on war-related industry and the containment of the young in the educational institutions. Because of the importance of the educational system to modern capitalist patriarchy, we pause to consider its structure and functions.

## THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF EDUCATION

The classical notion of education saw schooling as a means for human improvement and enlightenment, which in the context of a relatively uneducated society (as in the Middle Ages) was a means for preparing the new rulers of society. Education in the lower classes was confined to practical skills useful in doing a specific job. Of course, for the vast majority, formal education was not available until modern times, and it was sometimes illegal. In the South during slavery, for example, it was illegal to teach Blacks how to read and write.

Today, however, the educational system has been greatly expanded to the point where it is compulsory for young people below the age of 16 to remain in high school. There are many reasons for this transformation of education from a privilege of the few to a requirement for the many. The breakdown of the nuclear family has necessitated a new arena for the socialization of children as well as to "keep the kids off the streets." The increasing role of science and technology in the economy has necessitated the training of workers able to deal with various kinds of new jobs. Modern education cannot be simply looked upon as the transmittal of skills, but as Bowles and Gintis[43] have pointed out, schooling needs to be comprehended in terms of people becoming accustomed to the routine work, bureaucratic authority, hierarchy, and low pay of most jobs in the U.S. today. Although the original expansion of the educational system in the United States was a result of the need to Americanize the large number of foreign immigrants and to prepare these people for jobs made possible by the industrial expansion of the U.S.,[44] formal education has come to be a grounds for socializing young people into the rigidly hierarchical and bureaucratic organization of industry.

According to Jürgen Habermas, the modern university has three functions to fulfill outside of its research and instruction connected with the economic needs of society.[45] These are: to socialize its graduates to

be responsible members of their profession (thus, for example, doctors are expected to be capable of quick action in situations of uncertainty); to transmit, interpret, and develop the cultural tradition of the society; and to help form the political consciousness of its students. Under no conditions, according to Habermas, can the university fail to perform these functions.

One might argue, as most administrators at universities in the United States today do, that the university should not be political, that the university is a place for the development of "knowledge," not for its application in the "real world." As we have discussed earlier, however, "value-free knowledge" is itself a value judgment suitable to the conditions of modern technocratic society. What Habermas is attempting to speak to is not whether or not the university should be "political," but since it is political, *what kind* of political traditions should the university transmit to its students? This question is generally not considered unless the students themselves take actions which compel the administration to find answers. When students get together to protest a university's contract with the Central Intelligence Agency, for example, all of a sudden it becomes clear that the university is involved in the real world.

The system no longer needs the enlightened scholar or the individual entrepreneur since its bureaucratic organizations need the "organization person." The corporations do not only need workers with skills for industry, but most importantly, they need the kind of individual who will conform to the hierarchy and discipline of bureaucratic authority and assembly line production.

In *Schooling in Capitalist America*, the authors' study confirms the statement that the *structure* of learning in the university is one of the most important functions of the educational process.⁴⁶ This book contains a wealth of statistics and analysis to verify the proposition that the primary function of education today is grinding out the kinds of people who can tolerate and participate in the hierarchical organization of industry, white-collar jobs, and everyday life in the United States today. Students are rewarded with good grades in much the same way that a worker receives pay increases. The structure of the classroom (teachers and students) mirrors the top-down relationship of management and workers. According to the authors, with the closure of the westward frontier, education in the United States became a new means of social advancement, but the rapid expansion of the educational establishment soon diminished the importance of the college degree. The progressive era around the begin-

ning of the twentieth century had ushered in a standardization of school curriculum and classroom structure in contrast to the provincialism of decentralized small-town educational institutions.⁴⁷ Instead of becoming a means for social elevation, however, the schooling system became a means of tracking people into appropriate jobs based on their class, racial, and sexual status.⁴⁸ The transition from industrial capitalism to modern corporate capitalism required the increasing production of "educated" white collar labor to meet the needs of industry.

The view that the educational system in the United States has been developed to meet the needs of industry is not simply a proposition of radical theory. Rather, such high-level commissions as the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education admit the dependence of industry on the production of workers in the university.⁴⁹ Clark Kerr, president of U.C. Berkeley for many years and a spokesperson for the corporatization of higher education has said it is "natural" for the university to serve government, industry, and agriculture.⁵⁰ As one observer put it, universities today are little more than a service station catering to the needs of the corporations.

The element of social responsibility needed for students to be able to critically examine the direction and goals of the society is increasingly absent from university education as the methods of science and "value-free" information have become stressed. Fragmented technical knowledge and submissive behavior patterns are rapidly disintegrating the students' capacity for critical thought. Orwellian "double-think" is on the ascendency: the political complicity of the universities is called "apolitical," and those who protest university connections with the "Defense" Department are accused of politicizing the university.

The problems with the educational system in the modern world are ones of both quality and quantity. Qualitatively, education should serve to heighten the individual's sense of moral, ethical and aesthetic appreciation of life. Polytechnic education should be universally available to both demystify the control of technology by the experts who work for the power elite and to begin the process of developing a new science rooted in popular aspirations for harmony with Nature through an understanding of the laws and purposes of Nature. Young people should be "educated to govern,"⁵¹ not worn down into submissive roles. Furthermore, as Illitch reminds us, "de-schooling society" needs to accompany the redefinition of education.⁵² Rather than being viewed as the exclusive function of the schools and universities, education is involved in all

aspects of human interaction. As long as we only comprehend education as a specialized fragment of life, we live within the mis-education of the modern capitalist system.

## THE AUTHORITARIAN CLASSROOM

In *On Learning and Social Change*,[53] Michael Rossman developed the theme that the universities in the United States have advanced to meet the needs of technocratic society, but that they are still caught in the self-definition of themselves from an earlier epoch. Students attend the universities in large numbers to learn technical skills and to find a way to become socially useful workers. The universities, on the other hand, see themselves as neutral institutions, an ideal formed in an earlier, ivy era, when higher education served to train the elite in how to rule. But, as Rossman discussed, the universities today serve another important function: they are the central socializing mechanism of society. The mixing of rewards and punishment, first used by parents to teach children acceptable and nonacceptable kinds of behavior, is an important lesson which the universities continue to teach:

> Benevolently the dean reprimands, the dorm mother locks in, and the professor, inescapably the living arm of the machine of grades and degrees, casts shadows of stronger punishment indeed with every gesture.[54]

Rossman is attempting to deal with the problem of what he calls the totalitarian classroom—the structure of learning in such a way that one is required to memorize the wisdom of experts without being able to think critically for oneself. According to this model, change in society and in knowledge only occurs in a linear fashion. The authority of "Great Men" of the past is unquestionable if one wants to get ahead, and getting ahead is the reward for submitting to the rituals of the authoritarian classroom. Rossman's insight into the Authority Complex in the university leads him to understand pre-university and post-university life as being set within the same kind of structure:

> Spankings are the rare Vietnams of the cultural imperialism that dominates the world of the nuclear family. The true motives of the family, like those of our foreign policy, are not simply benevolent. In each the Authority Complex operates in the interests of power, to preserve and transmit an established order.[55]

Having demonstrated how the Authority Complex actually inhibits real learning, Rossman goes on to discuss the Free Speech movement in Berkeley and other aspects of the counterculture in the United States as providing an "open-circle" model of learning. According to this model, freedom of the individual becomes the goal of learning. No one person is expected to always play the role of leader (teacher), and the group is decentralized, rather than centralized in its focus and operations.

The critique of the authoritarian classroom is an important contribution which indicates new forms for education. A liberated classroom would stress participation rather than passivity; communication among peers rather than just a one-way flow from teacher to student; critical reflection on one's own life experiences and knowledge rather than assuming that the students know little or nothing; and role-exchanges whereby no one person is artificially expected to be the expert while the others are to be the passive consumers. As students in a classroom situation, think for a moment about the structure of the situation you submit to. If you have a big lecture type of setting, what is the *form* of the communication process? Whether your teacher is a radical or conservative, a man or a woman, it is a safe assumption that you and they are passively accepting the strict leader/led dichotomy. In other words, human interaction is perverted simply because of the way in which the room is constructed—the front of the room has priority since often the seats are bolted down facing the podium—or solely because it is "natural"—the easiest way to cover the material which the student is required to cover in order to advance to the next class.

Our analysis of the function of the educational system—to socialize people to accept the bureaucracy and hierarchy of the modern world—is precisely one of the reasons why all young people in the United States are required to stay in school for so many years and why the schools have come to resemble jails in many inner cities—complete with armed guards and windowless buildings. In order to curb the idealism and sense of social responsibility which young people have, the schools make sure—or at least try to—that people become accustomed to life as it is and will passively partake in the system as it is without questioning its rationality.

## YOUTH RESISTANCE

Despite the many structures of domination imposed on young people, an international student movement and counterculture arose in the 1960s. In contrast to the hierarchy of adult society and the atomization of the social

world, the youth movement sought to create a new community of equality and freedom. The political expression of this "new culture" in the United States was embodied in the anti-war movement, a movement inspired by the Civil Rights Movement and the resistance of the people of Vietnam. The anti-war movement reached its high point during the student strike of May 1970, when colleges, universities, and high schools across the country were shut down to protest Nixon's invasion of Cambodia.[*] This strike was the only major political strike to take place in the United States in decades, and it ended only after 6 students had been shot dead at Kent State and Jackson State universities while thousands more were injured or arrested across the country. The demands of the strikers were:

1) An immediate end to U.S. involvement in Indochina;

2) Freedom for Bobby Seale (Chairperson of the Black Panther Party in 1970 who was on trial for murder and later acquitted) and all other political prisoners in the U.S.;

3) An end to university complicity with military research and recruiting.

The universalistic nature of these demands are but one indication that the student movement was not confined to the problems of a special stratum of society--youth--but were self-consciously setting out the needs of the most oppressed in society as their own needs. This self-conscious universality would seem to invalidate sociological theories of the student movement which remain confined to psychological explanations. Moreover, those explanations that only stressed the specific conditions of the United States or industrialized countries failed to realize that students and youth have been responsive to radical movements in many different times and places. From the May Fourth Movement in early twentieth century China to the Civil Rights and anti-war movements in the U.S., students have played an important role as catalysts for larger social movements (as well as powerful movements in their own right). Especially in modern industrialized societies where the student population has increased immensely and where the problems of youth are exacerbated by the extension of childhood inequality later into life, the student movement has affected and will continue to affect national and international reality.[57] From the Pentagon Papers to the accounts of Watergate written by the "President's Men," the student movement had far more power than it itself was aware of.[*]

In every country where national liberation struggles are being waged today, students are an important part. A student movement by itself, of course, is not capable of effecting a revolution (except in exceptional circumstances, as in Thailand). The student movement's limits are often more apparent than its scope, but from practice it seems that students are the blasting cap and the working class is the dynamite of revolution. In May 1968 in France, a student revolt spread to the working class, and in the ensuing two months of upheaval, there was nearly a revolution. For Herbert Marcuse, the May events in France constituted the "first powerful rebellion against the whole of the existing society, the rebellion for the total transvaluation of values, for qualitatively different ways of life."[*]

The student movement in the U.S. (and the industralized countries generally) as well as the counterculture which accompanied it were living proof both of the human capacity for freedom as well as the limits of rebellion. Young people were instinctually repulsed by the technological genocide perpetrated by their society. Mario Savio, a leader of the Free Speech Movement of 1964, expressed the revulsion of the young when he said:

There is a time when the operations of the machine become so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part, you can't even tacitly take part. And you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus, and you've got to make it stop.[*]

From its inception, the youth culture contained members motivated by more than the desire to carve out easy lives for themselves. To understand the development of hippies in the United States, some observers have tried to make analogies with other youthful movements in the past. While the long hair and sexual experimentation of the hippies may appear on the surface to be similar to the Russian youth movement of the 1880s or to the earlier culture of rebellion in Germany, the youth movement of the modern world came into itself in the "electronic age," synthesizing a new music, "Rock and Roll," and alternative lifestyles to the monogamous family.

The original impetus of the hippie movement was the desire to live humanly in an age of specialization. The generations of children born after the second world war were raised in a position of unprecedented prosperity. This wealth was largely made possible by the exploitation of Third World nations, and it appeared to rebound in the minds of many Americans when their children began to support the struggles of Third

World peoples to be free. The hippies were born into a world secure in terms of their material needs, but they were cut off from their own human desires and potentials by adult society. While money and social status were basically guaranteed, living a free, integrated, and fulfilling life was not. Previous generations had had little choice but to accept material security as their goal because of the extreme poverty they had experienced during the Great Depression. In order to try to reach new human goals, hippies rejected the careerism and professionalism of technocratic life.

The belief that people and not things should come first was of paramount importance to the hippies. The propensity of the young to espouse moral causes coupled with the genocidal war in Indochina produced a remarkably long-term resistance to the foreign policy of the adult government. This resistance was spurred on by the fact that while 18-year-olds were not allowed to buy liquor or vote in many states, they were drafted (generally lower class and Third World young people were the Draft Board's targets) and forced to fight and die in the jungles of Vietnam. The televised draft lottery where young men were arbitrarily picked to be drafted only reinforced the view that adult society used the young to do their dirty work without giving them the full status of citizenship.

Since the 1960s, the cooptation of the counterculture—that is the institutional adjustment making more room for young people and the products of the counterculture within corporate production—has helped to sap the vital energy of the movement. The end of the draft, the 18-year-old vote, the formation and strengthening of youth groups within the established institutions (Young Democrats, Young Communists, etc.) the tokenistic granting of student representation on administrative bodies (to say nothing of the Democratic Party opening its convention in 1972 to radicals of the 60s)[61] have all taken the sense of opposition away from non-established groups and individuals. Where there was once a real San Francisco music, today there are huge record companies marketing the latest rock, jazz, and folk. Even agribusiness has jumped on the bandwagon with all-natural cereals and organic foods. The rapid diffusion of the counter-culture, as well as its dependence on "plastic America" for something to be "counter" to, proved to be strong forces which overwhelmed the meaning of such symbols as long hair.

The sudden rise and fall of the counterculture has led some observers to ask if it really was a "culture" after all. Those who saw the youth

movements as "petit-bourgeois"[62] have seen their point of view confirmed by the sporadic existence of "Woodstock nation."[63] Those who saw it merely as a youthful infatuation believe that the Woodstock generation has finally grown up. Some analysts, like the Rowntrees, had comprehended the countercultural communities as a base area for the class struggle:

> The youth communities–Haight Ashbury, the East Village, etc.–are important mainly because they define a quasi-political boundary between youth and others. Therefore, like black ghettoes, school grounds and campuses, villages provide a base from which youth can organize and a setting in which political learning can take place. . . . The communities also offer laboratories for the development of communal, life-affirming forms of living, eating, sharing and participating in public activities. Contrast the buoyancy of contemporary youth culture with the nihilism, individualism and withdrawal of the Beats of the 1950s.[64]

But the Rowntrees' expectation of the continuation of the youth class struggle after the resolution of the war in Vietnam has proven to be wrong, at least on the level of overt action. With the victory of the people of Indochina, many aspects of youth culture turned into withdrawalism of one form or another – mysticism, sex, drugs, space fantasy, and music.

Of course, the cooptation has not been complete. There remain many individuals, institutions, and collectivities who seek to transform the society, and despite their apparent disappearance, the rebels of the 1960s were an effective force in exposing the inhuman nature of the modern capitalist system to a complacent public. The total transformation of this society, a goal which was momentarily posed by the New Left, would require a leap from rebellion to revolutionary consciousness–a leap where young people do not define adults or "anyone over 30" as the enemy. As Dick Flacks put it:

> The idea of youth is a dangerous one for a social order, but it is also a very promising one. Youth revolt is a sign that a new culture and a new social order have been placed on the agenda of history. The promise of youth can only be fulfilled, however, if youth is transcended–if the young and the old who have a common interest in a new social order come together to make their collective mark and help each other realize their common dreams.[65]

# NOTES

1. See Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971) pp. 103-4 and Juliet Mitchell, *Woman's Estate* (New York: Random House, 1973) pp. 67, 109.

2. Lewis Feuer, *The Conflict of Generations* (New York: Basic Books, 1969) p. 527.

3. Ibid., p. 30.

4. Ibid., p. 8.

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6. For further discussion, see Chapter 10, "Theories of Racism."

7. George Paloczi-Horvath, *Youth Up in Arms* (New York: McKay, 1971) pp. 36-7.

8. Ibid.

9. Philippe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood* (New York: Knopf, 1962) p. 128.

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11. Philippe Aries, op. cit., p. 33.

12. Firestone, op. cit., p. 79.

13. Aries, op. cit., p. 131.

14. F. Musgrove, *Youth and Social Order* (London: International Library of Sociology, 1964).

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28. Horkheimer, op. cit., pp. 277-278.

29. Ibid., p. 276.

30. M. Real, *Mass-Mediated Culture* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1977) p. 8.

31. *TV Guide*, March 26, 1977, pp. 6-10 document the use of lie detectors to select newscasters by measuring their effect on audience sexual excitement.

32. Reich, op. cit., p. 88.

33. Ibid., p. 89.

34. Wilson Bryan Key, *Media Sexploitation* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976).

35. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966) p. 201.

36. John and Margaret Rowntree, "Youth as a Class," *Our Generation* 6, pp. 155-156.

37. Ibid., p. 162.

38. Ibid., p. 164.

39. Sam Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America* (New York: Basic Books, 1976).

40. Max Boas and Steve Chain, Big Mac (New York: Mentor Books, 1976).

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56. See George Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968* (Boston: South End Press, 1984).

57. See *Long March, Short Spring*, by Barbara and John Ehrenreich (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969), and *Student Power Participation and Revolt*, by John and Susan Erlich (New York: Association Press, 1970).

58. See any of the post-Watergate memoirs, especially Jeb Stuart Magruder's, *An American Life: One Man's Road to Watergate* (New York: Atheneum, 1974).

59. Herbert Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969) p. x.

60. Savio's full speech is reprinted in *The Berkeley Student Revolt*, op. cit. pp. 216-220.

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