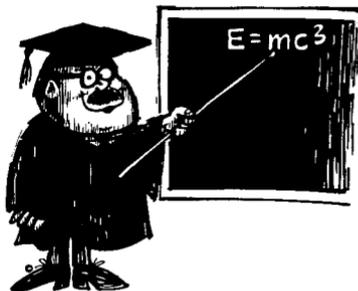


Ridgway K. Foley, Jr.

The Fine Art of Cheating



PERIODIC REVELATIONS of academic scandal enliven collegiate communities and titillate followers of current events. Every few years, the popular press reveals a consortium between university ballplayers and professional gamblers designed to predetermine the outcome of school athletic contests to benefit the knowledgeable inside bettors, to "beat the point spread." Recently, particularly on the West Coast, other instances of fraud and deceit have come to the fore. "Student athletes" receive college credit for unattended classes often held at non-existent institutions or in places little more than diploma mills. Stand-ins take tests and write term papers for the pampered few. Teachers award high grades for little effort. Coaches offer illicit monies to encourage the favored to participate in sports for the dear old alma mater. Grades or degrees in exchange for sexual, political or monetary favors are not beyond the realm of reality.

Righteous indignation comes into immediate conflict with pious justification concerning these endeavors. The offended rail against unethical conduct, only to be met with excuses from the groves of academe belaboring the fine educational efforts put forth on behalf of the college community. Poverty-stricken and disadvantaged students and over-

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worked, underpaid faculty members apparently encounter great difficulty in differentiating right from wrong and, in any event, focus on these minor misadventures obscures the wonders worked by public education greatly benefiting the world.

A Sacred Cow

Certain subjects reside beyond the bounds of fair comment in this topsy-turvy world: challengers to these unassailable institutions and myths find themselves pilloried by the press and ostracized by polite society for even suggesting that the emperor traverses the highways and byways stark naked. Public education represents one of those sacrosanct subjects above reproach. Nevertheless, at the risk of censure and misunderstanding, allow me to opine that the American public receives, at best, a dime's worth of education for every dollar spent, that the myriad examples of common cheating portend a much more serious moral ill, and that public education, far from constituting a Heaven-ordained precept, is just plain ineffective, indifferent and wrong. Moreover, attempted reforms (like the voucher system) do nothing more than perpetuate the evil rather than scourge it.

The true victim of academic excess will not be found by the unob-servant many; the real injured parties are those honest, upright, producing members of society who

involuntarily contribute part of their privately-created property to the plunderers who exact tribute and transfer that wealth into the maw of public education. Certainly the honest student or teacher loses too, but one cannot afford much sympathy for willing participants in misdoings; the seminal harm befalls the simple taxpayer-citizen who funds the transfer payments so that rowdy, lazy and rotund muscle-men live well and receive college degrees for learning how to move chairs in an auditorium.

The depth of the art of cheating in the twentieth-century educational system taxes the fainthearted. Many students receive tuition waivers, book allowances and housing grants (not to mention food stamps) from the state or federal government. Their classmates collect reduced interest or free student loans, most of which are never repaid. Tuition defrays but a slight share of the cost of modern teaching; the remainder emanates from a variety of federal, state and local subsidies. Professors procure a plethora of tax monies by way of research grants, often employed in the most abysmal, wasteful or shocking endeavors. Schools intercept other forms of public funding to facilitate compliance with various entitlement and social policy programs mandated by government. In short, an endless litany of perversions, diversions and boon-

doggles blemish the once-fair visage of the grand old dame of education.

Controls Follow Subsidies

Stealthy but iron-fisted state controls accompany the current mania of intervention in the educational process: the carrots of grants and loans convoyed by the sticks of sanctions and penalties for noncompliance. Thus, a furor arises because the federal government in its egalitarian wisdom decrees equal funding and opportunity for male and female sporting events, participants and teams. Detractors of this lofty premise point out that college football and basketball—played by men—produces high revenues; therefore, these grieved alumni, fans and participants decry the fundamental unfairness in taking monies generated by male sports to fund women's teams. By a parity of reasoning (apparently obscure to the multitudes) is it not also fundamentally unjust to plunder the taxpayer-citizens to support athletic contests or, indeed, schooling for other people? If it is wrong to pay halfbacks to run off tackle, is it not equally wrong to compensate scholars from public monies to study the mating instincts of armadillos?

The aspect of governmental control exceeds the simple examples employed. The state pervades the entire educational process: it decrees who shall teach, who shall at-

tend, what shall be taught, and what subjects are anathema; in a phrase, it determines the participants and sets the agenda. It punishes non-compliance or deviation by a series of sanctions, from the withdrawal of grants to the revocation of accreditation to the threat of imprisonment of dissenters. With the aid of a compliant media, those who jostle the public educational process are shamed, ridiculed or mistreated. Once tax dollars are expended for a stated public purpose, one can make a stronger case for implementation of governmental controls to assure adherence to announced state social policy and the avoidance of apparent unfairness or discrimination. The next logical step: coerce into compliance those few institutions which accept no state recompense whatsoever and which merely wish to teach their charges to follow their own stars.

Thus, a perceptive observer can chart issues on a continuum: (1) What should be done about overt cheating in public education? (2) Should some students be permitted a degree for attendance upon courses without intellectual content? (3) If nonchallenging courses exist, should public funds be employed in any manner in that endeavor? (4) To what extent should state social policy derive enforcement from the public school arena? (5) Should the government control education in the purely

private and voluntary realm? (6) What constitutes the proper role of the state in the teaching process?

Each of these questions (and the myriad sub-issues intervening on the scale) deserves separate treatment on the merits, increasing as they do in difficulty and importance from beginning to end. The modern nostrums prescribed for the earlier inquiries constitute mere placebos which hinder analysis by obfuscating the seminal concern expressed by the last question. Thus, the much-heralded voucher system would provide a tax credit or similar subsidy allowing parents to choose the schooling for their offspring; yet, that system, in all of its varieties, would continue to assign the state a central role in the learning process: the government would merely broaden the agenda, but it would still decree the boundaries and the participants, and it would proceed to transfer wealth involuntarily from the productive into the educational process.

Again, the debate over content (be it sexual education, evolution versus creationism, Biblical studies, or something else) merely constitutes a skirmish over who shall control the calendar and the substance; it does nothing to dethrone government and return it to its proper place. Furthermore, the recent attempts to remove tax-exempt status from institutions not currying favor with the educational establishment repre-

sent one more attempt to police substance.¹

Defenders of public education assure all who will listen that Herculean efforts by the faculty and administration have wrought wondrous results, leading to the conclusion that modern students are better, brighter, and more learned than anyone else. Pure bunk! The public educational miasma stifles initiative and dampens creativity so that those lucky few who do learn anything do so in spite of the system and not by reason of it. The adherents simply confuse cause and consequence and, more importantly, by virtue of their vested interests they are unable to judge critically.

Standards Have Declined

The fact of the matter is that today's standards and students have declined dangerously in the main; the best and the brightest cannot read, write, spell, divide or think analytically; they receive pap not challenge, and they respond in illiterate lockstep. Ask any discriminating employer who must interview applicants for positions of promise and trust: the mill run may be nice folks but they are woefully ill prepared to meet and surmount intellectual challenges.

Moreover, another more subtle and sinister attribute mars modern public education: the thwarting by the state of dissent. Oh, certainly, we

mouth the pleasing phrases of the First Amendment and Milton's *Areopagitica*, but when it comes down to the nub of the matter, our children learn not critical analysis but unquestioning recital of faded fact and patent fable.

For example, how many economic departments across this land still preach the discredited Keynesian faith? Or, more to the point, how many such classrooms see a fair comparative exposition of Austrian, Keynesian and monetarist ideas? Again, in political economy, how many students receive training solely from professed Marxists to the exclusion of even an introduction to the axioms of the private property order? Or, if one of one hundred faculty members pronounces the merits of a voluntary society, is he well qualified and amply endowed in intellect, or more likely, is he a ridiculous and inane caricature of a true believer in liberty? These questions bear repeating in all disciplines.

The frightening truth: by and large, public schools teach values and theories which perpetuate that system and which sanctify the precepts of those in power and, by reason of state mandate, no discerning student is free to go elsewhere in a quest for knowledge. The inquiring pupil must tolerate and survive and attempt to overcome the babble which assails his eyes and ears in every classroom.²

Look to the Arguments

Proponents of public education advance three arguments in support of the state school: (1) the education of the young constitutes a proper and inalienable function of government; (2) without state intervention into the realm of education, most pupils would go untaught; and (3) since society as a whole benefits from an educated populace, all persons should contribute toward the teaching of the progeny of the few. Reflection reveals that all of these reasons lack merit.

First, consider the appropriate functions of government: education is not among them. The state—the public monopoly of force—is suited only to channelling conduct by means of coercion. Destructive elements are ill suited to creative challenges. Force proves effective only in restraining undesirable conduct, not in occasioning virtue. As Edmund Opitz remarks, “to educate” is not a transitive verb. Learning requires an adept teacher and a willing student. Compulsion plays no vital or effective role in the process. Hence government possesses neither a natural aptitude nor a necessary adroitness regarding the enlightenment phenomenon.

Second, no reason exists to suppose that children would learn less in a private and voluntary system of education. Leonard Read has noted recently that learning occupies a high point on the value scale of most par-

ents from every walk of life, so high in fact that no one when queried ever advised him that they would forgo education of their offspring in a free society featuring a voluntary school system.³

Surely the structure, content and performance of a freely functioning private school system would differ and improve upon the present oppressive endeavor: after all, freedom has the open texture which accommodates creativity and fosters ingenuity. Learning would develop in untold and unpreordained paths; those who desire to improve would find great benefits in the system whereas those who merely take up space by reason of illogical laws would find another enterprise—such as honest toil for fair recompense—more to their liking.

Perhaps those athletically inclined individuals would continue to delight their partisans by their periodic gridiron feats or court exploits, but it seems likely that school teams would soon revert to students playing ball for fun and recreation, not as a subsidized and masked business fortified by the taxpayers, many of whom care naught for the weekend antics of Saturday's heroes. In short, those who can and wish to learn would do so, without the immoral application of force to compel endowment of the system by unwilling participants.

Third, should society (or, more

correctly the productive individuals in society) pay for education as a matter of justice? The argument proves too much. Society represents an open-ended exchanging fraternity which fosters trade and exchange of goods, services and ideas, as well as warmth, friendship and harmony. Each person in a society benefits from free exchanges of value with others, yet that very advantage would be substantially abased by the introduction of force in an atmosphere which requires liberty.

Voluntary Exchange Is Best

Voluntary exchange of value diminishes where the element of coercion creeps in: compulsion restrains the free development of ideas and predetermines the end, thereby shutting out the enormous possibilities for creative activity. Again, in a shortsighted sense, A benefits when B learns to be a doctor, but A pays for that benefit voluntarily by exchanging some of the value he creates for the application of B's skills. Each person gains from the development of his or her virtuosity; who can employ some sort of social calculus to decide whether A benefits more than B does when the latter secures his diploma in surgery?

Furthermore, formal education does not serve as the sole or even the highest means of personal development. All of us know of wonderful people who mastered a craft or im-

parted great virtue and knowledge without a degree or, indeed, with very little schoolhouse training. Each person or family should choose the type and extent of nurture from an ever-widening shelf of illuminating choice. Society, and the individuals in society, benefit the most from the vast creativity fostered by such a reign of freedom.

Rampant cheating and chicanery in the academy serve not only to betray proper morality but also to disclose a greater malevolence within. Public education induces such wickedness simply because it is constructed on wrong principles: force, not freedom. In a free society, the sting abates and true wisdom flourishes. ☉

—FOOTNOTES—

¹See, e.g., Kaus, Robert M., "How is Bob Jones U. Like Ms. Magazine," *The American Lawyer* 63-64 (April 1982). Of course, the key issue of whether *any* institution should receive tax-exempt treatment is never addressed. See my "The Elements of a Fair System of Taxation," *The Freeman*, September, 1982.

²On my venture toward degrees in "higher education," I developed an interesting technique: I divided my notebooks into two parallel columns; on the left, I wrote down that which I needed to regurgitate to pass the course; on the right, I took notes of thoughts which, for me, approximated the truth. The content of the competing columns differed vastly! I have found the right hand section of help in life after college.

³See Read, Leonard E., "One Way to Assess the Future," appearing as Chapter 25 in *How Do We Know?* (The Foundation for Economic Education, Inc., Irvington-on-Hudson, New York, 1981), 105-109.

Wise Strategy

TRYING to answer an involved question about some socialist panacea in one or two minutes is hopeless and unfair by the test of intellectual justice, for the same reason. Unless ample time is available and willingly offered by those who will be judging your case, it is probably better not to enter that particular courtroom at all; it would be better to refuse to accept its jurisdiction. In other words, it would be better to refrain from offering your views on all these questions at that time and place.

The wise libertarian is one who uses his time to the best advantage, who employs whatever honest strategy will best defend the concepts he holds dear. To do that is not cowardice. Why suffer bruised shins battling the keepers of the sacred cows in an arena of injustice and disadvantage while so many fertile fields for libertarian talent remain untilled?

F. A. HARPER, "Sacred Cows and Bruised Shins"

IDEAS ON



LIBERTY

Henry Hazlitt

Keynesism in a Nutshell

Henry Hazlitt, a frequent contributor to *The Freeman*, has a long and distinguished career as an economist, journalist, editor, and literary critic. Best known of his numerous books is *Economics in One Lesson*, originally published in 1946 and since translated into eight languages with sales of more than 700,000 copies. The recently revised edition is once more available in inexpensive paperback.

JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES was, basically, an inflationist. This has not been clearly recognized because he never spelled out, step by step, the consequences of his proposed remedy for unemployment and depression. That remedy was deficit spending by the government. He recognized that increased government spending paid for by equally increased taxation would not “add purchasing power.” The increased taxation would offset any “stimulus” that the increased government spending would provide. What counted, he confessed, was the government deficit. But he failed to take his readers beyond this step. How

would that deficit be financed? Either the money would have to be borrowed, or new (paper) money or credit would have to be created. But if the money were borrowed, then the previous spending stimulus would be reversed by a deflation when the borrowing was repaid. The only thing to prevent this reversal would be to allow the new spending to remain outstanding. In other words, the Keynesian solution to every slowdown in business or rise in unemployment was still another dose of inflation.

I may point out (if that is still deemed necessary in this inflationary era) that no inflation of which we have historical knowledge resulted in sound and continued business expansion but only in currency depreciation, a wanton redistribution of profits and losses, disorganized output, and economic demoralization. This has been true whether we begin with the coinage debasement of ancient Rome or the paper money scheme of John Law in 1716.

The lessons of inflation are soon forgotten. They apparently must be relearned in every generation. ☹