

# EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND IDEOLOGY

by Ray Peat

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Giving students a place to be free, to find a self, to do some things they couldn't comfortably do elsewhere, is a useful thing that can be done by a free college, as well as by free schools for younger children. This function has (particularly in the early 1960s in America) been part of the process of creating a new culture "inside" the old one. The school had an insulating function, as well as a creative function.

But as the idea of "free colleges" became popular, around 1966, students started arriving at "free schools", such as Blake College, with preconceptions that had been shaped by filtering through mass media. Passivity, conforming to a certain role, was an alienated attitude that free schools had helped people overcome, but now it was an increasingly explicit expectation of new students. Instead of using freedom to overcome passivity, they identified passivity with freedom, and defended it. The role of "passive counter-culture rebel" was a fine capitalist invention. (Richard Alpert/Baba Ram Dass can be seen as the vanguard of the ruling class with his empty mysticism of passivity.)

In this setting, the creative function of the free colleges became increasingly important, but, as far as I know, Blake College is the only one that has consistently tried to make this clear. Over ten years ago, when the foundations that had denied support to us began funding parodies of our program in very conservative universities, we felt that the forms of experimental education were being disarmed and corrupted, so that exploitation could pass for innovation.

As a result, we have tried to emphasize that the beliefs that justify the form of the free college should also serve as guides in the integration and creation of knowledge. Just as Marx's perception of man's potential guided his understanding of alienation and exploitation and social development, it is a revolutionary body of knowledge that originally supported ideas of educational reform. We feel that our function is to contribute new knowledge and coherence to it, while disseminating it and using it in humane ways and as a tool of resistance against the alienated-alienating culture of the exploitive society.

In organization, we have de-emphasized the recruitment of students to support teachers, and have become a small group of self-supporting collaborators, accepting students only on terms that will not contribute to further alienation.

Respect for the complexity and potentiality of matter is the foundation for this revolutionary body of knowledge. Use of the body as an instrument of discovery is an important part of our phenomenological method. Radical empiricism and dialectical materialism are among our commitments.

What Heraclitus, Blake, and Marx had in common was an intense honesty of method, and a perception of the tremendous potential of people who devote themselves to that kind of knowing. Many others including scientists such as W. F. Koch, M. Polanyi, and W. Reich, have extended this self-development into the natural world. Besides helping to expand our perceptions and knowledge, their great contribution has been to demonstrate a way of knowing and discovering that is simply human (and animal), but which contradicts all formalized doctrines of scientific method.

As I understand it, intuition is guided into even the subtlest and most complex aspects of the material world by the fact that subtle and complex aspects of matter and energy constitute consciousness, and that related and simple tendencies exist in both knower and known. Blake and Reich and S. Dali suggest that it is the erotic impulse that guides intuition, and

prevents "paranoia" from being "uncritical" (Dali's terms). The materialist tradition in its richest form recognizes desire and the directionality of time; alienated or mechanistic materialism makes the absurd assumption of randomness whenever possible, as a complement to their ruling atomistic and deductive logic.

When consciousness is seen as a material and energetic model or image of the world, rather than as an alienated set of rules and symbols, it is more likely to function in a productive, unalienated way.

For us, science is important as an amplification of the human - both as perception and as function. The fact that stimulation can cause an animal's brain to grow - even in maturity - and can lead to inherited larger brains, suggests the significance of cultural evolution to the organism.

Perception is extended, just on the psychological level, by the discovery of new rules of interaction - what was random, now can be seen as ordered. This is vaguely analogous to the function of myth, except that this is both perceptual and interpretive, while myth is mainly just interpretive. A higher energy state of the brain allows awareness of a broader span of the present, so that patterns which exist only or partly as a development through time can be perceived and used. Old theories of discovery could do no better than proposing a mysterious kind of luck in hypothesizing to account for the scientific success of some people. Mere intensity of animal perception is the whole trick. The difference from ordinary animal perception is its ability to dream new integrations when there is slight discordance of elements - i. e., it is more fluid, and able to be introverted.

An example of trying to amplify a function is the project of trying to find why some populations can fix enough breathed nitrogen to meet their protein needs, while in many populations protein starvation is very real. If a deficiency of vitamins or minerals is responsible, this would be an easy way of amplifying our "normal" function of fixing atmospheric nitrogen in our bodies for use in protein synthesis.

The emphasis put on the work function by Marx and Reich, the idea that real history begins when we can start realizing and creating ourselves through our work, combines an affirmation of time with a recognition of organismic energy.

Another perspective on the same idea is this: dreams affirm and shape life. The morphogenetic field of biological energy, which shapes growth and renewal, is known directly as consciousness; the dream cycle is also a voltage and resistance cycle, for example. G. A. Sacher has observed that brain mass correlates very well with longevity, and others have observed that the dream-activating function corresponds to brain size. Babies apparently dream very often and intensely. We feel that infancy is the direction of our evolution, biologically, and that the cultural stereotype of a child as one who doesn't work has to be overcome - kids are naturally high-generality problem solvers, wanting to contribute immediately to the world that has been reserved for adults,

Our invitation to others - students or teachers - is to come and play and dream with us, in our work of evolving ourselves and the culture. We are appropriating cultural achievements for ourselves, making them new and extending them, and looking for as many other peculiar cultural centers as we can find, because unique perspectives provide the richness for growing generality. We want our physics and our psychology and technology to incorporate the vision of the Mexican mountain villager and the Nepalese brahmin, because every village culture represents thousands of years of experience that will enrich our own village perspective, "western civilization". The desirable high-generality integration will be many-levelled and rich, unlike most previous cultural syntheses. European culture is flat and abstract; Mexican culture is many-levelled, but under-generalized; China is the closest to our ideal of rich generality, especially its Taoist tradition with a dialectical awareness and emphasis on body, energy, and life.

The institution, or the person, that performs the "higher education" functions of discovery, communication, and criticism should have a vision of matter, organism, and

society that serves as a guide to growth and liberation. Blake's statement, that unorganized innocence is an impossibility, should remind us that comprehensive understanding is necessary just for defense.

The dialectical idea of "criticism" has internal application, as well as being the proper interface with the static culture. The general way I use the concept is illustrated by some examples: Russian psychologists trained children to use the hand they weren't accustomed to, and found that their "characters" were improved, nervous heart conditions disappeared, etc. Alexandro Jodorowski used a theatrical form in which the actors present their "weaknesses" in dramatic form, and experience loss of some of their rigidities of character. Through his studies as a mime, Jodorowski discovered the neurological principles involved in the muscular rigidity and mechanical reflexes of a "decerebrate" animal, namely, that intensity of consciousness ("going to matter") and muscular differentiation and fluidity are closely related. Learning to visualize and move in patterns of unaccustomed complexity and sensitivity prepare the actor to present his new nature to the public.

Reich's emphasis on the complex interactions of muscles and awareness makes the same point. Our feeling at Blake College is that the human substance itself is involved in education, and that we work on ourselves as we work on our various projects.

"Culture" can be understood as the perceived limits of possibility. Class interests have been responsible for the "classical", static view in which man's capacities are limited in ways that justify exploitation. Other energy problems, e.g., diseases of age or poor nutrition, may harden the perceived limits of possibility. Just speaking the language of a sick culture is a threat to the naturally flexible perceptions, unless "innocence is organized" by a kind of paranoia that guards against limited desires and perceptions. Our work, of expanding our perceptions, and others', requires a lot of different techniques, but the process can be described generally as the complexification of matter and consciousness through what Blake called "Mental War".