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Teaching and Learning

Formal education has a dual ideological importance. It is often claimed to be the process by which ideology is transmitted, but it is also something that people have ideologies *of*. It is the latter issue that will concern us, namely people's conceptions of the educational process itself: of what education is, of how people learn, of how they should be taught, and to what ends. Conceptions of education are particularly appropriate for a general discussion of ideology. Education (in this context, formal schooling) is an important part of the larger process of becoming an adult member of society, and so ideologies of education necessarily include conceptions of human nature, of how we become what we are, of the relationship *between individual and society, as well as prescriptions for the conduct* of teaching and learning. Furthermore, education is organized and funded on a societal scale, and may be expected therefore to carry with it societal values about those things. In this chapter we shall demonstrate that the very process of education, quite apart from issues of what 'content' should be taught, is itself dilemmatic and ideological.

In Hard Times, Dickens provides us with a graphic parody of Victorian educational values:

> 'Bitzer,' said Thomas Gradgrind, 'Your definition of a horse.'
>
> 'Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries sheds hoofs too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth.' Thus (and much more) Bitzer.
>
> 'Now girl number twenty,' said Mr Gradgrind. 'You know what a horse is.'

Thomas Gradgrind's conception of what education is all about can be inferred from even so short an extract. It is based on an ideology of authoritative knowledge, of discipline and order, of the acquisition of received wisdom. Pupils respond when spoken to, and speak only to the teacher. It is all about filling the empty vessels of children's minds with 'facts': the cold transmission of ready-made bits of knowledge. But Bitzer's definition of a horse, while (presumably) accurate enough, would probably astonish a modern teacher. Pupils today are not expected to achieve understandings through the rote memorization of factual information. Bitzer may well have had no idea what he was talking about, what his parrot-learned words actually meant, why anyone would wish to possess such information, or what to do with it once they did.

The depersonalized 'girl number twenty' presumably had seen plenty of horses, knew they had four legs, and much else about them that Bitzer's

list of characteristics would not mention – how they look and move and smell, and what people do with them. A modern teacher might well start with such everyday knowledge, and get pupils to cooperate in a project to find out more. This is not merely a different way of achieving the same ends. It is founded upon a different conception of education, of knowledge itself, of children and of what sorts of adult citizens the education system should be trying to foster: that is to say, a different ideology of education. At least, this is the general assumption, that we are dealing with different and contrasting ideologies. We shall argue that a single, dilemmatic ideology underlies them both.

How many ideologies?

Conventional treatments of educational ideology concern themselves with the issue of enumerating how many educational ideologies there are, and with listing their distinguishing characteristics. Each is defined as distinctly as possible from the others, with each possessing as much internal coherence as description allows. Indeed, as we have noted, theories of ideology are typically based on the assumptions that ideologies are internally consistent, that they are opposed to other consistent ideologies, and that these opposing ideologies are espoused by different people. So, in a discussion of the sociology of education, Meighan (1981) defines ideology as 'a broad but interlinked set of ideas and beliefs about the world which are held by a group of people and which those people demonstrate both in behaviour and conversation to various audiences' (p. 19). An educational ideology is therefore 'a coherent pattern' (p. 22) such that 'alternative patterns of ideas. . .coexist and compete for existence' (p. 155).

There are always at least two contrasting ideologies, and indeed, in treatments of education, two is the usual number. A conventional dichotomy is drawn between 'traditional' and 'progressive' education; other, roughly equivalent terms are sometimes employed, such as 'transmission-oriented' versus 'interpretational', 'authoritarian' versus 'child-centred' or 'democratic', and so on. In rough, graphic terms, transmissional teaching is the formal, lecturing sort: pupils sit in desks facing the teacher, who controls all talk and activity. The pupils are required to listen attentively, to 'read, mark, learn and inwardly digest' what is given. In contrast, child-centred education would typically be represented by classrooms where pupils are engaged in individual work, or in small cooperative groups, the classroom a hubbub of noise and activity as the teacher moves from group to group, supervising and facilitating each pupil's learning. Sometimes three, four or more ideologies have been distinguished (for example Williams, 1961; Cosin, 1972), and even as many as a dozen, though by the time that we are down to the criteria that define that many types of education, the term 'ideologies' has been replaced by 'teaching styles' (Bennett and Jordan, 1975).

From the theoretical perspective that we have outlined in the earlier chapters, the various depictions of educational ideology possess several interesting features. First, despite their presentation as ideologies of education, they clearly appeal to a set of issues whose currency is much wider than that of merely how to teach and learn. They are concerned with fundamental and instantly recognizable social and political issues, such as those of individual freedom of action versus authoritative constraint, and the conservatism of sticking to traditional ways and wisdom versus the encouragement of change, variability and the potential for new understandings. Educational ideologies are variants of more general ones.

Secondly, they are cast as opposites, alternatives, positions defined in contrast to other positions. This immediately suggests that they are not independently formulated ways of thinking about education, but rather the terms of a debate, positions extracted from a single dialogue. Each position is not formulated as an exercise in itself, as a self-contained schema or conception of the world, but rather defined point by point in contradiction to another position which must inevitably, therefore, belong to the same universe of discourse. It is important that we realize that it need not have been so. The argumentative, dialogical character of educational ideologies is not a necessary characteristic of the consistent schemata that, according to some theoretical perspectives, individuals carry around in their heads as they make sense of the world.

Thirdly, the values of each position are not mutually exclusive. Supporters of traditional, transmission-oriented teaching are unlikely in all contexts to insist that pupils must remain passive recipients of the received wisdom, that education is always one-way traffic, an unchanging reproduction of all that has gone before. Similarly, the advocates of child-centred, autonomous learning will not insist that children are taught nothing, that the acquisition of a largely ready-made culture of knowledge and understanding is not, in however child-centred a way it is achieved, an important goal of education. Similarly, on the larger scale, few would advocate the unconstrained liberty of individuals to please themselves, just as few would insist on the necessity for social constraints in all aspects of personal conduct. We are dealing with values from a common culture, recognizable and usable by advocates on either side of a debate.

The discussion of educational ideology which follows will begin by outlining briefly the modern 'progressive' approach, and then will proceed to examine how some modern teachers come to terms with its contradictions, both in how they think about it, and also in what they do in the classroom. Prompted by some remarks by the influential educational theorist Jerome Bruner, an advocate of such liberal approaches, we seek an origin for our educational dilemma in Plato's presentation in the *Meno* of a dialogue between Socrates and a slave boy. It is a passage rich in significance for our understanding of education, embodying all of the

dilemmatic themes of child-centredness, of innate capacity, and of the exercise of authority that we shall first identify in modern teaching.

Teachers and teaching

Teachers do not have the luxury of being able to formulate and adhere to some theory or position on education, with only another theorist's arguments to question its validity. They have to accomplish the practical task of teaching, which requires getting the job done through whatever conceptions and methods work best, under practical constraints that include physical resources, numbers of pupils, nature of pupils, time constraints, set syllabuses and so on. But these practical considerations inevitably have ideological bases, which define what 'the job' actually is, how to do it, how to assess its outcomes, how to react to its successes and failures, how to talk and interact with pupils, how many can be taught or talked to at once. For example, in the traditional chalk-and-talk lecturing method, a large class size is not so great a practical *or* ideological problem as it is for a teacher who upholds the value of individual, child-centred learning.

Teachers' ideological conceptions tend not to be so neatly packaged and consistent as those posited by theorists of educational ideology; similarly, the practice of classroom teaching tends not to be a straightforward realization of some such coherent position. Rather, as we shall show, teachers may well hold views of teaching, of children, of the goals of educational practice and the explanations of educational failure, which theorists of ideology would locate in opposed camps. And so also will the practical activity of teaching reflect principles that are propounded by what are held to be opposed ideologies. Further, it is not unknown for teachers to be aware of such contradictions, to feel themselves involved in difficult choices and as having to make compromises.

We shall concentrate our analysis on a recognizably modern and widespread style of teaching which is of the 'progressive' sort. That is to say, it involves small-group, activity-oriented teaching, based on the view that pupils learn best through their own experiences. This is the 'child-centred pedagogy' that is associated with the psychological theories and research of Jean Piaget, with the principle of 'learning by doing', and with the enormously influential Plowden Report (1967), which has done much to shape the nature of British primary education since the 1960s (Valerie Walkerdine, 1984 provides a useful discussion of this approach and its limitations). It is explicitly opposed to the Gradgrind sort of pedagogy. In Piaget's words:

> Each time one prematurely teaches a child something he could have learned for himself, the child is kept from inventing it and consequently from understanding it completely. (1970: 715)

And, according to the Plowden Report:

> Piaget's explanations appear to most educationalists in this country to fit the observed facts of children's learning more satisfactorily than any other. . . Verbal explanation, in advance of understanding based on experience, may be an obstacle to learning. (paras 522 and 535)

Although the Report contained provisos and warnings against the misapplication of 'discovery learning', its general effect was to encourage teachers to take more of a back seat, to allow pupils to actively try things for themselves, to learn from their own experiences.

In fact, despite the obvious influence of these ideas on British educational thought and practice, it has become clear that a fundamental shift from transmission-oriented education to child-centred discovery learning has generally not taken place. Its implementation has at best been superficial or severely compromised, if not altogether illusory. Meighan (1981: 333) refers to 'the myth of the non-authoritarian primary school', and suggests that 'alternative forms of authoritarian schooling. . . are taken for radical non-authoritarian alternatives, and this gives rise to a variety of myths about educational practice' (p. 334). He cites a variety of research studies which support this conclusion (for example Richards, 1979; Berlak et al., 1975).

Indeed, theoretical and ideological opposition began in advance of any such research, from the moment the Plowden Report was published (for example Peters, 1969; Froome, 1970). It included some simple reassertions of principles that would have appealed to Mr Gradgrind: 'All knowledge consists of facts, and a step-by-step assimilation of those facts which are deemed desirable is the basis of learning' (Froome, 1970: 113). The invocation of knowledge which is 'deemed desirable' introduces an ideological dimension to the debate which was sometimes quite explicit. Marriott notes some instances:

> Kemball-Cook (1972), in an article critical of Plowden, argued that a relaxed approach to discipline is particularly unsuitable for boys; while girls in primary schools exhibit docility and eagerness to please, boys' toughness and aggression requires firmer handling. Similarly, the apparently ubiquitous abdication of teachers in primary schools was connected by such writers to impending or current economic difficulties; for example, Cox and Boyson (1975) argued that if the non-competitive ethos of progressive education was allowed to dominate our schools, the result would be a generation who would be unable to maintain current standards of living when opposed by overseas competitors. (1985: 34–5)

We seem to be faced with a quandary. Neither kind of education seems entirely satisfactory. The shift towards 'progressive' education was motivated by a deeply felt dissatisfaction with the nature and consequences of traditional chalk-and-talk teaching. The traditional methods, supported by the outmoded assumptions of innate ability and IQ testing, had given rise

to the wholesale educational failure of large numbers of children, especially those of the working class. They were being left behind, falling off the back of the train as the teacher's single-track locomotive of educated thought and talk pushed on regardless, arriving at the final destination with only a few first-class passengers still aboard. The few who remained on the train, who matched the pace of the lesson, were evidence that the teaching was sufficient; the train itself was not to blame. Failure was due to pupils' lack of ability to learn. In the 'progressive' ideology, such a notion was untenable. The train was obviously faulty. Rote learning is not the same thing as achieving understanding. Pupils learn best and most deeply when actively involved and motivated in what they are doing, when relating ideas to their own experiences.

So what has gone wrong? Do we need perhaps to formulate another theory or ideology of education? Or is it simply that neither the traditional nor the progressive approach has been properly implemented, so that what we need to do is to have a more thorough bash at putting one or the other of them into practice? Or perhaps the answer is a compromise, a combination of the best of both worlds? If all we were dealing with were a couple of technical alternatives – ways of organizing classrooms, or topics to include in the curriculum – such a compromise solution might be a simple matter. But, as we have argued, we are dealing with much more fundamental oppositions, ideological ones that are part of much larger social and ideological debates than can be resolved merely by tinkering with what happens in the classroom.

It could be that the problem is solved already: that despite our difficulties in formulating an adequate theory of education, there is no dilemma when it comes to the practical business of teaching. Teachers simply get the job done; the compromises work. But of course, we are begging the question. By what criteria do we, the pupils or the teachers, the analysts or the society at large, judge education to be 'done' and to 'work'? Let us look more closely at what some teachers and pupils think and do.

The educational dilemma: what teachers say

We are in no position to offer any definitive or comprehensive survey of the thoughts and activities of teachers and pupils. However, it is possible to get a feel for the ways in which the sorts of ideological and practical dilemmas we have discussed are felt and acted on, and have a practical reality and relevance for those teachers and pupils that we and others have studied. We shall draw mainly upon a study of classroom education in which successive series of lessons with several classes of nine-year-olds were video-recorded, and the teachers and pupils interviewed about what they were doing (see Edwards and Mercer, 1987 for a fuller account). The teachers in this study were all identifiable as essentially 'progressive',

as evidenced both in the way they taught in the classroom, and by comments in interview such as the following:

> Given sufficient time and resources I felt that the best learning experience is one where children work things out for themselves.

> I didn't want to tie them down to a heavily structured procedure because it might kill the possibility of children making their own observations and conclusions.

> In the practical work, where the children are much more interested, they will obviously acquire and retain more knowledge.

> The very meaning of the term [education] is not to input; it means to bring out.

In addition to these clear evocations of the Plowden ethos, the same teachers also expressed a variety of explanations of the fact that some pupils obviously succeed better than others. All of them offered explanations that appealed to innate intelligence. For example, in the words of one teacher (the last quoted above):

> They do better because they are more intelligent. . . you can't do anything about their IQ.

and on the importance of 'social conditions':

> Children from affluent families would. . . have books at home. They would be taken on educational trips. . . they achieve more at their level than children of a similar IQ with perhaps not such a good background.

and on more personal factors:

> You have to know which children in the class are. . . depressed or in trouble or distressed.

None of the teachers attributed educational failure to poor or inappropriate teaching.

So, while children are thought to learn through exploratory activity and experience, they fail not through the lack or inadequacy of it, but rather through being unintelligent, disadvantaged or beset by some personal or behavioural problem. These are notions that derive not from some single, coherent ideological position, as conventionally defined, but from conflicting theories of educational failure that are familiar in the literature. Teachers themselves are educated, of course, and will at some point in their training and in their wider reading have acquired at least a folk wisdom basis, and in many cases much more than this, in the social and behavioural sciences and in their orthodoxies, assumptions and established theory and findings with regard to education.

But from the viewpoint of educational ideologies, the doctrines of native intelligence and of experiential learning belong in opposed camps. And

so also do the orthodoxies of psychology and of sociology. While Piagetian psychological approaches allow for pupil learning which is exploratory, self-motivated, creative and constructive of whatever understandings are achieved, sociological approaches (those of Durkheim, Parsons and so on) have typically stressed the transmissional nature of education, seeing it primarily as the socialization of pupils into an established system of educated thought, language and practice. To the extent that both the sociological and the psychological positions have any validity at all, and presumably they do, this places our teachers in a dilemma. There is socialization to be achieved, not only of the behavioural sort (disciplined conduct, respect for authority and so on) but also in terms of the more official curriculum: a pre-established body of knowledge, thought and skills to be taught. But these cannot be taught directly; the pupils have to learn it all for themselves. In fact, they cannot be 'taught' it at all, in the traditional sense. You cannot teach children what they cannot understand. In the words of one of our teachers, it cannot simply be 'input'; it has to be 'brought out'. But how can you 'bring out' of children what is not there? How do you get children to invent and discover for themselves precisely what the curriculum pre-ordains must be discovered?

It is a dilemma felt by the teachers themselves. In a junior school English teacher (in one of our own interviews), we find a clear awareness of competition between different educational philosophies:

> I think there's a place for both of these [progressive and transmissional philosophies of education]. I mean there are things that you've got to actually sit down and teach but you know lots of things. . .practically they do find out. . .I mean they do lots of creative work and writing stuff where they were using their own experience. . .but I think there's a place for both. . .I mean you know, there's a limit to how much to keep plugging it and how much you just wait for them and then they know it.

While this teacher hopes to resolve the dilemma by suggesting that there is a 'place for both', it would not appear to be a simple matter to define precisely what that place should be. Berlak et al. (1975) cite the following comments from a teacher caught in what is also an obviously *felt* dilemma (and they proceed to describe the compromises of constraint versus freedom of choice under which his pupils were allowed to work):

> I have yet to come to terms with myself about what a child should do in, for instance, mathematics. Certainly I feel that children should as far as possible follow their own interests and not be dictated to all the time, but then again. . .I feel pressure from. . .I don't really know how to explain it, but there's something inside you that you've developed over the years which says that children should do this. . .As yet I can't accept, for instance, that since I've been here I've been annoyed that some children in the fourth year haven't progressed as much as, say, some less able children in the second year in their maths, because they've

obviously been encouraged to get on with their own interests. But I still feel that I've somehow got to press them on with their mathematics. (1975: 91–2)

The dilemma felt by this mathematics teacher is, similarly, not simply a personal one, unique to his own perspectives and experience. He is pulled by the very values and criteria that we have located in the wider context of current educational ideology: the notion that some pupils are simply 'less able' than others, yet also learn from self-motivated activity and experience, but yet again have to achieve standards of 'progress' in the clearly predefined realm of 'mathematics' which, whatever the pupils might discover for themselves, the teacher knows already.

The educational dilemma: what teachers do

The most important arena in which this dilemma has to be worked out is not in what teachers say in interview, but in what they do in the classroom. Edwards and Mercer (1987) present a detailed study of the sorts of strategies that are adopted, through which teachers, apparently at least, manage to 'elicit' from pupils things that they did not already know. What frequently occurs is that teacher and pupils engage in an implicit collusion in which the solutions and answers appear to be elicited, while a close examination of what is happening reveals that the required information, suggestions, observations and conclusions are cued, selected or provided by the teacher. A simple illustration will suffice. In the following dialogue, the teacher is introducing to a group of nine-year-olds the concept of pendulums, concerning which they are about to embark upon some experimental investigations. She has begun by telling them a story of Galileo, and decides to elicit from the pupils the information that he used his pulse to time the swings of incense burners in church. (T is the teacher. Concurrent behaviour is recorded to the right. The diagonal slashes represent pauses; underlined words show vocal emphasis.)

T: Now he didn't have a watch/	T swinging her pendant.
but he had on him something that was a very good timekeeper that he could use to hand straight away/	T snaps fingers on 'straight away', and looks invitingly at pupils as if posing a question or inviting a response.
You've* got it. I've* got it.	* T points.
What is it?// What could we use to count beats? What have you got?//	T beats hand on table slowly, looks around group of pupils, who smile and shrug.
You can feel it here.	T puts finger on her wrist pulse.
Pupils: Pulse.	(In near unison)
T: A pulse. Everybody see if you can find it.	All imitate T, feeling for their wrist pulses.

Through action and gesture the teacher manages to coax from the pupils the word she wanted. We may call this process one of 'cued elicitation'. The procedure was a pervasive one and was not restricted to such simple and obvious cases. It extended to the main activities, discoveries and conclusions of the lesson, all of which had been planned in advance. Before beginning the lessons on pendulums, the teacher had planned various features of them, including that the pupils should test *three* hypotheses about how to effect changes in a pendulum's period (the time taken for a pendulum to complete one swing). She had also determined *exactly what* these hypotheses should be, knew in advance that *only one* of the three variables (length of the string) should have any effect, and that the pupils should average their timings across *twenty swings* of the pendulum. All of these features (and others) were ostensibly elicited from the pupils during the lessons, as if it was the pupils themselves who were inventing and deciding upon them. So let us examine a somewhat less obvious elicitation, that of the decision to average twenty swings. (In the following transcript, simultaneous speech is bracketed together.)

Speech	Notes
T: Right/ now how many swings will she* have to do do you think// before she can work out for instance suppose she starts from here and she counts the swings and divides OK. Now we did five. Do you think that's a good number to do and divide by?	* T referring to Sharon. T holding the pendulum bob out at an angle.
Lucy and Karen: Yes.	Both nodding their heads.
Jonathan: Yeh.	
David: Yeh.	
	// (Pause, 3 seconds)
T: I don't know. [Why *David*: [Ten Miss/ ten.	David shouts, interrupts T.
Antony: Six/ an even number six.	
T: An even number/ makes it/ you reckon you can divide by six better than you can divide by five./	T looking at Antony. T laughs, then Sharon laughs.
Will it make any difference to the *accuracy*/ of what she's doing if she did a *larger*/ number of swings? For instance if she decided that if it was/ um/ five swings she was going to do/ right/ and then she divided by five/ but suppose she decided as you've just said on ten. Which one of those readings would be the more accurate?	T speaking slowly and clearly, with small pauses as indicated. T writes '5' on sheet of paper on table. T writes '10' next to '5'. T prods her pen back and forth from '5' to '10'. Pupils watch the pen.
Antony: Five.	Antony points to the '5'. // (Pause, 3 seconds)

Antony: [Ten.
David: [Ten.
T: Why?
Antony: Because it cuts it down more.
T: Good boy. It cuts down/ what we call the margin of error doesn't it. It makes the error that much smaller. I think we could cut it down even smaller than ten.
Antony: Twenty.
T: Make the error

T continuing.

Antony: Hundred.
David: [Sixteen.
T: [Counting a hundred swings Antony we'd be here till the Christmas [holidays.

Antony smiles.

David: [sixteen.
Sharon: [Fifteen.
T: [Let's make it an easier number to [work with.
Antony: [Twenty. Twenty.
Various pupils: Yeh.
T: That would be all right wouldn't it? So if we *all* use twenty/ so we'll do twenty swings/ get the time/ divide by twenty and we can use the calculator/ then we should get the time pretty accurately/ possibly in hundredths of seconds. OK?

T writes down '20'.

T picks up and shows calculator to pupils.

T looking round group, pupils' eyes downcast and averted.

Lucy, Karen, Jonathan and David all appeared initially to be ready to accept five swings as a good number to use. Guided by a series of strategic pauses and prompts by the teacher, they eventually hit upon the required number – twenty. It is difficult to avoid the impression that the pupils were engaged in an exercise of trying to read all the cues, prompts and signals available from the teacher in an elaborate guessing game in which they had to work out, more by communicative astuteness than by the application of any scientific principle of measurement, what it was that the teacher was trying to get them to say. The advantages of this sort of teaching may well be considerable, for instance in terms of involving the pupils in an active pursuit of knowledge. But whatever the advantages, it is also clear that, despite the elicitation style of teaching, there is at least as much 'putting in' of knowledge going on here as 'bringing out'.

The communicative devices used by the teachers, through which curriculum knowledge was surreptitiously offered to pupils while overtly elicited from them, included the following:

1 Gestural cues and demonstrations while asking questions.
2 Generally controlling the flow of conversation – such as who is allowed to speak and when, and about what.
3 The use of silence to mark non-acceptance of a pupil's contribution (see pauses, and pupils' reactions to them, in the dialogue quoted above).
4 Ignoring or side-tracking unwelcome suggestions.
5 Taking up and encouraging welcome ones.
6 Introducing 'new' knowledge as if it were already known – and therefore not open to question.
7 Paraphrasing pupils' contributions so as to bring them closer to the teacher's intended meaning.
8 Over-interpreting observed events so as to make them seem to confirm what the teacher anticipated.
9 Summarizing what has been done or 'discovered', in a way that reconstructs and alters its meaning.

These and other features of classroom talk and education are discussed in some detail in Edwards and Mercer (1987). The point which concerns us here is their implication for educational ideology. To the extent that such findings have any generality at all (and they are indeed consistent with other research, such as Becker, 1968; A.D. Edwards and Furlong, 1969; Berlak et al., 1975), we are forced to the conclusion that the distinction between traditional, transmissional education on the one hand, and progressive, child-centred education on the other, is not so clear in practice as it may appear to be in theory. Both approaches involve a subordination of pupil to teacher, of personal discovery to the curriculum. Indeed, rather than stemming from two distinct and opposed ideological bases, they may well be alternative expressions of a single, though dilemmatic, ideology. That is the argument that we shall pursue.

Educational dilemmas and social values

The practical dilemma which we have identified hinges on the problem of how to 'bring out' of children what is not there to begin with, how to ensure that they 'discover' what they are meant to. It is this dilemma that gives rise to the variety of strategies we have outlined, through which the teacher manages to impose knowledge and understandings while appearing to elicit them. But this is a dilemma that rests upon a conflict of values and perspectives that are relevant to much wider issues than that of education alone – the contrasts between freedom and constraint, individual and society, growth from within (psychological development) and imposition from the outside (socialization). These are fundamental ideological oppositions, of the sort that are appealed to in general political

debate and polemic. They may be invoked on either side of such a debate; 'freedom', and the contrasting necessity of 'social order', in one sense or another are claimed by both left and right.

Not only are these oppositions essential to many political debates, they are also basic features according to which we can distinguish a variety of theoretical positions and approaches taken within the social sciences. Behaviourism is a psychology of control and constraint, of imposition and socialization, explicitly set against the notions of voluntary action, personal growth, sense-making and self-determination (Wann, 1964; Skinner, 1971). Similarly, Dawe (1970) has identified two opposed currents of sociology, which can be distinguished in terms of their positions with regard to these issues of freedom and constraint, relations between individual and society, determination from within the individual or imposition from without:

> At every level, they are in conflict. They posit antithetical views of human nature, of society and the relationship between the social and the individual. The first asserts the paramount necessity, for societal and individual well-being, of external constraint. . . The key notion of the second is that of autonomous man, able to realize his full potential and to create a truly human social order only when freed from external constraint. Society is thus the creation of its members. (1970: 214)

It is clear that the 'two sociologies' are not merely alternative descriptions, but are ideologically opposed and prescriptive of human conduct, including notions of what is proper and necessary for our 'well-being'. For example, writers in the tradition which emphasizes the importance of social discipline and constraint can argue with reference to education that 'Society can survive only if there exists among its members a sufficient degree of homogeneity; education perpetuates and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child, from the beginning, the essential similarities that collective life demands' (Durkheim, 1956).

In education, as in many other spheres of social life, these oppositions of freedom and constraint, of individual and society, of determination from within or from without, have to be worked out in practice as well as in theory. The point about them is that they are oppositions intrinsic to how we think of ourselves, oppositions in which each one of the pair is necessary to the meaning of the other, in which neither can survive alone. They do not belong to separate systems of thought. Society cannot socialize dogs, rhubarb or furniture into the requirements of mature human conduct, any more than an isolated individual can bootstrap herself or himself into a culture. In becoming twentieth-century citizens of Britain we have not merely realized a potentiality within us. The same thinkers and theorists (including us all) move freely from one side of an opposition to the other, as practical constraints or the requirements of argument demand. The same teachers who espouse the virtues of child-centred education, of learning by discovery and of the realization of innate potential also know in advance

what will be discovered, prepare their lessons according to set books and syllabuses, and prepare their students for the knowledge that is to come. (The pendulums teacher even referred her nine-year-old pupils to aspects of the physics of pendulums that they would cover if, in perhaps eight years' time, they did the A-level syllabus upon which her own son was currently embarked.)

Education and the *Meno*

Educational theories and prescriptions which stress one side or the other of our opposite perspectives are likely to fall prey to the arguments and virtues of the other side. In an attempt to create an integrated account, the influential psychologist and educationalist Jerome Bruner draws upon the work of the Soviet theorist Lev Vygotsky:

> His basic view. . . was that conceptual learning was a collaborative enterprise involving an adult who enters into dialogue with the child in a fashion that provides the child with hints and props that allow him to begin a new climb, guiding the child in next steps before the child is capable of appreciating their significance on his own. . . The model is Socrates guiding the slave boy through geometry in the *Meno*. (Bruner, 1986: 132)

It is a modern, sophisticated view of education and of human development in general, one which gives an equal importance to the intrinsic activity of the child, and to the adult's role as carrier and representative of a ready-made culture in which the child is serving an apprenticeship. But it is not so modern that Bruner cannot trace it directly back to Plato. Indeed, the dialogue between Socrates and the slave boy is well known in the annals of educational history and philosophy, and is often cited as an early example of the modern, progressive sort of pedagogy. For example, Lawrence (1970: 26–30) cites it in an argument that Plato, rather than Rousseau, originated the notion that 'The function of the teacher is to help the learner to discover the truth for himself.' Similarly, Curtis and Boultwood (1965: 80) have it as a 'classic instance' of the doctrine, this time attributed to St Augustine, that we can only teach what is already implicitly known, that 'Teaching. . . is the activity of causing pupils to learn.' The *Meno* will repay a close examination, not only because its presentation as a dialogue invites comparison with the teacher–pupil conversations we have examined, but also because it is possible to discern within this famous and influential text the very issues and oppositions that have concerned us. Indeed, it becomes clear that it would not be difficult for a proponent of teacher-dominated pedagogy, or of the doctrine of the overriding importance of innate abilities, to present the same text as support. Gradgrind would have *The Republic* to draw upon too!

In a passage in the *Meno*, Plato provides an account of a dialogue about geometry between Socrates and a slave boy. Socrates was trying

to convince Meno, the boy's master, of the reality of innate ideas, that concepts such as that of 'virtue' (*arete*) were not empirical, but depended upon being already present in the mind in a latent form, awaiting realization through experience. It was Socrates's belief that such innate ideas were memories (*anamnesis*) derived from the immortal soul's previous lives. Through dialogue with the slave boy, Socrates attempts to demonstrate to Meno that, despite an apparent initial ignorance of Pythagoras's theorem concerning the calculation of the areas of triangles and squares, the boy in fact knew the theorem all along, and simply needed to be questioned in order that this innate knowledge might be drawn from him. (The implication for Meno's benefit is that the same may also be true of the notion of 'virtue'.) In fact, Socrates was at pains to demonstrate that he *taught* the boy nothing. The slave boy dialogue is a peculiarly powerful and influential passage, in which we find the very themes of human nature, of knowledge and education, that we have identified in modern educational ideology.

Socrates asks Meno to 'Listen carefully then, and see whether it seems to you that he is learning from me or simply being reminded' (Plato, 1956: 130; the sequences of dialogue quoted below are taken from the translation by W.K.C. Guthrie). Let us also take up Socrates's invitation. In the following dialogue, he has drawn a square in the sand at his feet, and has established that the boy understands that it is a figure with four sides of equal length. Pointing to various parts of the diagram, Socrates establishes that the boy can calculate the square's area:

Socrates: Now if this side is two feet long, and this side the same, how many feet will the whole be? Put it this way. If it were two feet in this direction and only one in that, must not the area be two feet taken once?
Boy: Yes.
Socrates: But since it is two feet this way also, does it not become twice two feet?
Boy: Yes.
Socrates: And how many feet is twice two? Work it out and tell me.
Boy: Four.
(1956: 131)

Guthrie (1975), in a detailed account and discussion of this and other parts of Plato's philosophy, offers a distinctly progressive/Piagetian interpretation of the slave boy's achievements (of which more in a moment):

> Mathematical knowledge cannot be handed over by a teacher like the chemical formula for water or the name of the first President of the United States. Each must comprehend it for himself, and when he does so. . .the surprising fact emerges that he discovers precisely what everyone else must discover. The boy does not say 'yes' or 'no' to please Socrates, but because he sees that it is the obvious answer. What shows him his errors, and the right answers, is not so much the questions as the diagrams themselves, and were he mathematically inclined he might, given time, draw the diagrams and deduce the truth from them, without an instructor. (1975: 255)

The 'surprising fact', that the boy comes to understand what everyone else does, is of course no surprise now to us. But let us examine this claim, that what the boy learns from experience is a realization of innate knowledge, and that Socrates does not teach but merely elicits.

The boy's contributions to the dialogue are clearly minimal, the first two being simple affirmations of propositions put to him by Socrates. If this were a transcript of natural dialogue that we are examining, we would probably assume that, preceding Socrates's 'Put it this way', the boy had paused, unable to answer the initial question. Indeed, several times in the dialogue Socrates has to rephrase and break down the problem into simple steps, as he does here. But in doing so, he asks recognizably 'leading questions', providing the answers within his own questions, with even the restricted choice between 'yes' and 'no' cued by the form of the question: 'must not the area be . . . ', 'does it not become . . . '. Moreover, in breaking the problem down into a series of small steps, Socrates requires of the boy only that he performs small calculations; the boy's one substantive contribution is to work out what is twice two, a calculation he could easily have made without reference to geometry. If we conceive of the problem as constituted by the ordered series of steps rather than by its individual elements, it is difficult not to read the dialogue as essentially Socrates's thought rather than the boy's. In terms of the classroom discourse we have examined, what we have here is a piece of cued elicitation.

Let us examine, then, how Socrates proceeds to elicit from the boy Pythagoras's theorem. First, he establishes that the boy falsely assumes that a square of twice the area, that is eight square feet, will also have sides twice as long, that is four feet in length. As the dialogue proceeds, Socrates builds in steps a geometrical diagram of squares and rectangles to illustrate each step of the argument. He succeeds in eliciting the boy's acquiescence to the suggestion that 'Doubling the side [of a square] has given us not double but a fourfold figure.' Again, the boy's role in the dialogue is merely to confirm the propositions put to him by Socrates: 'Won't it be four times as big?' The sole exception is a minimal and tautological one, in which the boy is called upon to deny that 'four times' is the same as 'twice'.

Socrates's questions eventually reduce the boy to a state of confusion. He is brought to realize that a square with sides two feet long has an area of four square feet, and that a square of four feet long has an area of sixteen square feet. In pursuit of the sides of a figure of eight square feet, Socrates points out that they 'must be longer than two feet but shorter than four'; the boy appropriately suggests three feet, but is prompted to calculate that three squared gives nine. He despairs: 'It's no use, Socrates, I just don't know.' Socrates proceeds to enlighten the boy by drawing another diagram (shown here as Figure 1, constructed line by line in alphabetical order as the dialogue proceeds), in which ABCD represents the same area as

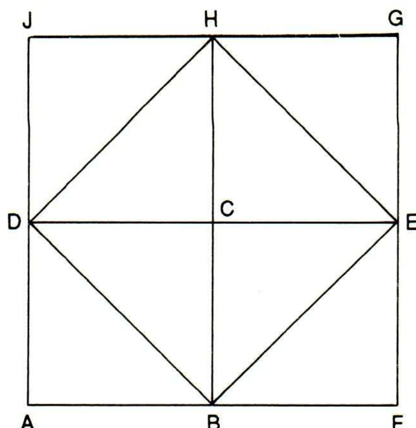

Figure 1 *Socrates's drawing*

before, i.e. four square feet. Socrates again exhorts Meno to 'Notice what, starting from this state of perplexity, he will discover by seeking the truth in company with me, though I simply ask him questions without teaching him.' Once more, 'in company with me' hardly does justice to Socrates's role in the discovery.

Socrates [*drawing in the diagonals*]: Now does this line going from corner to corner cut each of these squares in half?
Boy: Yes.
Socrates: And these are four equal lines enclosing this area [BEHD]?
Boy: They are.
Socrates: Now think. How big is this area?
Boy: I don't understand.
Socrates: Here are four squares. Has not each line cut off the inner half of each of them?
Boy: Yes.
Socrates: And how many such halves are there in this figure [BEHD]?
Boy: Four.
Socrates: And how many in this one [ABCD]?
Boy: Two.
Socrates: And what is the relation of four to two?
Boy: Double.
Socrates: How big is this figure then?
Boy: Eight feet.
Socrates: On what base?
Boy: This one.
Socrates: The line which goes from corner to corner of the square of four feet?
Boy: Yes.
Socrates: The technical name for it is 'diagonal'; so if we use that name, it is your personal opinion that the square on the diagonal of the original square is double its area.
Boy: That is so, Socrates.

Socrates goes on to conclude that, having been elicited by questions rather than through direct tuition, 'These opinions were somewhere in him... This knowledge will not come from teaching but from questioning. He will recover it for himself' (Plato, 1956: 138).

The dialogue of the *Meno* is in many ways unlike naturally recorded conversation; it is altogether too neatly ordered, and there are moments of implausibility in the boy's responses. It is, of course, whatever its historical origins, a quasi-dialogue written by Plato. Nevertheless, the role of Socrates bears comparison with that of the teachers in the sorts of 'discovery learning' we have been examining. He remains in control of the talk, governing the taking of turns at speaking, closing the boy's options even to an extent that we have not witnessed in schools, by merely inviting affirmations of ready-made propositions – the familiar 'leading questions' of the courtroom. The assumption implicit in Socrates's account of the process, that he will 'simply ask him questions without teaching him', is that questions do not carry information, that they may not inform and persuade, command and convince. Of course, this is a demonstrably false assumption, one unlikely to be made even by the pre-Socratic Sophists, the experts in rhetoric (Billig, 1987), let alone by modern scholars of language and communication. As one of the latter remarks, 'Questions will generally share the presuppositions of their assertive counterparts' (Levinson, 1983: 184).

Most strikingly, we find in the *Meno* an example, at least as clear as any we may find in school, of a contrast between the teachers' overtly expressed insistence that their pupils learn from experience, realizing an innate potential and learning for themselves rather than being 'taught', and the surreptitious way (via gesture or presupposition, for example) that the teacher implants knowledge and assumption, defines what is relevant and true, structures experience and assigns significance to it. The boy's conclusions were, like the principles of pendulums, established by Socrates and the teachers in advance of the 'lesson'. Their pre-existence was real enough, as Socrates claimed, but they existed not in the minds of the pupils but rather in those of the teachers – Socrates included.

The very term 'education' is a symbol combining contradictory themes. Its etymological derivation is a direct reflection of Socrates's conception of the process. It comes from the Latin *e-ducare*, which means, as many modern teachers are aware, to 'lead out'; this implies a process in which the teacher's role is rather like that of Socrates in the dialogue, drawing out of pupils that which is already latent and awaiting realization. But our discussion of educational ideology forces us to re-examine the word and its implications. The notion of 'leading out' is just that; the 'duc' of 'education' is the same as that of 'duke' and of 'Il Duce' (the title adopted by Mussolini), denoting leadership in the sense of power and command. It is no mere coincidence that Socrates's dialogue was with a slave boy.

Our examination of much less domineering sorts of 'elicitation' forces us to note that what is apparently elicited is often surreptitiously introduced, by gesture, assumption or implication, by the teacher. The knowledge attributed by Socrates to the slave boy was in fact constructed for him in the discourse itself, the boy serving merely as a compliant participant in an exposition dominated by Socrates. If the boy was 'educated' in the process, then it was at least as much a process from the outside in (in-duction) as from the inside out (e-ducation). What Socrates and Plato offer us is not so much a demonstration of the reality of innate ideas, as a somewhat unreal piece of surreptitious tuition.

In fact, the slave boy section of the *Meno*, despite the special significance that educators have attached to it, is a rather untypical example of a Socratic dialogue. The usual form of the Socratic dialogues is different in both respects that we have emphasized; they are typically dialogues between social equals, and they are also typically dialogues about contentious issues (such as the nature of virtue or of justice) rather than about problems for which there is a unique and demonstrably correct answer. In the *Protagoras*, for example, Socrates and Protagoras deliberately swap roles of questioner and answerer. The interchange with the slave boy is very different. Like Gradgrind's 'girl number twenty', the boy has no name, and must do as he is bidden. He also must answer the questions put to him, and does so briefly, and does not question or answer back. But if we take the *Meno* as a whole, rather than just the slave dialogue section of it, we can see that it is not really so exceptional. The true dialogue was not with the slave at all, but with Meno, his master. The boy was not invited to participate with Meno and Socrates in the discussion of 'virtue'. The slave dialogue is merely an interlude in that discussion, a demonstration performed on the boy by Socrates to convince Meno of the validity of an argument concerning innate ideas. The real issue was not geometry but the innate idea of virtue – a genuinely contentious issue. The dialogue with Meno continues before and after that with the boy, and even during it, as in the quotation above when Socrates pauses to make sure that Meno appreciates the significance of the demonstration. The slave boy is called in like a medical exhibit in a lecture on psychiatry or anatomy.

It is a peculiar fact, then, that it is the untypical slave boy dialogue rather than those between Socrates and Meno or Protagoras (or any of the others) that has appealed to liberal educators as embodying principles of pedagogy. Perhaps this is merely because the slave was a child, and education is generally conceived to be a process oriented to children. But surely the other features of that untypical case are also important: power and the pre-existence of knowledge. The teacher is in control, the child cooperatively subjugated, the agenda closed and determined by the teacher, the learning process defined as one in which the pupil attains an under-standing already attained by the teacher. Absent are the qualities of open

argument and debate, of true negotiation of issues and understandings, that we find in Socrates's real dialogues.

The notions of innate knowledge, and of education as drawing out (or 'bringing out') from pupils the capacities and cleverness which they possess already within them, are clearly reflected in modern educational theories. Indeed, they are a cultural heritage, an ideology of education that we have inherited from Plato. In the *Thaetetus* he calls it 'mental midwifery', and in keeping with the metaphor the modern word 'concept' has the same root as 'conceive', in the sense of 'become pregnant with'. It derives from the Socratic dialogical method of drawing out meanings – the 'maieutic' (midwifery) method, with Socrates the midwife, and the pupil giving birth to ideas that were latent within. More recent variants of the nativist doctrine include the arguments by the linguists Chomsky and Fodor for the necessity of postulating an innate knowledge of language. (How, Fodor asks in an argument reminiscent of the *Meno*, can one learn a new concept unless one can already hypothesize it?) But the dual, oppositional character of the educational process was present even in Plato's treatment. R.S. Peters puts it nicely:

> When Socrates described himself as a midwife in the service of truth he used a brilliant image to illustrate this dual aspect of a teacher's concern. He must care both about the principles of his discipline and about his pupil's viewpoint on the world which he is being led to explore. Both forms of concern are obligatory. Respect for persons must not be pursued with a cavalier disregard for standards. (1966: 59)

The twin pillars of educational philosophy most clearly espoused by the teachers in our study were variants on the theme: an assumption of innate intelligence as the prime factor in pupils' learning problems and abilities; and the principle of 'e-ducare', of leading or drawing out, helping pupils to learn for themselves, to realize their intellectual potential through their own activity and experience. The slave boy's knowledge of geometry was elicited, on Plato's and Socrates's accounts, merely through 'questioning' and by confronting the boy with the properties of squares and triangles. We find articulated and embodied in the *Meno* the foundations of both poles of our ideological oppositions: discovery learning versus transmissional teaching, the realization of personal potential versus the exercise of social power and determination. We even have the denial by Socrates that any such control is being exercised. It is a set of oppositions and pretences that recur not only in modern education, but in many other contexts of our social and political life.

The hidden dimension of the slave boy dialogue – indoctrination, as opposed to elicitation – is in fact quite explicit elsewhere in Plato's writing. Indeed, his major treatments of education are to be found not in the *Meno* (in which Socrates ostensibly teaches nothing), but rather in the *Republic*

and the *Laws*. Here the major recommendations concern the ends, rather than the means, of education. And the ends are clearly predetermined and heavily imbued with ideological values – the rearing of children so that they become good citizens, virtuous and dutiful, each to their allotted place in the creation of the ideal state. It is no open-ended creative process; the midwife has a clear, socially defined conception of the required offspring's character: 'Education is the process of drawing and guiding children towards that principle which is pronounced right by the law and confirmed as truly right by the experience of the oldest and the most just' (*The Laws*, book 2, para. 659). Indeed, steps should be taken to prevent any possibility of unpredicted or open-ended outcomes. While toddlers would be encouraged to play, this must be carefully constrained in middle childhood, for fear of rearing innovators: 'Children who make innovations in their games, when they grow up to be men, will be different from the last generation of children and, being different, will desire a different sort of life, and under the influence of this desire will invent other institutions and laws' (*The Laws*, book 7, para. 797). Marvellous, we might now think, just what we want children to be. But from Plato this was a dire warning, consistent with his recommendations for editing, restricting and bowdlerizing children's literature. Indeed, it was the very rationale for starting the educational process in early childhood, that it is then that our nature is at its most malleable: 'For it is then that it is best moulded and takes the impression that one wishes to stamp upon it' (*The Republic*, book 2, para. 377).

So, the very process of child-centred elicitation, of conceptual midwifery so keenly espoused by the liberal educationists, contains also the predetermined curriculum, the character training, social values and constraints of the opposed camp. They originate in Plato's philosophy as parts of a single ideology. They come together in the pursuit of clear social goals, the creation of a highly structured, determined and just society, the realization of the natural virtue and goodness that are founded upon the careful midwifery of reason and understanding. As with all such ideological positions, what is socially arbitrary is offered as something natural.

The notion that education is as much a process of in-duction as of e-ducation brings us back to Jerome Bruner, whose invocation of the *Meno* prompted our examination of it. According to Bruner, education is best conceived as an induction of pupils into culture, with culture itself conceived as a 'forum' within which shared meanings are defined and negotiated. It is a revised version of the 'progressive' ideology of education, contrasted with the older 'transmissional' sorts of pedagogy, but with the introduction of a communicative induction into culture in place of the all-discovering, self-fulfilling child:

> It follows from this view of culture as a forum that induction into the culture through education, if it is to prepare the young for life as lived, should also partake of the spirit of a forum, of negotiation, of the re-creating of meaning. But this conclusion runs counter to traditions of pedagogy that derive from another time, another interpretation of culture, another conception of authority – one that looked at the process of education as a *transmission* of knowledge and values. (Bruner, 1986: 123)

Bruner's vision is an attractive and perhaps even an achievable one, but it is not much like what happens in schools; indeed, it is not much like what happens in the *Meno*, at least not in the slave boy section of it. If anything, it has more in common with Socrates's dialogues with the Sophists. What Bruner refers to as the older conception of 'authority' is not so easily dispensed with. It merely reappears in disguised form, as it did for Socrates. The same ideological oppositions are revisited; the contrasting values of creation and reduplication, of individual self-determination, and the reproduction of the established order. And in the absence of fundamental social changes in the nature of our culture and politics, in the underlying origins of our ideology, it is unlikely that the theorists and the practitioners of education will be able to avoid merely, at the ideological level, shifting from one foot to the other.

5
Expertise and Equality

The behaviour of the teachers discussed in the previous chapter is a reflection of the contemporary dilemma between authority and expertise. In a strictly stratified society, in which the charisma of authority can be recognized for its own sake, the dilemma does not arise: authorities can behave in an uninhibitedly authoritarian way. However, in a society imbued with democratic norms, the position of an authority is not so straightforward. The norms of democracy are fundamentally egalitarian. They suggest that each person is to be respected as having opinions valuable enough to have an equal say in the destiny of the country. It is taken for granted that it is desirable to be democratic: the term 'undemocratic' is a criticism, likely to be levelled against high-handed authority. The contrast between the desirability of being democratic and the desirability of being authoritarian is expressed even in psychological theory. The classic work in the psychology of prejudice, *The Authoritarian Personality*, rested upon a contrast between those persons who were presumed to possess 'democratic personalities' and their psychological opposites 'the authoritarian personalities' (Adorno et al., 1950). There was no doubt in the psychologists' minds about which was the more desirable type. The democratic types were the healthy ones, and it was the authoritarians who were the neurotic, distorted bigots with irrational cravings for authoritarian chains of command.

The teachers, in their behaviour, showed how authority can be restricted and, most importantly, can restrict itself in a democratic society. Within the classroom the teacher is the constituted authority with direct power over the pupils. Yet this authority is not maintained in an authoritarian manner. Instead the teacher becomes the *primus inter pares*, and uses democratic semantics: 'we' discover things together, rather than 'I', the authority, tell 'you' the already discovered facts. It is as if the teacher and the pupil have set sail together on a voyage of discovery. Having left the port, the teacher has come down from the ship's bridge and has discarded the old-fashioned uniform with its golden epaulettes of command. Now, teacher and crew are gathered on the ship's deck, discussing freely where to head for. Yet, authority has not been totally abandoned. For all the discussion, the passage has already been charted. The teacher still possesses the navigational maps, the compass and the power to ring the ship's bell. Even on the deck the teacher must direct the crew, and thereby the ship, but must do so without appearing too directive. These modern teachers, standing among their crew, cannot exercise their authority with the certainty of a Captain Ahab. Nor would they wish to.

The teachers, in not demanding deference, are behaving in a way which is general in modern society and which has ideological roots. Edward Shils has connected the decline of deferential behaviour to the rise of modern democracy: 'The egalitarian tendencies of contemporary Western societies have not only witnessed the attenuation and restriction of deference, they have seen it assimilated into the pattern of intercourse among equals' (1975: 289). Nevertheless, matters are not quite so simple. If the members of society were in actuality equals, then an egalitarian pattern of intercourse would fit happily into the pattern of reality: teachers and pupils would be genuinely embarked upon that exciting voyage of discovery. On the other hand, an egalitarian pattern within an inegalitarian social structure is fraught with dilemmatic aspects.

Modern society may have produced the democratic values which ensure that Captain Ahab is an outdated figure. Yet it has also produced modern authorities in profusion (Johnson, 1972). Each aspect of society has its authorities, or experts, whose authority has been duly accredited by requisite, duly constituted authorities. No longer is it possible for anyone with minimum literacy and maximum confidence to enter a classroom as a teacher. Examinations must be passed and official certificates must have been issued. The very process of examination is intrinsically authoritarian; the official authorities question the supplicant and, if the answers are sufficiently correct, authorized certification can be issued (Rueschemeyer, 1983).

Ideologically produced dilemmatic thinking arises when two valued themes of an ideology conflict, and these dilemmatic elements can spill over into a full-scale dilemma, when a choice has to be made. A conflict between the valued aspirations of an ideology and the reality of the society need not, of itself, produce an ideological dilemma. For example, there might hardly be a problem if all members of modern society consensually agreed that it was a shame that authority had to be exercised on occasion and that full assimilation of equalitarian tendencies was self-evidently desirable. Everyone would then be looking forward to the day when authority could be eliminated. However, as will be seen, matters are not this simple, because respect for authority has not been totally dismissed. Authorities are expected to be respected and to behave in a way that can be respected. Social norms may criticize the concept of authority, but they also justify the same concept. The *British Social Attitudes* report of 1986 revealed overwhelming support for the idea that it was important for schools to teach fifteen-year-olds 'respect for authority'. Less than 4 per cent of the respondents believed respect for authority to be unimportant. An even lower percentage dismissed the importance of 'discipline and orderliness' (Jowell, Witherspoon and Brook, 1986: 233).

This chapter concentrates upon the authority of the expert. At first glance the concept of 'expertise' seems to resolve the dilemma between equality

and authority; however, as will be seen, it only re-creates the dilemma in new forms. It will be suggested that modern relations between experts, and between experts and non-experts, are characterized by ambivalence rather than by the egalitarianism described by Shils. Although the democratic norms may have been assimilated into patterns of intercourse, they have not driven out all authoritarian tendencies. Patterns of discourse and behaviour are marked by what Wetherell, Stiven and Potter (1987) have called 'unequal egalitarianism', or perhaps a 'non-authoritarian authoritarianism'. In this pattern the modern expert does not have Captain Ahab's commanding manner. Instead the expert is like a large individual caught up in a throng of smaller persons. The giant attempts to look inconspicuous by bending at the knees and hunching the shoulders. Trying hard not to step on tiny toes, the giant nevertheless tries to move the throng gently in the desired direction. One push too hard and the Lilliputians will turn in fury upon our Gulliver. One push to few and they will blame him for not sharing the vision provided by his extra height. The hunched-shouldered authority must proceed warily.

The hunched-shouldered authority

Two examples will be given of the discourse of experts, and in these the tension between authority and equality will be found. Both examples look at expertise in a group setting, and there is a similarity between both sets of expertise. In each case, the experts are authorities on children with difficulties. In both instances, there is no question that the experts are dedicated professionals, caring for the children and the anxieties of their parents. Moreover, these professionals have to cooperate amongst themselves and are well aware that the good of the children will be jeopardized by any professional jealousies between different specialisms. Cooperation and care must guide their activities. As expert authorities, who care and cooperate, they unthinkingly and uncynically hunch their shoulders, so as to prevent onlookers being blinded by the flash of an official epaulette.

The first example is taken from a study by Mehan (1983) of the language used in decision-making committees. Mehan was particularly interested in the language of professional experts, who worked in 'school appraisal teams' deciding how to classify school children with special educational needs. He noted how the definitions imposed by the professionals in their diagnosis of the 'problem' determined the decisions about where the children would be sent. The language of the professional authorities, whether medical or psychological, was grounded in expertise. They presented their official reports in a specialized format, using technical terms. Most of the professionals had only a slight contact with the child whose case was being discussed. Those with first-hand knowledge, such as parents and classroom teachers, spoke in a less professional way at the

institutional meetings. Their reports lacked the expert vocabulary and the fluency of the professionals. The experts would typically present their fluent reports without interruption, whereas the non-experts suffered frequent interruption. And, of course, the less authoritative discourse was associated with lower prestige in the institutional setting.

The example concerns the way that one professional, a psychologist, called upon a classroom teacher to speak to the committee: 'Kate, would you like to share with us?' (Mehan, 1983: 197). In fact, Mehan does not discuss in any detail this invitation, being more interested in the patterns of the reports themselves. The words of the psychologist chair-person constitute the sort of speech act commonly studied by conversation analysts. The words can be seen as a successful conversational gambit to achieve the plan of eliciting discourse from the classroom teacher (Hobbs and Evans, 1980). One might note that the plan is executed with politeness. This is to be predicted, for it has been claimed that successful conversation is marked by a 'politeness maxim' which is part of a more general 'cooperative principle' (Grice, 1975; Bach and Harnish, 1979; McLaughlin, 1984).

If one examines the specific character of this conversational plan and the nature of the politeness it embodies, one can see the influence of ideology. According to Althusser (1971), ideology 'interpellates' or 'hails' the subject. The discourse of the psychologist chairperson hails and interpellates another. Not only is the other called upon to perform dis-cursively, but also the other is hailed by name, Kate. The chairperson did not glance brusquely around the table and merely call out 'Mrs X' in a tone which commanded words from the classroom teacher and silent attention from everyone else. Instead the chairperson's words and syntax are not those of confident command; there is a linguistic hesitancy. The form is that of a question, phrased with delicacy to avoid offence. And the offence would have been that of imperious command. The first name is used (an intimacy which may not have been reciprocated, but the norms of equalization would not have forbidden the reciprocation). The first name conveys a friendliness, as if the professional and Kate were friends. The relationship of friendship is, of course, one of equality, at least in theory, in the way that the relationship betwen high-status expert and lower-status semi-expert is not. Instead of a command there is an invitation, as if one friend is inviting another. The impression of equality is emphasized by the choice of words to describe what Kate is being invited to do. She is not invited to give her report to be assessed by expert decision-makers. She is not even invited to give anything, for that would imply that others were taking. Instead, she is invited to 'share'. What could be more egali-tarian than sharing with friends? The language is that of free and equal exchange without any hint of a competition. And so the authority metaphoric-ally hunches its shoulders and draws itself inwards in a way that only makes

sense against a background of ideological assumptions about the nature of persons and how they should conduct their business.

The second example is a British one, and it is taken from a research project which examined the workings of a child development centre (for more details see Middleton and Mackinlay, 1987). The centre is a unit attached to a hospital, and is of a type which has been promoted in a number of government reports on service provision for the mentally and physically handicapped (Court Report, 1976; Warnock Report, 1978; for critical assessment of multiprofessional practice see Tomlinson, 1981 and Gliedman and Roth, 1980). Instead of being staffed by a particular specialized type of expert, this type of centre is multidisciplinary and comprises a broad range of professionals. There are paediatricians, nurses, physiotherapists, educational and clinical psychologists, social workers, health visitors, nursery nurses and so on. All have an immense commitment to the unit in which they work, and they represent a group of specialists who are determined to sink professional rivalries and inequalities. The ethos is that the interests of the children should come first; and that all the experts, whatever their different specialist backgrounds, should combine to work towards common goals. It is an ethos which expresses democratic aspirations and opposes the authoritarianism of rank.

In this second example, the interviewer is talking to the nursery nurse in the centre's general office. Normally, the nursery nurse is of low status in the context of a children's hospital. She – and the ascription of gender is appropriate – is barely an expert in a world of highly trained and prestigiously accredited experts. She is telling the interviewer how much she enjoys working at the unit. She feels part of a team; the others, especially the physiotherapists, do not think themselves all-important. In the unit, she explains, no one thinks themselves superior: 'We all do everybody else's job and we all take advice from each other.' They work 'so much as a team', without any consciousness of status. In fact, she explains, they are all friends as well as colleagues. It was only people outside the unit who looked down upon the position of nursery nurse. At this point, the speech therapist enters the room to ask politely, 'Excuse me, have we got any medicine cups?' So polite is the phrasing that the nursery nurse interprets the interrogative as a question rather than a command. Thus she replies that there might be some in the drugs cupboard, but the pharmacy stores provide them. This is not the response that the speech therapist was wishing for: her conversational plan has not succeeded. She states: 'I want it now, though.' The nursery nurse responds by obediently searching for the cup. However, the switch from the democratic interrogative of the first person plural ('have we?') to the command of the first person singular ('I want') has been too abrupt. It has conveyed an unintended authoritarianism. The speech therapist starts to parody her own words: 'I want it *now*' she says, in the humorously exaggerated tone

of a sergeant-major. In so doing she distances her own command from the sort of authoritarian, military command which would have been unacceptable.

The tones of command had to be inhibited, for they would have been inappropriate in the egalitarian atmosphere of the unit. The tones have been transformed into humorous parody, but the command has not been negated. The nursery nurse searches for the cup and is pleased to find one for her colleague and friend. The order is obeyed so long as the commander denies that an order is an order. Like the teachers discussed in the previous chapter, the speech therapist has not negated authority as such. No one wants democracy to go that far. At another point the nursery nurse, in talking about the equality of the centre, claims that she does the same sort of work as the sister: 'I run the clinics, I do exactly the same as sister.' However, the equality is not entirely devoid of inequality: 'The difference between us is that she has the responsibility, she carries the can.' And so the nursery nurse is prepared to accept the authority of the sister, the most dominant figure in the day-to-day running of the centre, just as she accepts a reasonable order which politely parodies authoritarianism. But her acceptance cannot be taken for granted. Delicate semantics and syntax are required to express the unequal egalitarianism.

Expertise and equality

Many social scientists analyse relationships and conversations in terms of 'negotiation', with the implication that, as people react to each other, they are negotiating their respective statuses, roles, identities and so on. The two examples given in the previous section would be well suited to such an analysis. They suggest that in relationships between experts of different status, there is a continual negotiation of the limits of expert authority. If the expert is too direct in giving orders, there may be a reaction. On the other hand, if commands are phrased too hesitantly as questions, the questioner may elicit in response a factual answer rather than a compliant action. The conversation in the child development centre showed such a negotiation, as the speech therapist oscillated between question, command and parody of command in order to strike the right balance. One might say that the two conversationalists were negotiating the appropriate tone of the conversations and thereby negotiating their respective roles and identities. Similarly the psychologist chairperson in the first example needed to negotiate her identity as an authority, but a friendly one.

An important factor is omitted if one concentrates entirely upon the negotiations between the individual participants in these everyday dramas. This is the ideological factor. The dilemmas involved in these interpersonal

negotiations represent more than the problems of the individual personalities involved. Similarly, they represent more than the tensions of the organizations involved. They are representations of a basic ideological dilemma. The values which the participants wish to respect, and to be seen to respect, are central ideological values. The interpersonal representations of these ideological dilemmas do not result in the ideological dilemmas being negotiated to a satisfactory conclusion and thereby disappearing from everyday life. In fact, the reverse is the case. Because the ideological dilemma persists at a deeper level, the interpersonal dilemmas of equality and expert authority are never fully resolved, but continue to reconstitute themselves in varying forms.

The basic dilemma of democracy and authority was well expressed by Durkheim in his essay 'Individuals and the intellectuals', first published in 1898 (full text in Lukes, 1969, to which page numbers refer in the following). This essay was a defence of the philosophy of rational liberalism, and his immediate opponents were the traditional conservatives who were supporting the prosecution of Alfred Dreyfus. Durkheim was writing at the height of the controversy surrounding the conviction of Dreyfus, a Jew and French army officer, on a charge of treason. Although there had been abundant evidence of the Captain's innocence, Dreyfus was convicted in an atmosphere of violent anti-semitism. Irrational respect for traditional authorities, opposition to the progress of modern democracy and xenophobia were all intermingled in the conservatism of Dreyfus's opponents. Their stance in its political outlines resembled that which Adorno et al. (1950) claimed much later to characterize the 'authoritarian personality'. In criticizing the anti-Dreyfusards Durkheim may have been criticizing traditional authoritarianism, but he was no anarchist, wishing to abolish all authority. The problem was to substitute a rational authority for an irrational one.

Durkheim's article discusses a basic problem for a democratic society: if democracy produces a multiplicity of opposing opinions, how is a harmonious society possible? In posing the question, Durkheim was raising the issue whether a democracy can be harmonious society if it recognizes that all opinions are necessarily equally valid:

> It will be said, if all opinions are free, by what miracle will they then be harmonious? If they are formed without knowledge of one another and without having to take account of one another, how can they fail to be incoherent? Intellectual and moral anarchy would then be the inevitable consequence of liberalism. (p. 24)

Durkheim was concerned to argue that liberalism did not lead to intellectual anarchy. Not all opinions were to be regarded equally. He suggested that liberalism 'does not sanction unlimited right to incompetence', for expert knowledge should be respected:

> Concerning a question on which I cannot pronounce with expert knowledge, my intellectual independence suffers no loss if I follow a more competent opinion. The collaboration of scientists is only possible thanks to this mutual deference. (p. 24)

Traditional deference might be irrational, but the equality of liberalism still needed a modern, rational deference. For this the role of the rational expert was of importance. At first glance, liberal individualism seems to conflict with rational authority, for a philosophy based on freedom of opinion would seem to lead to anarchy rather than to rational authority. However, Durkheim suggested that if individualism is not interpreted in terms of unlimited self-interest, and its social basis is recognized, then 'All these apparent contradictions vanish as if by magic' (p. 23). In other words, there will be no basic ideological dilemma to trouble the rational dreams of the liberal.

Durkheim was representing the same dream which gives force to the aspirations of the members of the child development centre, and indeed to countless other professional groups. The members of the group see themselves battling enlighteningly against the irrationality of those who revere status for its own sake. The egalitarian impulse, which attacks irrational defence, seeks to institute a deference based upon reason and respect for expertise. The psychologist in the unit talked about the way that status differences were reduced by recognizing the expertise of all members of the unit: 'If one allows others to be expert, then there isn't a tension. . . . the tension doesn't arise if you say "I have reached the limit here; I need your help."' Moreover, as Durkheim suggested, the recognition of expertise depends upon some common feeling. The members of the child development centre stressed their feeling of cooperation and group loyalty. The psychologist went on to add: 'The answer to a child's problems and help for a child's problems lies in two people working together and arriving at a solution that neither of them would have arrived at separately.'

The ethos of the group was that cooperation was rational because it produced desirable results. The approach was a problem-solving one. According to one member of the team, describing the history of the unit, 'Problem-oriented record-keeping was very useful in actually helping to eliminate petty rivalries, because we focused our attention on what we were going to do for the child, rather than what was going on within the team.' In other words, deference to status and the self-interest of status were intrinsically irrational because they hindered the solution of problems. All attention should be directed to the problems themselves and not to the irrelevancies of status. One member, referring to professional jealousies in the early days of the unit, commented that 'The thing that most impressed me was that those sort of feelings only lasted a very brief period. . . we quickly focused our attention on the children and the family rather than on the workings of the unit.'

Cooperation, based upon a common recognition of specialist expertise, encouraged the free expression of expert opinion, which jointly would lead to rational solutions of problems. Putting rationality first and recognizing that all opinions should be equally respected, so long as they were expert, would lead to progress over the old, inefficient and irrational concerns with authority. Moreover, a cohesive group would be created out of this rational individualism, just as Durkheim had envisaged that liberalism as a philosophy, or ideology, would lead to a rationally coherent society. There is one further point. The members of the centre, in describing their rational, egalitarian philosophy, stressed the harmony of the group and how their philosophy, so obvious and so commonsensical, had resolved the sorts of conflicts which are common elsewhere. To paraphrase Durkheim, it seemed that apparent, and very real, contradictions had vanished as if by magic.

This is the image of an applied philosophy, or ideology, which has conquered the problem of dilemmas: all has been harmoniously resolved under the benevolent direction of rational good sense. Yet, the dilemmas between equality and authority are not so easily, even magically, disposed of. Later, some of the dilemmas of the child development centre will be discussed. For the present, the dilemmas in theory can be seen. As Durkheim was seeking to reconcile opposing values, so they were separating themselves on his very pages. Durkheim raised the obvious question: if the expert opinion is to be respected, is not this an intrinsic threat to democracy, for the opinions of experts are to be given greater credence than those of non-experts? In answer, Durkheim suggested that respect for expertise only concerned technical issues, for which expertise was relevant. There was a whole range of civic issues which needed no special expertise. Casting his eye upon the Dreyfus case, Durkheim commented: 'In order to know whether a court of justice can be allowed to condemn an accused man without having heard his defence, there is no need for any special expertise. It is a problem of practical morality concerning which every man of good sense is competent and about which no one ought to be indifferent' (p. 25).

However, the separation between technical and civic issues is not so straightforward. Durkheim seemed ambivalent about whether the rational experts, when pronouncing upon the great civic and moral issues of the day, were actually just as equal as the mass. The purpose of his essay was to defend the Dreyfusard stance of liberal intellectuals. Why was it, he asked, that so many intellectuals had taken that stance? It was their 'professional activities' which had led them to criticize the official proceedings: 'Accustomed by the practice of scientific method to reserve judgement when they are not fully aware of the facts, it is natural that they give in less readily to the enthusiasms of the crowd and to the prestige of authority' (p. 25). In other words the expert, quite 'naturally', had a more rational way of thinking than the non-expert. Thus expert, and particularly scientifically

expert, opinions on the great civic issues would be more rationally based that the irrationally authoritarian opinions of the masses.

All at once, as if by magic, the basic dilemma has reappeared, like a jack-in-the-box rudely bursting open its lid. Durkheim's grand jack-in-the-box is the sort of art work which is preserved in museums, which to this day are still regularly visited by academic tourists. However, in everyday life people are carrying around with themselves much smaller jack-in-the-boxes, designed along similar lines to Durkheim's but mass produced and incorporating modern features. As will be seen the members of the child development centre have not in practice resolved the dilemmas of ideological theory. Moreover, they carry a particularly difficult modern feature in their dilemmatic jack-in-the-boxes. The distinction between the authority of technical expertise and the democratic respect for the opinions of other people becomes even harder to draw (or to negotiate) when the expertise is not merely an expertise about scientific procedures or the operation of machinery. When the expert is an expert about people – other people – there are a whole range of problems to trouble the democratic spirit.

The expert in human relations

Durkheim's solution to the dilemma between democratic equality and expert authority suggests a boundary is being put around the scope of expertise. In certain matters the rational authority of expertise is relevant, but in others matters everyone has the capacity, indeed the obligation, to be rational. The solution suggests that there could be a harmonious and non-dilemmatic parallel development of equal personal relations and rational expertise. In fact, according to Durkheim's analysis, the growth of modern liberalism demands such a parallel development. There is evidence that, since Durkheim's day, something like this has occurred, for the equalization of intercourse, of which Shils wrote, has coincided with the modern growth of the professionalization of expertise. Although processes may be parallel in their development, this does not mean that they are necessarily harmonious, or that their separate functions enable ideological dilemmas to be resolved as if by magic.

The decline of deference raises questions about how the expert is to be treated. Perhaps the delineation, implied by Durkheim, has been translated into everyday practice, so that there is respect for the knowledge of the expert but not necessarily for the person of the expert. The comments of the psychologist chairperson could be interpreted in the light of such a distinction. The chairperson introduces the non-expert in friendly terms, but the way that the experts react to the report of the non-expert indicates a lack of respect. As Mehan (1983) shows, there is no deferential and silent respect paid to the non-expert's report. Yet, the lack of technical equality is not matched by a lack of personal equality. The chairperson's comments emphasize the equality of intercourse, as one individual to

another within the democratically equal society. In fact, one might predict that in these circumstances there will be a correlation between the equality of chairperson's introductory remarks and the inequality of the treatment of the introduced report. It is precisely those whose expertise is deemed unequal who must be reassured that personally they are just as valuable as anyone else.

This prediction need not be based upon an observation of behaviour in committees, but can be derived from knowledge about how a skilled chairperson should act: the humblest person in the gathering should be put at their ease and not be made to feel slighted. Herein lies a paradox. The equalization of intercourse under these circumstances is itself a part of rational expertise. It is the expert professional who will act in this way. Thus the very enactment of equalization – the democratically polite tones of 'shall we share' – belongs to the rational authority, and inequality, of expertise. Similarly the liberal teacher, who enables the class to feel that they have jointly just discovered what they had been intended to learn, is exercising the specialized skills of modern pedagogy.

This implies a distinction between the expert as a figure and the content of expert's knowledge, the possession of which confers expertise. The equalization of interpersonal relations suggests that the expert should not be respected as a figure, or even as a possessor of expertise. It is the expertise which should be respected. In this regard, the modern growth of expertise has seen a semantic change in the concept of 'expert'. No longer does it imply experience of a personal kind. In *Troilus and Criseyde* Chaucer used the phrase 'expert in love' to describe someone who had experienced the emotion of love: he was not referring to some medieval sexologist, equipped with duly accredited certification and no debarring scandal to their name. The semantic shift seems to imply the notion that expertise is separable from the personal characteristics of the expert. The modern concept of 'expert system' would appear to reinforce such a separation, for the expertise is presumed to lie within a systematic body of information which is potentially available to all, including computing machinery, who wish to acquire it.

The delineation between the expertise, to which respect must be paid, and the expert individual, who is ordinarily equal, cannot be easily maintained, as the paradox of the friendly expert shows. The idea that expertise is separable from the expert may be readily accepted by the general public (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1986), but it does not accord with the actual practice of expertise. Schon (1983) has shown that all too often experts are not applying a fully determined and systematized body of knowledge. Instead, experts frequently improvise their way through novel situations, engaging in a 'conversation' with the situation. Modern expertise possesses a further feature, which blurs a simple distinction between the person and the expertise: so many experts are experts at human relations, and thus their expertise relates to the qualities of the person rather than the system.

The experts in the child development centre, like the modern professional teacher, have to be experts at handling others. Nor is this peculiar to the examples chosen; it is a characteristic of a wide variety of professions. Johnson (1972: 58–9) has suggested that the higher the prestige of a profession the less technical expertise is shown: 'Those professions which are "client-based" and diagnostically oriented provide services in which the element of non-technical interpersonal skills is most important.' Foremost amongst such high-status, 'client-based' professions is the legal profession, where an ability to deal with people counts for more than an encyclopaedic knowledge of the legal texts. To use current psychological phraseology, such experts have to show 'social skills'. Indeed, psychologists offering such training sometimes imply that the acquisition of social skills is a moral requirement for anyone who must conduct smooth and effective relationships with their fellows (Soucie, 1979).

The ambivalence in the position of the modern expert can be seen in the figure of the doctor. Merton has introduced the concept of 'sociological ambivalence' in his suggestion that social roles typically contain an ambivalent aspect. Each role contains more than a simple role prescription. It will include subordinate role prescriptions, which are often the opposite of the dominant prescriptions. Merton discusses in detail the role of the doctor. The dominant role prescription is to be objective and scientifically neutral. However, if the doctor's behaviour were the result of only following the norms of strict medical expertise, the doctor would be a poor doctor. It is a part of the role of the doctor that the doctor should be something other than a doctor. There is the requirement that the doctor should also be a friend. As a respondent noted in a recent study of general practitioners: 'We're not general practitioners, we're family doctors, which means you're a family friend' (Horobin, 1983: 97). However, the doctor is neither really nor merely a friend, but must act as if a friend. The friendly face which greets the patient in the surgery must convey that the doctor and patient might be friends, if only they did not have to meet in such a formal setting. But, of course, that is usually the only way that they have occasion to meet. In this way, the good doctor must employ a manner which oscillates between the impersonality of the medical authority and the easy equality of the friend. Because the easy equality is itself a necessary part of the unequal professional expertise, the equality cannot be total, but is itself a variety of unequal egalitarianism.

The notion that the expert must be an expert in relating to people is expressed in a popular guidebook for nurses, entitled *Interpersonal Relations* (Burton, 1979). The author stresses that, over and above the specific skills which a nurse must acquire, the nurse must become 'an expert in human relations'. Perhaps the average nurse might be daunted by the prospect, continues the author, but 'A nurse is responsible for improving human relations by making a patient feel at home in the hospital

or comfortable with his illness wherever he is' (p. 129). The book gives a series of examples showing how the proficient nurse is such a human relations expert.

The concept of an expert in human relations is an ambivalent one, especially if expertise is intrinsically marked by inequality and human relations are seen to be characterized in their present form by signs of equalization. Certainly the 'expert in human relations' is not envisaged as an 'expert system', but as someone who is experienced in dealing with people and who is equipped with all the necessary social skills. If all people have experiences of 'human relations', then the expert has ordinary skills but to an extraordinary degree. The expert in 'human relations' does not allow personal feelings to cloud the ordinariness which must be shown in an extraordinary way. For example, the ordinary person might answer back sharply when criticized, but the nursing expert in human relations should avoid reacting in this way (Burton, 1979: 201). The nurse should be like a friendly hostess, 'responsible for making strangers comfortable in her hospital home' (pp. 140–1). The analogy of hosts and guests suggests the equality of friendship, but the visits are not reciprocated, for it is the patient who is always the guest of the nurse. Above all, the expert in human relations must show the ordinary touch whose expert accomplishment is so different from the acquired expertise necessary for running complex equipment or bandaging bloodied limbs: 'What a patient requires is a genuine interest in his total welfare, a sincere desire to make him comfortable, and a nurse's perceptive ability – the ability to put herself into his bedroom slippers' (p. 136).

The demand for the expert to be friendly – to be a hostess – is one which Merton (1976) recognized to be charged with ambivalence. If the expert is too friendly the claim to expertise is endangered, whereas too much technical expertise threatens the friendliness. The human relations expert is the expert with the expertise to balance the competing claims of equality and authority, and to do so in an authoritatively friendly manner. Above all there is nothing secret in this. The guidebook for nurses is not revealing secrets. In fact, its banality stems from its lack of secret information to impart to the trainee in human relations. The experts, whether doctors, lawyers, chairpersons or physiotherapists, are aware of the dangers of appearing too imperious in their expertise or, conversely, of allowing friendliness to cloud professionalism. They must be ready to deny that they are being high and mighty (a denial which must seem strange to the respected figures of former ages). Yet, on the other hand, they cannot allow that anyone can do their jobs, for then they cease to be experts.

If the expertise is perceived as being too ordinary, then the claim can be made that anyone can be an expert in human relations. Counsellors and psychotherapists have faced the problem of lay helpers, lacking the necessary certification, but offering human relations guidance (Durlak, 1979;

Nietzel and Fisher, 1981). These lay helpers are sometimes called 'paraprofessionals', a grand term which accords them enough expertise, if not to be the equal of the full professional, at least to put them above the totally ordinary unprofessional member of the public. Thus the paraprofessional is seen to possess human relations expertise which is a cut above the person haphazardly advising strangers in railways carriages or bars. Even the paraprofessional must follow the professional in stressing that their expertise in human relations is not so ordinary as to be possessed by completely ordinary people. By definition the expert is an expert, and the very choice of term 'expert in human relations' is designed to enhance the respectful distance between ordinary person and professional.

Experts and non-experts

There is one point that cannot be stressed too strongly. The friendly smiles of the expert, produced so expertly and divorced from genuine friendship, are not to be confused with hypocrisy. There may be some experts who are hypocrites. In bad faith, such hypocrites may knowingly flash their smiles whilst plotting to manipulate with cynicism. It is possible that the chairperson, who delicately introduces the classroom teacher at the case conference meeting, has quite explicitly decided to 'turn on the charm' for some ulterior purpose. However, for every ill-intentioned schemer, there are many more for whom the friendly style will be accepted unquestioningly as the proper form of behaviour. Moreover, donor and recipient of the smile may agree with this social propriety. The teacher who has been introduced might well feel slighted unless the chairperson has conveyed a gesture of friendly equality, and this mutually recognized code of reciprocity is very different from hypocrisy. As Mannheim in *Ideology and Utopia* pointed our, deliberate deceit does occur, but it is nowhere near as frequent, or as theoretically interesting, as the well-intentioned operation of ideology.

The significance of the polite intercourse between the chairperson and the teacher should not be confined to interpersonal relations. The attempt to convey friendliness should not be boiled down merely to a strategem of etiquette between two persons, or be seen only as a form of 'impression management' by which one actor presents their self to another. There are ideological dimensions at work in between the management of individual images. The experts are not merely conveying 'friendliness' because they want others to think well of them as individuals, although doubtlessly they want this as well. They are also following what may broadly be termed a philosophy of friendliness. They genuinely believe that the forms of discourse which represent the equality of friendship, rather than the stiffness of authority, are beneficial to the world. The liberal teacher's prime motive is not based upon a wish to be liked by the class, or even

by fellow professionals: it derives from a firm belief, whose efficacy is tested daily in the classroom, that education should be pursued in a friendly, egalitarian spirit. Similarly, the nursing guide stresses that the nursing will bring more benefit to the patients, if nurses 'get along' with patients, fellow nurses and all the other professionals in the hospital. The general practitioner who is friendly may be a nicer person than the unfriendly doctor, but that is beside the point: it is the friendly doctor who is the more expert doctor. Thus the friendly intercourse of egalitarianism is not considered merely more congenial than an authoritarian mode, but it is seen as being more effective. Because it works and solves the problems, which must be solved, it is the more rational form. In consequence the experts, whose friendly smiles might appear superficial when compared with smiles of genuine friendship, are not being hypocritical, for they believe their conduct to be correct and rational. Moreover, they have good grounds for believing that the recipients of the signs of friendliness demand this extra display of expertise.

The execution of such expertise is not without its problems. The liberal and egalitarian motivations, which might attack the old-fashioned displays of inequality, nevertheless have to be expressed within a social world, which is not itself perfectly liberal or egalitarian. As will be seen, there is a tension between egalitarian and inegalitarian, liberal and authoritarian forces in the practice of expertise. This tension ensures that it is too simple to hope that contradictions will vanish magically with the application of well-intentioned liberalism. Further examples drawn from the personnel of the child development centre will show how liberal motives can result in illiberal consequences and how the practice of professional egalitarianism can bring into play new inequalities. These examples illustrate the dialectic between equality and authoritarianism in two interrelated directions: first, the relations between different experts; and secondly, the relations between the experts and the non-experts.

Relations between experts

The child development centre illustrates on a tiny scale one aspect of Durkheim's vision of a modern rational society. If such a society were to be attainable it must possess moral coherence and could not be based upon the coincidence of individual interests. Similarly the centre was based upon a moral philosophy of interdependence, in which loyalty to the group and its aspirations was paramount. The members strongly identified with the collectivity, and it was only through the collectivity that they sought to pursue their individual goals. In establishing the group, according to one member, 'The big thing to learn was that your job did not come before everyone else's.' Responsibility was shared, in a way that demanded that the group be cohesive. As the sister said, 'People take on responsibility beyond any strict definition of what they are trained to do in order to make

sure that a problem is acted upon when it crops up.' Loyalty and identification were thus transposed from their professional speciality to the unit, as members sought to think of themselves not primarily as 'psychologists', 'physiotherapists' or 'nurses' but as members of a team with a common goal.

Here was a process that social psychologists could describe in terms of the creation of group identification (Tajfel, 1981; Taylor and Moghaddam, 1987; Turner, 1987). In this case, the group possessed the rationalist objective of 'getting the job done' and breaking down unhelpful barriers of status between group members. However, the desire for group commonality, despite its egalitarian philosophy, created its own illiberal, authoritarian demands. If the group were to function cohesively, dissent and egoism could not be tolerated. To use the language of Durkheim, individualism could only be expressed through the collectivity. In practice this entailed that a 'party line' had to be insisted upon. According to the sister, 'If people have come to work here and do not fit into our way of going about things and if they try to kick against it. . . they either modify their ways or leave.' The psychologist specifically linked the authority of the group to its egalitarian philosophy. In this egalitarianism not all views were equal, only those that were egalitarian: 'If someone came to join the unit and found it difficult to accept the idea that we all have equal rights to suggest ideas for what to do next, then they either had to change their approach or leave.' The friendliness of the group could only be maintained if there were an illiberal determination to get rid of the unsatisfactorily inegalitarian.

Experts and non-experts

There is social psychological evidence that the creation of strong group ties affects the way that group members view non-group members (Tajfel, 1981; Turner, 1987). As ties between ingroup members become stronger, so there is a corresponding distancing from outgroups (Pepitone and Kleiner, 1957; Sherif, 1966). Certainly within the unit, the creation of group cohesiveness can be seen in terms of the creation of group isolation. The members viewed themselves as battling against entrenched orthodoxies and interests within the hospital. At the same time there was an unplanned distancing from the general public and, in particular, from families of the patients. The members of the centre were acutely aware of this distance and they sought to combat it. The particular form of this distancing cannot be explained in terms of general social psychological theorizing about intergroup relations and the universal properties of ingroups and outgroups, whatever their nature. Instead, it derives from the ideological dilemma of the liberal expert, who simultaneously accepts and rejects authority.

The expert may seek to serve the interests of the non-expert (the member of the public), but in so doing the expert is faced with the issue identified

by Durkheim: the non-expert has no unlimited right to incompetence. Yet on the other hand, the expert has no unlimited right to dismiss contemptuously the views of the non-expert, however uninformed they might be. A party line might be achievable within the group, but it cannot be imposed over the general public which the experts seek to serve. The liberal aim of rational cooperation was expressed. The social worker at another child development centre claimed that 'Our aim is to foster an alliance between the team and the families.' Again there is the rhetoric of rational egalitarianism, as both parties work together towards a common end. Yet the alliance cannot be an egalitarian one, for the view of the expert must somehow impose its rational authority. The social worker continued: 'You have to get the parents on your side if you are going to be able to do anything useful.' The parents were going to have to come over to the side of the experts. This was not seen as an alliance to be formed upon a middle ground. In recognition of the pressure that expert authority can place on non-experts in these sorts of situation, there have been calls to 'democratize' therapeutic intervention and to 'empower' parents in their contact with professionals (Wolfendale, 1986; Cochran, 1986). The professional, of course, faces a dilemma: the more that 'consumer rights' are afforded, the more the experts are in danger of giving away their authority.

There is evidence from other studies that the dialogue between experts and members of the public is not an equal one based upon rational persuasion. The experts of the medical profession will impose their views, or schemata, upon the very different ones held by the patients; whilst the patients may accede in the face of rhetorical pressure, they do not actually change their own schemata (Tannen and Wallat, 1986). The unity of the group increases the pressure on the parent. Instead of being faced by a single expert, whose advice might be checked by a second opinion, the parent is faced by a united phalanx of experts. From the nursery nurse to the paediatrician, all are agreed upon a single diagnosis and recommended course of action. As the sister said: 'In getting together and discussing the child's problems we are able to give the mums and their families the same advice from everybody and not conflicting advice from all different professionals. We look at all the different points of view and come up with some agreement of how best we can all help the child.' Again the rationality is impeccable. Who would want conflict? And who could deny the value of different professionals cooperating to produce the most helpful advice? And yet the power of the 'mums', and of their outlook, is reduced as expertise is strengthened through unity and rational cooperation. Sometimes the 'mums' are not even considered equal enough to enter the dialogue. The prognosis for their children may be so dispiriting that they are not considered ready to accept all the information. The team possesses human relations expertise, which enables judgements to be made.

This expertise, which must use kindness and sensitivity in 'winning over' the 'mums', emphasizes the gap between the experts and the non-experts. And the more sensitivity which is shown, the more the inequality is emphasized, because the sensitivity is itself part of the expertise which separates the expert from the recipient of expertise.

The unit's tension between equality and authority can be crudely summarized: the greater the equality within the group, the more the authority of the group was strengthened in relation to the non-experts. Thus equality within the group seemed to enhance inequality between the group and non-experts, and therefore the egalitarian motivations of the group had an inegalitarian effect. The unit's members were aware of the problem, and they recognized that their attempts to lessen the gap between experts and non-experts involved accepting the inequalities between experts. One of the psychologists was discussing how the families tended to be overawed by the higher-status professionals. This higher status, in turn, prevents the expert from gaining the trust which is so necessary if there is to be a successful alliance. In consequence, it is the lower-status nurses who are assigned the task of winning over the families: 'The nursing staff are the most accessible because people. . . have a concept of nurses as nurturant and caring. So they are not threatening or at least not daunting like other therapists might be, the psychologists for example. This gives us a way in.' This comment expresses an awareness that, in order for the unit to deal best with the children and their families, it was necessary to accept the philosophy of status, which the group saw as hindering those ends. In this sense, the rational liberalism was coming up against the illiberal presumptions of the society. As a result, the unit was caught between either accepting and working with the authoritarian presumptions, or failing to establish the rational authority of its expertise. Either way, equalization could not banish authority.

What should be emphasized is that the members of the unit were aware of these dilemmas, and talked of them openly with the interviewer. They knew from daily experience that the contradictions did not vanish as if by magic, but that the work of their own unit, of which they were fiercely proud, threw up fresh problems. In winning over the 'mums', they might have to cajole, or even conceal information. This was something which was done with reluctance. They might have to acknowledge the status which in their own relations they wished to eradicate. Above all they knew that expertise could exert unfair authority over the inexpert and the powerlessly confused. Yet they knew also that they could only help the families and their handicapped children if the expert view were the *primus* amongst the *pares* of other views. We should not dismiss this dedicated group of professionals as being cynics who manipulate the weak in order to further their own professional interests. Nor should we patronize them as being unthinking optimists, blindly driven by a set of principles and oblivious

to all dilemmatic difficulties. Instead, these are experts who know from daily experience that the general principles, which sound so rationally obvious in theory, do not in practice resolve all difficulties. Like so many other modern experts in other fields, they are aware of the dilemmas of expertise: they talk about them, argue about them and continue to search for that magic solution which will, once and for all, rationally exorcize the ghost of Captain Ahab.