Friendship and Fairness: Ideological Tensions in an American High School

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> In order to see one's society from without, one must become conscious of its values and their implications.
>
> **LOUIS DUMONT**

Why should one see one's society from without? In these days of "the participants know best," how can anthropology defend what many have considered to be its mission--objectivity through detachment? Many of the cultures and groups traditionally studied by anthropologists are rebelling against the "irrelevance" of the purported "findings," asserting that they, as natives, know it all, more fully and directly.<

Perhaps this applies to us anthropologists as well. "We" are natives too; we have an intuitive feel for our culture. But is this intuition enough, for us? It is we, as natives, who have developed a style of interpretation of the **world—science—founded** on the idea that intuition is not enough, that our knowledge must be founded on an objectivization of the world. To do anthropology as a science, to attempt detachment from our cultural experiences, is thus to participate fully in this very culture. Indeed the justification of anthropological research, say, of Margaret Mead's studies of Samoan childrearing practices, lies in the fact that if these studies are relevant at all, it is because of what they say about our own childrearing practices, because they contribute to pull us out of our cultural environment and lead us to adopt a relativistic stance *vis à* vis our own culture.

Though we as scientists may adopt a stance and objectify our environment to study it, the fact remains that we are part of this environment, that we are always the objects of our research, the natives of our own studies. One way of saying this is that anthropologists cannot escape being, in certain ways, biased. But this should not be a blueprint for despair. It must be taken as an objective description of our position in relation to the things we study and the audience to

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whom we report our findings, and eventually a justification for studying ourselves "from the outside." We study ourselves to understand what we say about others and thus to be assured of the "object-ivity" of what we say about ourselves. The circle is not vicious; it is hermeneutical, we believe.

Our studies of these "others" are relevant to *them* only in so far as they accept our western ideas about objectivity, in which case "they" have become "us" and are equally in need of examining the very concept of objectivity and all the other concepts which we, as natives, generally consider to *be* objective. To look-at-ourselves-from-the-outside is, properly speaking, to participate fully in our culture, since science in general, and anthropology in particular, are meaningful only within the context of this culture.

Dumont speaks of a "one" who wants to see his society from the outside, thereby implying that the exercise is potentially of universal validity. We don't believe it is; anthropology, like science, is a product of Western historical, social, and cultural structures. In this sense it is "we" who must become conscious of our values and their implications, we who must see our society from without. For it is only after we have done this that our beliefs, and our policies, can be called truly legitimate-within our own system.

This paper is about schools. In schools, even the freest of the free schools, we manipulate environments and people so as to transmit certain forms of knowledge and certain values. How to do this legitimately, i.e., in ways that do not compromise the values themselves, is a question of great import to us. It is, nowadays, of all the greater import since the development of the social sciences has challenged the smug assumption that the intent of an action is necessarily coterminous with the nature of the action as seen objectively, from the outside. Sociologists of all persuasions have demonstrated that this is not necessarily so. In fact, it is the contrary: Consciousness of intent is, more often than not, a false consciousness of the true nature of the action.

That this should bother us confirms our contention that "looking at ourselves from the outside"-the *very raison d'être* of anthropology-is an indispensible exercise in the process of legitimizing our'actions. Intent is not enough. It must also be demonstrated *objectively* that the act is coterminous with the intent. This process of evaluation has generally focused on the act (structure of the classroom or school, curriculum, financing, etc.) or the outcome (test results, drop-out rates, eventual "success") and the relationship between the two. Examination of the intent is either considered unnecessary, because that intent is obvious, or is deemed the rightful domain of the philosopher of education.

It is this last assumption that must be challenged. The intent, what some would call the "values' of any educational system, is not a simple matter. Values are not in their everyday usage absolute, immovable guiding stars to which we orient ourselves to guide our actions. They are structured, parts of systems, and thus submitted to processes that make them fully immanent to the human, social situation and not transcendent to it.

We may still believe in certain transcendental principles, one of which is that legitimacy, in our culture, is grounded in objectivity. But we must recognize that there is an intermediate point between "real" acts and "ideal" values. This is the level of "real values," values-in-use in historical situations. This level, which might also be called the "cultural level" following Parsons-as-transformed-by-Schneider,[1] is structured in its own right. We must understand the exact nature of this structuring process before we can understand more fully the working of the school as a complete system of action. Only then will we be able to evaluate justly what we do in our schools, and propose changes that have a chance of being implemented because we use the structuring processes rather than go against them.

In this paper[2] we shall consider the words that participants in an American high school-teachers, students, administrators-use when they talk about friendship between teachers and students. As we shall show, teachers and students in their relationships are not confronted with a single dimensional model of proper behavior (e.g., how to be a teacher to a student). They are confronted with a complex, seemingly contradictory model which offers to any individual teacher several modes of relationship, each with its own logical development. A teacher, or a student, may "choose" among these modes. More often, of course, they are pushed into the choice by forces not fully under their control. For the individual in the school, the complexity of the structure is the source of many dilemmas as various actors around him claim the right to relate with him in different and potentially permissible ways.[3]

As an example of the type of research we believe is needed, we shall explore a dilemma-producing paradox grounded in the very structure of American

1 The theoretical formulation of the need to separate "culture" ("systems of value-orientations") from "social structure" ("the social system") was first formulated in all its complexity by Talcott Parsons and Edward Shils. *Toward a General Theory of Action.* New York, N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1962. Our personal orientation in this paper is closer to that which David Schneider has been developing in recent years. From Parsons and Shils he has kept the idea that culture and social structure are analytically separate systems. His understanding of culture, on the other hand, is quite different from theirs in that he de-emphasizes the "value" aspect of culture and emphasizes its semantic aspects. He makes this point theoretically in David Schneider, "What is Kinship All About?" in P. Reining, ed. *Kinship Studies in the Morgan Centennial Year.* Washington, D.C.: Society of Anthropology, 1972. A good example of what the approach yields when applied to an ethnographical situation is to be found in David Schneider. *American Kinship: A Cultural Account.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968.

2 The fieldwork on which the following is based was conducted over the school year 1972-73 by Hervé Varenne, Patricia Caesar, and Rodney Riffle. The funds for the research were provided by the Ford Foundation, the National Institute of Education, and the Horace Mann-Lincoln Institute at Teachers College. We wish to thank also with particular gratitude the participants in Sheffield High School (a pseudonym) who so graciously accepted us and our queries.

3 Hervé Varenne is now in the process of writing a book on the rhetoric of education in an American high school. It is an attempt to demonstrate in detail that the statements made by participants about the school and their life in the school ("what they say" rather than "what they do") are structured at their own level.

values. It is the paradox implied in the belief in both the equal endowment of all human beings with regard to certain inalienable rights (those about which the ‘‘Declaration of Independence’’ speaks) and their unequal endowment with regard to individual capacities (the varied “gifts” of St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians [I: 12]). The intellectual solution to the dilemma says that as long as “equality of opportunity” is preserved, the demands of socio-political morality are met. The criteria for evaluation must be universal, the rewards may be tailored to individual performance. Many, however, feel that this solution does not deal with all aspects of the situation. De Tocqueville has pointed out the difficulties inherent in master-servant relationships in America.[4] The same paradox has produced what Myrdal saw as the “American dilemma,” the refusal to accept blacks as full members of American society? The original answer to this question was to place them outside that society, as less-than-human slaves. Dumont has argued[6] that this was very much a culture-bound “solution,” directly related to the structure of individualism and democracy as understood by American culture.

The argument we present here is inspired by the same idea which guided these authors: American culture, insofar as it cannot escape the inequality of conditions produced by the socio-economic system (master-servant or master-slave relationships) or by biological and physiological facts (adults-children), deals with it in a way that solves the problem intellectually but still leaves the actor in a quandary (since the solution, like all cultural solutions, is arbitrary to the world). Our research is more limited than that of de Tocqueville or Myrdal. But what we have lost in scope, we hope we have gained in detail.

The procedure we used to abstract the structure of what students and teachers said about teacher-student friendships is as follows: First we read the field notes and located direct references to friendship. Then we selected a statement and began a preliminary analysis, taking heed of the uses of certain words and their relationship to other words and raising questions to be asked in the analysis of succeeding data. This method is directly inspired by Lévi-Strauss’ structural analysis as carried out in *Mythologiques*.[7]

4 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. G. Lawrence. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969, pp. 572. ff.

5 Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma, New* York, Harper & Rowe, 1962.

6 Louis Dumont, “Caste, Racism and Stratification,” *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, Vol. 5, 1951.

7 Claude Levi-Strauss. *Mythologiques*, 4 vols. Paris, France: Plon, 1964-1971. The method is formally similar to the one codified as “grounded theory” by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Chicago, Ill.: Aldine, 1967. It is however, radically different from it on a major point. The outcome of “grounded theory” is a set of propositions about probable relationships between categories-“hypotheses” to be tested by further research. The outcome of a structural analysis is an analytic, systemic description that shows how the various parts discovered fit in the general structure and how they may be transformed as the structure shifts.

We proceeded in this manner because we accept the assumption of Lévi-Strauss[8] that any statement made by a participant in a cultural system is structured by rules applicable to all statements made by this participant and by other participants in the same communicational set. One "text" (as we shall call statements from the field notes) relating to friendship is thus as valid as any other for the beginning of the analysis. It surely would not contain reference to all aspects of the structure of the teacher-student friendship in an American high school. This will appear later as more evidence is presented. It does, however, present certain clues with which to start the process of analysis.

We started with the following text in which a young female teacher, Betty Lynn, tells the fieldworker that:

> Age certainly makes a difference in relationships with students. When I was a student teacher, a teacher once told me that "You can be friendly to students, but you cannot be their friends."[9]

She admitted, however, that she has become friends with some of the students even though she thinks that perhaps she shouldn't:

> When I first became a teacher, I tried to overcome my young age by being strict, but that was not a good way to act. If you grain the respect of the students, then you can keep discipline at a minimum.

This text is "about" several matters which the teacher sees as related: age, friendship, strictness, discipline. Let us begin our analysis, somewhat arbitrarily, with age.

For Ms. Lynn, age is a factor to be considered in teacher-student relationships. What difference does it make and how is it defined? In chronological terms? If so, where is the line that separates teacher from student? Is it drawn at 18 years, the legal definition of majority? If so, under what circumstances is this legal definition used? Or is the basis a behavioral one interpreted around the concept of maturity?

The formal evaluation of a young teacher included the phrase: "It would be my hope and desire that as David Taylor continues to mature and grow, he will understand the need to adjust his mode of hair style and appearance." The

8 Levi-Strauss introduces his four volume *Mythologiques, op. cit.* Vol. 1, p. 2, as an attempt to demonstrate that a set of myths produced by South and North American Indians are transformations one of the other and thus belong to what is fundamentally one communication set.

9 All the statements used in this paper were collected in the one high school of the town of Sheffield-a pseudonym. The town of Sheffield (pop. @10,000) is located in a suburban area of the Northeast United States. The population is predominantly white and well-to-do. No Blacks or Puerto Ricans, in fact no poor from any ethnic group, reside in the town. The high school has 750 students and 30 faculty members. It is well supported by the community. The internal structure of the school and its curriculum are somewhat traditional though at the time of the research the principal was pushing strongly "individualized instruction."

evaluation pointed out that this teacher's long hair made him popular with the students but unpopular with the parents. Maturity could also refer to sexual matters, but this was never alluded to directly in these contexts, though it may underlie the rarely broken taboo which prevents male teachers from offering rides to female students.

Chronological age and biological/behavioral maturity are two different things in the minds of the participants, but they are intimately related from the point of view of the influence that proximity in age or level of behavioral maturity has upon interpersonal relationships. Betty Lynn was implying that closeness of age between teacher and student creates a tendency for them to become friendly (an excess toward positive relationships) or it leads the teacher to be overly strict (an excess toward- negative relationships). The writer of David Taylor's evaluation made the same implication. Why should this be? And if it is, why should it be considered a problem? In other words, becoming a friend of someone is helped by the fact that the other person is, in certain ways, similar to oneself. Indeed, in many ways-though we cannot document it fully here—being a friend with someone, in America, is being ***the same*** as this person.[10] This need not be literally true as long as the differences that exist between two persons are considered to be secondary to the sameness. Becoming a friend to a student is not a good thing for a teacher to do. Young age is something for teachers to overcome because age, maturity (sexual and otherwise)-in fact any other personal characteristics-are extraneous to the teacher-student relationship. When a disparity in age does not clearly draw the line of differentiation between teacher and student, the possibility exists that the teacher will seem to be too much like a student, that the "difference" between them, which must remain primary to their relationship, will disappear.

Betty Lynn then tried to differentiate herself by being "strict." However, she concluded that this was "not a good way to act." Why? Gaining "respect" of the students is a better way. If the students respect you, a minimum of disciplinary acts are needed by the teacher. Strictness is bad, just as friendship is. What is good is "being friendly." Accordingly, Betty Lynn's mentor passed on this bit of professional wisdom to her apprentice: "You can be friendly to students, but you cannot be their friends."

The teacher must act ***as if*** a relation of friendship existed, while being careful not to let such a relation come into actual being. In fact, Betty Lynn recognized that she was friends with some of the students, though "perhaps she shouldn't be." But she is friends to "some" of the students while "being friendly . . . to the students," ***all*** of them by implication. Here, from the point of view of the teacher, the "real" joins the "ideal": being a friend to ***the students*** is not only a

10 This is developed at some length in Hervé Varenne's *Individualism, Community and Love.* New York, N.Y.: Teachers College Press, forthcoming.

tabooed mode, it is also not possible in practice since at most a teacher might become a friend to ***some*** students and could not possibly be a friend to all. The text we quoted gives only a vague idea of what Betty Lynn meant concretely when she spoke about friendship and discipline. We could analyze this but it would take us too far afield. We shall simply say that disciplining involves the imposition of one's own sense of right or wrong, obliging another person to do one's will. Discipline is differentiated in the school from brute force in that the person exercising discipline has the legitimate authority to do so, while the person over whom it is being exercised does not share this authority either reflexively or on the people who share his position. Disciplinary relationships are ranked and asymmetrical; friendship relationships are not ranked, and symmetrical. Acts of discipline are definitely not acts of friendship.

Here is another interpretation of the problem by another teacher, Robert Williams:

> I don't like to find out too many things about the students' personal lives because it might lead me to get too involved. I think it is better to know as little as possible about students so as to maintain my objectivity so it will not affect my evaluations and grading.

One of the main aspects of discipline is grading and evaluation, and this is antithetical to friendship: A person cannot evaluate a friend "objectively." Teachers are supposed to evaluate students' work objectively-on the basis of actual performance and on no other basis-thus they cannot be friends to students.

Simple enough, one could say. But (a) one must act friendly-an ideological prescription; and (b) all teachers have friends among the students-the recognition of a state of being. Robert Williams continued:

> I have become friends with a few students. These students run the gamut from smart to stupid, from good kids to so-called slobs. I really resent other teachers when they sit around in the lounge and cut up the students. It is wrong for teachers to put students in little boxes labelling them as good or bad kids according to their academic ability, extra-curricular activities or the way they dress.

Of importance here is that Williams indirectly acknowledges that friendship relationships transcend evaluative categorization. Furthermore, as the preceding remarks of Williams reveal, evaluation concerns only a part of the student's person, friendship involves the ***whole person*** in which age and maturity definitely play a part. It is in this opposition between specific behaviors and the total person that the complexity of the situation lies. The relationship between teacher and student is not one of wholes; it is a limited one. But beyond the fact that this special relationship exists, and that it is a limited one, there is no

consensus among the actors as to whether specific acts are *teacher's acts, friendly*, or that *of a friend.* For instance, Mr. Williams sees the people gossiping about students in the lounge as teachers who are not executing their role properly. From our observations, the lounge is a place to be relaxed and informal. It is not a classroom. It is a place where friendship groups among the teachers can congregate. It is a place for wholes where personal feelings, likes and dislikes, can be expressed without direct risk. This of course implies a belief that the teachers will be able to compartmentalize successfully between lounge and classroom modes of thinking about students. Critics can justly point out that this just cannot be, that what teachers say in the lounge will influence what they do in the classroom.

The lack of consensus on what acts are proper, given the perceived difficulty of being objective, does not prevent teachers from continually trying to maintain the compartmentalization. Students and teachers often refer to "the formal teacher role," "doing the teacher thing," "putting on a teacher face," "putting up a barrier," "finding a dividing line," etc.

Calling teachers by their first names or by their initials, seeing the teacher outside the school, knowing about the teacher's personal life, joking, kidding around, having fun, hacking around, and cursing by either student or teacher are indications of the quality of relationships between teacher and student. None of these things are specifically forbidden by either law or custom. But neither are they completely unstructured. Cursing, for example, is a delicate matter that cannot happen without some sort of reaction, from a joke to suspension from the school. The context or situation is all-important while the specific act is not. The teacher, and the student too, of course, must decide how to react with little guidance from the administration or even the culture at large.

Although they do not always agree as to where the line between students and teachers should be drawn or why, both students and teachers agree that lines *must* be drawn. Differentiation between teacher and student is essential because there are dangers when the line is not drawn in such a way as to keep the relationship from becoming personal. One teacher told us that teachers must keep up "the authority barrier." Teachers must have the upper hand because there always are a few kids who are bad and would take advantage of a teacher that acted informally. This would lead to the teacher "losing control" of the teacher-student relationship.

"Losing control" is an interesting notion. The teacher has control and can lose it. The students do not have control, as such. It is their behavior which is controlled. To this extent they are involved in the system. Furthermore, though individual students may deplore it, to attempt to lead a teacher to lose control is a central aspect of the student condition. Of course, the attempt cannot be successful: When the teacher loses control, or shifts into the friendship mode, the student loses his reality as a student. For both teacher and student, the line must be drawn.

We offer as an extreme example of this line-drawing, the case of Beth Walton, a student, and Mrs. Walton, who is both Beth's mother, and a teacher at Sheffield. They are in an inescapably personal relationship, and yet have also to try to maintain a student-teacher relationship. In the following text a student is telling the fieldworker about Beth's relationship with her mother:

> Beth still has to ride in the back seat of a car with her mother. On the way to school she still rides in the back seat by herself. She has to. . . . I don't know why. I don't know, but she has her (driver's) license also. It's the most amazing thing. She has her license, but on the way to school she sits in the back seat.

This student does not understand why Beth rides alone in the back seat while her mother drives alone in the front seat because he is judging the relationship as a personal one based on love. As such, mother and daughter should be close or side by side, not so drastically separated. It appears that the student did not realize that Mrs. Walton, the teacher, is trying to let everyone at the high school, including Beth and herself, see in a concrete way that she can separate her subjective feelings for her daughter from her obligations as a teacher toward each and every student in formal relationship-an objective one in the full sense of the term.

Interestingly, the most formal statements of the school's goals made no reference to these objective qualities of the teacher-student relationship. The "Sheffield High School Educational Philosophy" states in part (and we excerpt mostly to give an impressionistic taste of a document which runs 500 words in the same vein):

> Believing in the dignity and inherent worth of every individual we accept every student as he is when he enters our school. We recognize that each student has different abilities, interests and needs to which our curriculum must be suited. We shall do our utmost through guided judgment in course selection to help each student develop his potentialities to the fullest extent so that he may become a productive member of our democratic society.

Not that many people in the school would-admit truly to "believe" in the above when asked in nonofficial situations. The general reaction to it was snickers. Another statement at the beginning of the teacher's manual was greeted with even more cynicism. We quote again in part:

> ***Desidera turn :***
> I want to teach in a school-in a system where the Superintendent has a vision-where the administrators are dreamers-and doers too-but basically can dream great dreams. I want to teach where the faculty dreams of ways they can help young people really become significant-really contribute to the world-really grow in knowledge.

No mention is made in official documents that a teacher may want to teach because teaching is a way of making a living, or that students are in school because the law says they must be there. No mention is made of the custodial functions of the school. ***No mention is made of the essential evaluative function of the school, both for teachers, before tenure at least, and for students throughout their career in the school.***

It may be that these statements, however trite, are more modern and liberal than the actual structure of the school is. We cannot readily say. Synchronically, and certainly for a number of years before our fieldwork was conducted, objective evaluation and "recognition of the needs of individual students" have existed side by side not only as dream versus reality, but as two dreams manifested in two realities. Being subjective ("being friendly") and being objective (evaluating) are two goals of the schools, though they may not be expressed at the same moment. Being a friend to a student and giving him a grade are two everyday realities in the life of the *school.

In a recent article, Varenne has explored certain of the consequences of this dual structure.[11] It is part of the job of the teacher to evaluate how well students have learned. These evaluations must be objective judgments made on the basis of some measurable (and according to scientific logic, objective) performance of the prescribed task. Subjective factors such as personality traits (being sweet, or understanding, or sympathetic, or sharing an interest in skiing, politics, or beer drinking) are not supposed to have a place in the evaluation process. If subjective factors do enter into the evaluation, the teacher is denying the student his culturally assumed birthright. His basic equality to other humans is being denied. A teacher who evaluates a student's work subjectively is being unfair. This is the determining factor for creation of the formal teacher-student relation. It is the main reason, in these situations, why human beings must remember they are either teachers or students.

Both students and teachers are aware of the above. A student put it this way:

> . . . other teachers would think it is wrong if a teacher sees kids on the weekend outside of school, or otherwise develops a personal relationship because they say he'd been grading them the wrong way and that a teacher isn't supposed to be like this. He won't get any respect.

This student gives the impression that perhaps students do not see anything threatening about teachers and students becoming friends. However, this is not how Mr. Taylor, the long-haired teacher we mentioned earlier, thinks students will interpret friendly acts between teachers and students:

> If you're friendly in school, I think, you just can't be friendly towards one,

11 Hervé Varenne, "From Grading and Freedom of Choice to Ranking and Segregation in an American High School," *Council on Anthropology and Education Quarterly,* Vol. 5, 1974.

> two. I think it's got to be spread, you know? It's going to . . . If they know you're friendly with one person, then you've got to be almost as friendly with everyone else, or they are going to think you are very prejudiced, very biased towards some students and you're going to get wrecked for that, too. The students will wreck you directly. The student and then the students, you know, not individual any more because as soon as they know you were with one student over them, they'll know if you're not equally with the other students, then they'll come right at you. So you know, like the old thing, teacher's pet. But they don't rat the student I don't think as much, at least not openly.

It appears that approximating the ideal formal teacher-student relationship becomes more and more necessary as the subject matter being taught becomes more formal and academic. This is because the student's performance in academic subjects is used to measure his ability as a student. The measure of the student's academic ability is the grade he earns. High grades in academic subjects are generally considered by educational experts to be prime predictors of the student's future success. They are the ticket to college. Gaining admission to a good college is a primary concern of both parents and students at Sheffield. To be a valid measure, the grade must be awarded on the basis of criteria which are as objective as possible. Thus, nothing personal or subjective or informal should enter into the process whereby the student earns his grades.

In less academic subjects, like sports, drama, art, the need to evaluate is less pressing. This may explain why more teachers in these areas reported directly and with little embarrassment that they regularly entered into relationships of friendships with students. Teachers in academic subjects more consistently emphasized the dangers of friendship.

The fact that certain students ***are*** friends with, or operate as friends of, certain teachers tends to make this mode of relationship available to other students with other teachers, if only as a strategy to compensate for failure in the academic system. Some students see friendship as a fully legitimate mode. A student who was more successful in athletics than in academic subjects said:

> I think . . . I can't see how a teacher could be too friendly without the students appreciating it and respecting him for it. Me, personally, the closer, the nicer, a teacher is to me, the more I respect him and then if1 hack around, the teacher gives you one of the looks, then you know you're taking advantage of the teacher. Then I'd stop. I don't think there's such a thing as being too friendly. At least I haven't encountered it.

Friendliness is a mode that is always available, and attractive though dangerous. And not only is it available and attractive, it is also, in many ways, ***the*** valued mode. But why should the junction of two negative modes of behaving,

"acting" with its implications of hypocrisy and lack of personal involvement, and "friendly" with its implications of unfairness, be transformed into a positive mode?

Friendship, a subjective association between equals on personal terms, is inappropriate as a mode of relationship within the school for it leads to destruction of the teacher-student relationship. Conversely,. the school philosophy, on the one hand, many teachers and even more students on the other, refuse to consider the teacher-student "'thing" as the "true," legitimate or otherwise basic reality: Teachers and students are, first and foremost, humans---dreamers more than doers, different, unique and equally valuable-' 'we accept every student." The teacher-student relationship is asymmetrical in its very nature and it functions as producer of asymmetrical relationships within the students. Friendship, conversely, is a symmetrical relationship in which both actors have engaged willfully and as unique persons. But while the asymmetry between teacher and student is a class matter which transcends indiv.iduals-whether a teacher is nice or not towards a student, he remains a teacher and evaluator by his very position—the symmetry between friends is an individual thing, and not universal. In other words, while the teacher-student thing is founded on an asymmetry between the teacher and the students, it also puts all the students in the same position *vis à vis* each other; it is a leveling relationship. Conversely, while the friend-friend relationship is symmetrical, its extent is only so wide as the individuals concerned. It is objectively segregative-however involuntary this may be-given the practical impossibility of personal involvement with 'large numbers of individuals.

It appears, in view of the above, that the asymmetrical teacher-student relation is implied in the school philosophy's statements about treating the students equally insofar as it is practically more feasible to treat a large group of individuals equally if the situation is structured in such a manner that all individuals are put in the same relationship *vis à vis* another group in the structure. Allowing individual, personal relationships to become the basis for social organization will lead to objective inequality-at least as long as resources are scarce.

The participants in the school recognized this well enough, but only pragmatically. Equality of opportunity and equality of instructional treatment are valued, but not in and for themselves. They serve only as a background for a "freely" chosen personal relationship. Discipline is illegitimate if it is not grounded on *mutual* (i.e., person-to-person) respect. "True teaching occurs when one person's mind is stimulated by another person's mind and when a human heart is touched by another human heart,"' as the "Educational Philosophy" also says.

Whether intellectual or emotional, education is first and foremost something which happens between two individuals, not between two groups. "Acting

friendly" is thus the intersection of equality and liberty: It is equal because it is addressed to all students and, more fundamentally, because it *is* an act, because it involves persons in asymmetrical relationships. It is free because it is ''friendship''-personal, one-to-one.

Structurally, synchronically, and very much ideally, we can understand the necessity of "acting friendly," or of the peculiar wording of the school philosophy. Acting friendly is not a compromise; it is a synthesis. In other words, the structure of the ideology is coherent when one looks at it from a certain distance-as outsiders. Whatever problems this structure may generate in the day-to-day life of the participants in the school cannot be blamed on its incoherence or miscellaneous nature but rather on its very nature as a system.

''Acting friendly'' may be the synthesis between "being friendly" and "acting like a teacher''—like all syntheses it is, however, essentially unstable and vague. In most situations, the protagonists see more clearly the two extreme choices they might make than the middle road which they probably would like to follow. Thus the structural tensions that constitute the system are transformed into personal dilemmas for actors-in-situation.

This is not simply the conflict between the "ideal" and the "real" as traditionally conceived, for it is a conflict grounded in the ideal itself. What we have tried to show is that the ideal is not a monolithic thing. It is not simply a listing of miscellaneous values but an organized, structured set grounded in the real-all the participants saw friendship and fairness as immediately apprehensible "real" things-and yet fundamentally tragic. A structure is not simply a system in homeostatic balance-a metaphor of quiet and peace-but also an unstable construction of dialectical oppositions and, as such, fundamentally tragic.

The observer's stance thus allows us to see two things that an insider may not have seen quite so clearly. First, we see that the situation is structured despite the apparent chaos. Second, we can also see that it is this very structure that leads to the dilemmas that confront indvidual actors. In a practical sense it means that neither the teachers nor the administrators (nor obviously the students) can be blamed individually for not acting up to the ideal *since the ideal is not univocal.* Moral regeneration will not solve the problems of the school.

What will solve them is something that outsiders cannot decide, if only because action *is* choice between equally plausible alternatives and this choice can only be made properly by insiders. What an outsider can contribute is information that will allow for greater awareness of the alternatives. As it is now fully accepted that one cannot teach a child except through his nature as a child, so we must accept that society and culture have their own logic that cannot be transcended by a simple act or wish. We can manipulate socio-

cultural environments but only within certain rather narrow limits. And we certainly do not "create" society.

This goes further than the declaration that one must take into account the social background of the child as well as his developmental stage in order to teach him properly. It is related to the idea that schools are formal organizations, and thus will necessarily react like any such organizations to internal and external pressures. Schools-or more precisely-participants in a school-see their actions structured at yet another level, the level of cultural definitions and organization of perception. There are limits to what teachers can do and there are limits to what we can ask them to do in an attempt at reform.

This is of course the reformer's, the "meta-educator's" dilemma. But we do not want to end on a purely pessimistic note. The structures which organize human behavior are not closed. They determine a process but not its content. What we said about the teachers in the school and their personal responsibility to choose their reaction among several permissible ones apply also to meta-educators. The dialectic of the outsider and the insider stance with which we opened this paper is an example of structural tension in the values of meta-education. So there are choices we have to make. Happily for us they are not as instantaneous as the choices the teachers have to make at all times. We have more time for reflection and for taking a line of action that corresponds more closely to the "ideal" line, the one which would satisfy all requirements. The legitimacy of decisions taken within our cultural system, particularly at the rarefied level of the theory of education, lies in our being able to demonstrate that we have distanced ourselves, seen the situation as it is, and are working to change it within the structure of the reality thus discovered.