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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF REINHOLD NIEBUHR

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BY

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THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF REINHOLD NIEBUHR

APPROVED BY

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

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THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF REINHOLD NIEBUHR

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

A study of historical patterns in the American educational system reveals that this system has been influenced by two basic philosophies: that which has grown out of a religious orientation and that which has grown out of a secular orientation. Today, in a society that is undergoing profound sociological and cultural changes, one of the problems confronting the educational philosopher is the need for a critical examination of the first of these two conflicting traditions. Secular philosophies of education are easily available; many have been produced during the past hundred years. But religiously-oriented philosophies of education, especially in Protestant circles, are not so easily acquired. Even though Protestantism dominated the educational scene in early American life, Protestant philosophies of education have not been produced to any great extent.

The author of this study directs his investigations

into this problem through a study of the philosophical thought of Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr's works have been selected as a basis for this study because of his prominent position both in the intellectual and religious life of America during the first half of the twentieth century. Born of Lutheran parents in 1892, he received an early training which combined the liberalism of Harnack with the conservativism of the Lutheran faith. He attended a denominational college and completed his graduate training at Yale Divinity School. By 1915 he was pastor of a church in Detroit, and it was in this position that his dialecticism appeared. For here he discovered the need to reconcile the platitudes of Christian liberalism with the necessities of economic life. His penetrating search for a meaningful and yet religious answer to the basic questions of the human race led him to national prominence and finally to the position of Professor of Applied Christianity in Union Theological Seminary in New York. His writings, which include possibly as many as twenty books and a thousand articles and editorials, have critically examined and analyzed the American scene and challenged the religious thinking of the period to be more critical in its evaluations. Thus, his writings provide representative sources of study for a religiously-oriented philosophy of education.

The Purpose

The purpose of this investigation is to present a

religiously-oriented philosophy of education based on the educational philosophy inherent in the writings of Niebuhr. In order for this statement to have relevance in contemporary education, some comparisons with other current philosophies of education need to be made, but the primary purpose is to present Niebuhr's thought as that thought related to Protestant educational efforts.

Do the basic tenets of Protestantism have any significant contributions to make to the educational thought of contemporary America? In this investigation an attempt to seek to answer this question has been made in the light of the educational thought of Niebuhr.

The Value

Two values of this investigation become apparent at the outset. First, the study provides an opportunity for investigating some of the basic theories of American educational thought, and for the comparing of those theories with the religious theories of Niebuhr. This investigation will necessarily provide a profound understanding of some of the basic thinking of the day; this understanding will be of further value in the development of an independent educational philosophy.

Secondly, this investigation will be of value to students of educational philosophy as they confront the differences existing between religious educational thought and secular educational thought. Factually Niebuhr's

thought cannot be categorized precisely, but it is basically religious. Philosophically, an attempt to place him in a particular philosophical pattern results in defining him as an idealistic, traditional, pragmatic thinker.

Niebuhr is idealistic in that his metaphysics affirm a supernatural reality called God. In a search for final and ultimate truth, Niebuhr sees man driven to the reality of the presence of God, both as the creator and as the ultimate power in the universe. Niebuhr is traditional in that he regards the traditions of the Christian faith as valid. Although he respects the church in its pure form, he is not traditional to the extent that the church becomes the final Defender of the Faith. His traditional aspects end with the recognition of that part of the Christian faith which places God as supreme Creator, which accepts Jesus Christ as the revelation of God, and which holds that the nature of man is related to the nature of God. Beneath these factors, relativism becomes the rule and Niebuhr's traditional affirmations end. Niebuhr is pragmatic in that he believes that all events, including actions and thoughts, achieve meaning for a person when those events and thoughts are relevant to that person's particular experiences. He believes that each man must experience the presence of God individually if that presence is to play a significant role in the life of each human being. Furthermore, Niebuhr's pragmatism becomes actively progressive in that he believes

that man is responsible for developing justice within the social environment. His many harsh indictments of the social injustices of his day suggest a prophetic role in which he seeks to point an exploited humanity toward purer forms of justice. Niebuhr is not an idealistic fundamentalist who seeks to escape from the struggles of life by looking forward to eternity. Neither is he an illusionary romanticist who believes that the world is good if man will but live harmoniously with it. In social ethics, he is a pragmatist, seeking, through struggle and effort, to build a society that will guarantee more equitable forms of justice for all people.

This philosophical pattern of Niebuhr's thus becomes a dialectical one, but it is one that is relevant to education today. Niebuhr's writings stand distinctly between the ideal and the real, between the supernatural and the natural. Educators who are frustrated with the ineffectiveness of contemporary educational efforts--who can see little if any relationship between what is sought and what is actually achieved, will find wisdom and insight in a study of Niebuhr's thought.

The Limitations

This investigation is limited significantly in three ways. In the first place, Niebuhr has not addressed himself specifically to educational thought. Education, as the term is used in educational circles, is rarely mentioned

in his writings. Consequently, much of his educational thought must be based upon inference rather than upon specific statements. One cannot ascertain with certainty exactly what Niebuhr would state if he were writing an educational philosophy. One must make generalized, personal judgments about Niebuhr's philosophical thought by comparing Niebuhr's philosophy with the basic educational theory and practice of the day.

In the second place, this investigation is limited to the extent that Niebuhr's philosophical perspective has changed as his thinking has matured. His earlier writings indicate a tendency toward liberal thinking; his later writings indicate that he has become much more conservative with regard to religious concepts but more pragmatic with regard to social concepts. In this investigation, concern will be focused on his mature thinking. Where earlier works are quoted, the attempt is to use that which is in harmony with Niebuhr's later thought.

In the third place, this study is limited by the complex and speculative nature of the inquiry. It is impossible for one person to absorb and to state another's philosophy in any absolute sense. The limitations of language will not permit it and the differences in personal perspective will not allow it. There is always the possibility of misunderstanding and misinterpreting the thought of another. Certainly this is true in an interpretation

of the thought of Niebuhr; there is always the danger that his thought will be modeled to some preconceived pattern. Nevertheless it is possible, by logical inference, extrapolation, and rational analysis to deduce Niebuhr's positions. It is within the framework of this conception that this study is presented.

Definitions

Except in those instances in which specific definitions are given in the text of this investigation, the following definitions are used:[1]

Absolutism: A theory in which fundamental reality is constant, unchanging, fixed, and dependable.

Aesthetics: The nature of the values which are found in the feeling aspects of experience. The conscious search for the principles governing the creation and the appreciation of the beautiful in that creation.

Agnosticism: A theory which holds that the existence of any ultimate reality is unknown and unknowable.

Altruism: A theory which states that the interests of others or of the social group are served by an individual's actions. One achieves selfhood in seeking the best interests of others.

A priori: Knowledge which is self-evident. Prin-

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[1]These definitions have been drawn primarily from J. Donald Butler, Four Philosophies and Their Practice in Education and Religion, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957, pp. 48-54.

ciples which, when once understood, are recognized to be true and do not require proof through observation, experience, or experiment.

Atheism: The theory that there is no ultimate reality in or beyond the cosmos which is Person or Spirit.

Authoritarianism: The theory that states that knowledge is certified by an indisputable authority or source.

Axiology: The branch of philosophy which deals with the general theory of value. The nature of values, the different kinds of value, specific values worthy of possession.

Deism: The theory that God exists quite apart from, and is disinterested in, the physical universe and human beings. But He created both and is the Author of all natural and moral laws.

Dialectical: Pertaining to those forces, substances, or elements which are opposed to each other but which interact upon one another.

Dualistic: Pertaining to the belief that reality is two. Usually these realities are antithetical, as spirit and matter, good and evil. Commonly the antithesis is weighted so that one of the two is considered more important and more enduring than the other.

Education: The processes by which an individual achieves maturity, either through formal instruction or informal experience.

Egoism: The theory that the interests of self should be served by an individual's actions.

Empiricism: The theory that sensation, or sense-perceptual experience, is the medium through which knowledge is gained.

Epistemology: That branch of philosophy which deals with theories of the nature of knowledge.

Essentialism: The belief that basic ideas and skills essential to our culture provide the basis for culture and that these ideas and skills should be taught all alike by time-tested and proved methods.

Ethics: The nature of good and evil. The problems of conduct and ultimate objectives.

Hedonism: The theory that the highest good is pleasure. Hedonist philosophies vary in their conceptions of pleasure, ranging from the intense pleasure of the moment to highly refined and enduring pleasure or contentment.

Idealism: The theory that ultimate reality lies in a realm transcending phenomena.

Macrocosm: A complex element that is a large-scale reproduction of one of its constituents.

Metaphysics: The branch of philosophy which deals with theories of the nature of reality.

Microcosm: An element that is the epitome of a larger unity.

Monistic: Relating to the theory that reality is unified. Reality is one.

Naturalism: A theory denying that an event or object has any supernatural significance; specifically, the doctrine that scientific laws are adequate to account for all phenomena.

Neumenal: Relating to that which is known through thought or intuition rather than through the senses.

Ontology: A branch of metaphysics which deals with a particular theory about the nature of being or the kinds of existence.

Optimism: The theory that existence is good. Life is worth living. The future can be faced with hope.

Pantheism: The theory that all is God and God is all. The cosmos and God are identical.

Particulars: Separate parts of a whole. Individual items or specific substances which relate to a larger whole.

Perennialism: The theory that reality is absolute and is understood in terms of past knowledge.

Perfectionism: The theory that the highest good is the perfection of the self, or self-realization. Perfectionism may also have its social frame of reference, envisioning an ideal social order as the ultimate objective of society.

Pessimism: The theory that existence is evil. Life is not worth living. The future cannot be faced with hope.

Phenomenal: Relating to that which is known through the senses rather than through thought or intuition.

Physical: Of, or relating to, or according with material things or natural laws as opposed to things mental, moral, spiritual, or imaginary.

Polytheism: The theory that spiritual reality is plural rather than a unity. There is more than one God.

Pragmatism: The theory that the meaning of conceptions is to be sought in their practical bearings, that the function of thought is to guide action, and that truth is preeminently to be tested by the practical consequences of belief.

Progressivism: An educational theory which believes that moderate political change and social improvement can be achieved through pragmatic methods in education.

Rationalism: The theory that reason provides the basis for the establishment of truth.

Realism: The theory that reality exists in that which is factual and in harmony with nature and real life.

Relativism: A theory that knowledge is relative to the limited nature of the mind and the conditions of knowing.

Relevant: Relating to that which has a bearing upon the matter at hand.

Religion: A commitment or a devotion to a supernatural force.

Revelation: The process by which God reveals himself to mankind.

Romanticism: A philosophical concept which is characterized by an emphasis upon the imagination and emotions; an exaltation of the primitive and natural man; an appreciation for external nature.

Science: A system or method in which knowledge is attained through study and practice.

Skepticism: The doctrine that true knowledge is uncertain; systematic doubt; suspended judgment.

Spiritual: Relating to that which is of a religious or supernatural nature.

Supernatural: Of or relating to an order of existence beyond the observed universe.

Teleology: Considerations as to whether or not there is purpose in the universe.

Theism: The theory that ultimate reality is a personal God who is more than the cosmos but within whom and through whom the cosmos exists.

Universals: Those elements which include and cover all or a whole collectively or distributively without limit or exception.

Utilitarian: Of or relating to the theory that the useful is the good and that determining considerations of value should be the usefulness of its consequences.

Utilitarianism: The theory that the greatest happiness of the greatest number is the prime objective.

Summary

This Introduction has been an attempt to establish the basis for this study. The problem presents the need for a religiously-oriented philosophy of education. The purpose is to present such a philosophy in the light of Niebuhr's educational thought. Religiously-oriented educational institutions will find the study beneficial as they confront contemporary educational problems. The study is limited in that Niebuhr's writings are not directed specifically toward educational problems. The next step toward understanding the problem is to examine briefly the philosophy of Niebuhr.

CHAPTER II

THE PHILOSOPHY OF REINHOLD NIEBUHR

This study, which examines the philosophy of Reinhold Niebuhr, does not attempt to examine that philosophy in all its ramifications. To examine the total thought of Niebuhr would require considerably more space and time than that which is allotted to this particular study. Rather, this dissertation, since it is to provide a basis for an educational philosophy based upon Niebuhr, will limit its considerations to those aspects of his philosophy that are relevant to an educational philosophy.

In his metaphysics, Niebuhr is confronted with the presence of man's dilemma of the centuries--the reconciliation of the real world with the ideal world--and he continually finds evidence of a supernatural presence in the world of existence while he envisions the natural world as reaching its fruition in infinity. His man, in the form of "Everyman," contains some aspects that are supernatural; his revelation of God, in the form of Jesus Christ, suffers and struggles and finally dies like any other man. In Niebuhr's writings, philosophical and theological speculation

do not follow prescribed forms. There is an overlapping of the supernatural and the natural. The ideal and the real become fused in the central character in the human drama, man.

Since this is true, it becomes apparent that Niebuhr does not spell out his metaphysics in a concise manner. It can be only partially developed through a study of his entire anthropological view. But in order to gain a basic understanding of his views about metaphysics, three areas will be investigated in this study: (1) the nature of God; (2) the nature of man; (3) the relevance of history.

To the person with a naturalistic or scientifically empirical orientation, Niebuhr's concept of God appears to be naive. Many theologians quarrel with him at this point for he does not attempt to define God in any philosophical sense. To him there is no question about the final Absolute; it is God. God exists; God simply is. Supporting the Judeo-Christian concept, he states:

> The will of God is the norm, the life of Christ is the revelation of that will, and the individual faces the awful responsibility of seeking to do God's will amidst all the complexities of human existence with no other authoritative norm but that ultimate one.[1]

Thus, Christ becomes the revelation of God, the end of man's search for God. If man desires to know God, he but needs to study the life of Christ. As Niebuhr does

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, Volume I, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951, p. 58.

attempt to define that revelation and its interrelationships, he gives a further clue to his interpretation of God. "In . . . revelation God becomes specifically defined as Creator, Judge, and Redeemer."[1]

Niebuhr's interpretation of God as Creator, of God as Judge, and of God as Redeemer is paradoxical. When he states that "faith concludes that the same 'Thou' who confronts us in our personal experience is also the source and Creator of the whole world,"[2] he is making what to him is a simple statement of fact. But there are questions. Why would an omnipotently perfect God create an imperfect world? Or to make the problem even more complex: How could an omnipotently perfect God create an imperfect world? Niebuhr answers these questions by simply stating that God is paradoxical. In essence, the answers to perplexing questions concerning the creation are beyond the limits of man's finiteness. But Niebuhr does attempt to draw conclusions by considering the nature of the individuality of God. Just as every person possesses the mark of individuality, Creative God has a particular divine individuality which embraces the whole creation. The paradoxes of creation are resolved in the individuality of God. Although Niebuhr does not state it directly, the theory is that the omnipotent, perfect, individual, creative God is

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[1] Ibid., p. 32.

[2] Ibid., I:142.

paradoxically a permissive God; that is, an imperfect creation is permitted through God's individual omnipotence.

Niebuhr views the second role of God, that of Judge of the universe, as a predicament. If God is divine perfection and upholds the standard of perfection before all the world, how can a perfect God judge an imperfect world with anything less than perfect standards? It is at this point that the revelation of God through Jesus Christ achieves significance. Niebuhr resolves the predicament:

> From the standpoint of Christian faith the life and death of Christ become the revelation of God's character with particular reference to the unsolved problem of the relation of His judgment to His mercy, of His wrath to His forgiveness. Christian faith sees in the Cross of Christ the assurance that judgment is not the final word of God to man; but it does not regard the mercy of God as a forgiveness which wipes out the distinctions of good and evil in history and makes judgment meaningless.[1]

Thus, God's judgment is beyond the understanding of man. Through the Pauline interpretation of Christ man does discover that God's judgment is not subservient to a law of perfection but that there is a form of love and mercy which transcends perfection-judgment and this form of love and mercy is available to man as he errs in the natural world. This concept, however, can come to mean that the judgment of God is nothing but a hollow mockery and that no standard of perfection is demanded, but Niebuhr never permits such a loose interpretation. The mercy of God never frees man from the judgment of God's perfection. Niebuhr clarifies

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[1] Ibid., I:142.

the demand for perfection:

> The whole impact of the Christian doctrine of creation for the Christian view of man is really comprehended in the Christian concept of individuality. The individual is conceived of as a creature of infinite possibilities which cannot be fulfilled within terms of this temporal existence. But his salvation never means the complete destruction of his creatureliness and absorption into the divine. On the other hand, though finite individuality is never regarded as of itself evil, its finiteness, including the finiteness of the mind, is never obscured. The self, even in the highest reaches of its self-consciousness, is still the finite self, which must regard the pretensions of universality, to which idealistic philosophies for instance tempt it, as a sin. It is always a self, anxious for its life and its universal perspectives qualified by its "here and now" relation to a particular body. Though it surveys the whole world and is tempted to regard its partial transcendence over its body as proof of its candidature for divinity, it remains in fact a very dependent self.[1]

God as Redeemer, according to Niebuhr's philosophy, becomes the force which balances man's imperfection with God's perfection. In this role Christ becomes the ultimate, divine revelation of God, and man perceives his Redeemer through the Pauline interpretation of Christ. God the Redeemer becomes the Redeemer through _agape_ or grace; through the pouring out of divine love upon man who does not merit that love and its forgiveness. For God is not only divine judgment; he is also _agape_, the divine, forgiving love. To Niebuhr the recognition of this mystical realm of love and forgiveness becomes one of the marks of Christianity, the application of faith to the _agape_ as revealed by Christ. Niebuhr supports his thesis:

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[1] _Ibid._, I:170.

> The Pauline doctrine really contains the whole Christian conception of God's relation to human history. It recognizes the sinful corruption in human life on every level of goodness. It knows that the pride of sin is greatest when men claim to have conquered sin completely. ("Not of works lest any man should boast.") It proclaims no sentimentalized version of the divine mercy. It is possible to appropriate this mercy only through the Christ, whose sufferings disclose the wrath of God against sin, and whose perfection as man is accepted as normative for the believer, by the same faith which sees in Him, particularly in His Cross, the revelation of the mystery of the divine mercy triumphing over, without annulling, the divine wrath.[1]

God as Redeemer then is discovered in the contradictory nature of the revelation of Christ. As Niebuhr continues:

> Christian faith regards the revelation in Christ as final because this ultimate problem is solved by the assurance that God takes man's sin upon Himself and into Himself and that without this divine initiative and this divine sacrifice there could be no reconciliation and no easing of man's uneasy conscience.[2]

This concept of God is paradoxical because here God the Judge takes on mercy and perfect God takes on imperfection. This paradox becomes necessary for Niebuhr at this point for it is only through this paradoxical situation that man can ultimately relieve his anxious and uneasy conscience. Through the Cross of Christ, God revealed to man just how far his _agape_ can be extended and that the extension of that love reaches to unlimited boundaries and thus establishes the position of God the Redeemer.

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[1] _Ibid._, II:104.

[2] _Ibid._, I:143.

Niebuhr's conception of the nature of man is similarly complex. In any attempt to develop a concept of the nature of man, several alternative courses present themselves. Niebuhr, however, rejects certain aspects of accepted concepts about the nature of man but accepts other aspects of those same concepts. He rejects the Calvinistic concept that all the world is evil but he sees within that concept some segments of validity in that the world is not totally good. He rejects the idealistic concepts of Transcendentalism and involves man in a struggle which exists between the forces of good and evil. But in this conflict, he perceives that man possesses a limited capacity to transcend his position and to better his situation in life if man will exert the personal will to do so.

Niebuhr defines his concept of the nature of man:

> The Christian view of man is sharply distinguished from all alternative views by the manner in which it interprets and relates three aspects of human existence to each other: (1) It recognizes the height of self-transcendence in man's spiritual stature in its doctrine of "image of God." (2) It insists on man's weakness, dependence and finiteness, on his involvement in the necessities and contingencies of the natural world, without, however, regarding this finiteness as, of itself, a source of evil in man. In its purest form the Christian view of man regards man as a unity of God-likeness and creatureliness in which he remains a creature even in the highest spiritual dimensions of his existence and may reveal elements of the image of God even in the lowliest aspects of his natural life. (3) It affirms that the evil in man is a consequence of his inevitable though not necessary unwillingness which involves him in the vicious circle of accentuating the insecurity from which he seeks escape.[1]

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[1] Ibid., I:3.

From this statement it can be ascertained that Niebuhr regards man as being (1) a creature who possesses a touch of the divine in that man is created in the "image of God"; (2) a creature who is a child of nature and who possesses carnality in that he is dependent upon God; and (3) that in the resultant conflict between these two forces within himself, man becomes a "child of sin" in that he will not admit his dependence, and this results in the chief sin, pride. It is Niebuhr's further contention that out of the struggle which evolves from these conflicts, man becomes morally responsible, both personally and socially.

Niebuhr's concept of man in the "image of God" is not clearly delineated. But he does point out rather conclusively that man is not God; neither is man the revelation of God as exemplified in the life of Christ. Man in the "image of God" is the reflection of God. Niebuhr attempts to clarify his understanding of the concept as follows:

> He (man) is made in the "image of God." It has been the mistake of many Christian rationalists to assume that this term is no more than a religious-pictorial expression of what philosophy intends when it defines man as a rational animal. We have previously alluded to the fact that the human spirit has the special capacity of standing continually outside itself in terms of indefinite regression. Consciousness is a capacity for surveying the world and determining action from a governing centre. Self-consciousness represents a further degree of transcendence in which the self makes itself its own object in such a way that the ego is finally always subject and not object. The rational capacity of surveying the world, of forming general concepts and analyzing the order of the world is thus but one

> aspect of what Christianity knows as "spirit." The self knows the world, insofar as it knows the world, because it stands outside both itself and the world, which means that it cannot understand itself except as it is understood from beyond itself and the world.[1]

It would seem fairly accurate to assume from this statement that Niebuhr regards man in the "image of God" as having the capacity to view himself and the world from a position that is beyond and above his physical existence. Man also possesses the innate ability to make a limited transcendence over nature and thus to regard life from a higher position. This can be discerned in man's ability to dream, to plan, and, above all, to reason. This transcendence involves the particular individuality of every person. Niebuhr continues:

> Genuine individuality, embodying both discreteness and uniqueness, is a characteristic of human life. It must consequently be regarded as the product of spirit as well as of nature. Nature supplies particularity but the freedom of the free spirit is the cause of real individuality. Man, unlike animal existence, not only has a centre but he has a centre beyond himself. Man is the only animal which can make itself its own object. This capacity for self-transcendence which distinguishes spirit in man from soul (which he shares with animal existence), is the basis of discrete individuality, for this self-consciousness involves consciousness of the world as "the other."[2]

When Niebuhr undertakes to discuss the theory of man as creature or man as a child of nature, he is not concerned chiefly with the natural instincts of man, but seems to be preoccupied with the struggles which result when the

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[1] Ibid., I:13.

[2] Ibid., I:55.

"image of God" creature and the natural creature are united. However, he is rather emphatic in stating that this does not result in a dualistic concept of man but that man is monistic. In this concept, Niebuhr does not completely evade the issue of man's natural drives and instincts; he merely fails to emphasize them.

As this concept is explored further it leads to man's very real dilemma in life. For man's real problem to Niebuhr, which results in what Niebuhr calls "sin," is not a conflict which breaks out between the limited transcendent and the natural forces in man. He recognizes the struggle, but the struggle is not sin. Neither is sin the result of natural existence. Niebuhr is quite emphatic in one place in stating that the creation, as it came from the hand of the Creator, was good, even though it was not perfect.[1] Rather, sin or evil grows, not out of man's finiteness, but out of man's limited transcendence. The very fact that man is in the "image of God" permits man the privilege of perceiving anticipations and hopes which are above his natural existence. This in itself is not sin, but the freedom which man possesses in connection with this transcendence can lead to sin--the sin of pride. He states:

> The sin of man consists in the vanity and pride by which he imagines himself, his nature, his cultures, his civilizations to be divine. Sin is thus the unwillingness of man to acknowledge his creatureliness and dependence upon God and his effort to make

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[1] Ibid., I:167.

> his own life independent and secure. It is the "vain imagination" by which man hides the conditioned, contingent and dependent character of his existence and seeks to give it the appearance of unconditioned reality.[1]

Thus, sin is not man's finiteness; it is man's failure to recognize and accept his finiteness. In Niebuhr's concept of man and of man's relation to sin, sin is finally the result of a defect in man's will, not in man's finiteness. Man's way out of his predicament is to repent of his self-willfulness and to recognize his need for God. In this, Niebuhr approaches the concept that whatever is of God is right and that man is not to question the divine purposes of God. But man does face the necessity of recognizing God as the final and absolute Force of the universe.

There can be little doubt that Niebuhr's conception of history is metaphysically related to the world. History --past, present, and future--becomes a foundation for reality because through it God's revelation to man becomes more nearly complete. Niebuhr states that the events of history are related to revelation:

> The revelation of God to man is always a two-fold one, a personal-individual revelation, and a revelation in the context of social-historical experiences. Without the public and historical revelation the private experience of God would remain poorly defined and subject to caprice. Without the private revelation of God, the public and historical revelation would not gain credence. Since all men have, in some fashion, the experience of a reality beyond themselves, they are able to entertain the more precise revelation of the character and purpose of God

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[1] Ibid., I:137-138.

> as they come to them in the most significant experiences of prophetic history. Private revelation is, in a sense, synonymous with "general" revelation, without the presuppositions of which there could be no "special" revelation. It is not less universal for being private. Private revelation is the testimony in the consciousness of every person that his life touches a reality beyond himself, a reality deeper and higher than the system of nature in which he stands.[1]

Thus, to Niebuhr, the hand of God has been involved in the course of human history, and the spirit or will of God is involved in present history. Man's present history is man's spiritual relationship or association with God. Since Niebuhr also regards God as Absolute, he also conceives future history as the destiny which God holds for the world and all that is in it. This does not eliminate man's responsibility for the construction of the best possible social and cultural forms, but it does place the final destiny of the world in the hands of God.

Niebuhr's epistemology, like his metaphysics, is not stated in his writings in a clear-cut, succinct manner. As Paul Tillich has stated:

> The difficulty of writing about Niebuhr's epistemology lies in the fact that there is no such epistemology. Niebuhr does not ask, "How can I know?"; he starts knowing. And he does not ask afterward, "How could I know?", but leaves the convincing power of his thought without epistemological support.[2]

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[1] Ibid., I:127.

[2] Paul Tillich, "Reinhold Niebuhr's Doctrine of Knowledge," Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social, and Political Thought, edited by Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956, p. 36.

Nevertheless, Niebuhr's epistemology cannot be lightly dismissed. For there is much searching for that which can be called knowledge in his writing. It is true that he breaks with the traditional philosophical patterns of analysis in his attempt to arrive at a workable plan of epistemology. He perceives life as a mysterious process which cannot be explained solely on a rationalistic basis; it must be explained on a paradoxical basis and this paradoxical basis has often been defined as Niebuhr's plan of the "impossible possibility" of life.

To clarify this matter requires a consideration of his concept of reason. Reason, to Niebuhr, like much of life, is composed of two properties which exist in a unified condition. There is, first of all, the rationalistic, calculating form of reason which man uses in the solving of his concrete problems. Man uses this form of reason in the fashioning of tools which will provide for better means of adaptation to existence. Through this form of reason, man develops new inventions and makes new discoveries. Through it he studies his natural world and the expansive phenomena of his universe. But at this point Niebuhr challenges the traditional concept of man's knowledge, for to him man is not man if his experience ends at the level of rationalistic knowledge. In order for man to be man, the mystery of the paradox must be brought into play and man takes on a limited supernatural role in the utilization of a <u>logos</u>

form of reason. This form of reason provides the incentive within man which drives him ever onward toward an understanding of the meaning of his existence that lies beyond the natural phenomena of life. It is through the use of logos that man creates art, literature, and music. Through the use of logos man keeps his calculating reason alive and searching; through the use of logos man develops his systems of religion. Man, driven ever toward a supernatural search in the natural phenomena, discovers, not necessarily positivistic evidence of a creative force, but at least an attraction toward a creative force, and also discovers within the order of the natural world evidence that will permit him to develop faith in the existence of that force.

A further exploration into Niebuhr's concept of the paradoxical nature of reason relates his theory of the "impossible possibility" to that mystical experience which Christians call faith. Niebuhr develops this study through his understanding of the nature of man and through his interpretation of Jesus Christ. In the first place, identifying Jesus Christ as a God-man is impossible from a rational point of view. One of the distinguishing differences between God and man is that God is infinite; man is finite. If the logos is defined as the mind, the power of creation, the thought of God, then Jesus Christ becomes the incarnation of that idea or thought. Thus, he becomes the "impossible possibility," the logos in a man form. To

Niebuhr, then, man achieves knowledge as he becomes aware of the "impossible possible" nature of Christ. Moreover, man becomes a reflection of the "impossible possibility" as revealed in Jesus Christ as man attains an understanding of the meaning of his existence through the process of faith. Niebuhr states:

> A sane life requires that we have some clues to the mystery so that the realm of meaning is not simply reduced to the comprehensible processes of nature. But these clues are ascertained by faith, which modern man has lost. So he hovers ambivalently between subjection to the "reason" which he can find in nature and the "reason" which he can impose upon nature. But neither form of reason is adequate for the comprehension of the illogical and contradictory patterns of the historic drama, and for anticipating the emergence of unpredictable virtues and vices. In either case, man as the spectator and manager of history imagines himself to be freer of the drama he beholds than he really is; and man as the creature of history is too simply reduced to the status of a creature of nature, and all of his contacts to the ultimate are destroyed.[1]

Niebuhr thus builds his own epistemology and that epistemology is based upon faith. His conception is that man, even though he possesses an awareness of the infinite, is still limited by finiteness, and that man can never know the ultimate. Knowledge and faith become inter-related. Although knowledge is enhanced by empirical research, knowledge does not derive from empirical research alone. If it did so, then man would be limited by naturalistic boundaries. The self possesses a form of freedom that will permit knowledge to attain an understanding of the universal

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Irony of American History, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952, p. 88.

through the application of faith. Without this faith-knowledge, man would constantly revert back to the learning of the past and would not discover new areas of learning. Rational research will not reveal the significant truths and facts about God nor about man; neither will it explain the nobility and the misery of human freedom and existence. Some facts and truths are beyond the realm of method, and man's freedom is of such nature that he can expand his knowledge upon the basis of those facts and truths. The self transcends the reason.

A final statement concerning Niebuhr's concept of epistemology requires a consideration of that which he calls revelation. This includes the manner through which God has revealed himself or his truth to man. To Niebuhr, that revelation is accomplished through the advent of Christ:

> A man appears in history who is at the same time the second Adam and the revelation of divine mercy. The Agape incarnate in his life is the norm of human existence which is approximated but not fully realized in all human history. When it is realized in history it ends upon the Cross, a symbol of the fact that the norm of human history transcends the actual course of history. But the Christian community discerns by a miracle of grace that this death upon the Cross is not pure tragedy. It is also a revelation of the love of a suffering God who takes the frustrations and contradictions and sins of man in history upon and unto himself. That is the only possibility of finally overcoming the corruptions of human freedom which will express themselves in history until the end and more particularly at the end (the Anti-Christ), for human freedom over nature constantly develops and with it the possibilities of both

good and evil.[1]

In conclusion, Niebuhr's concept of epistemology evolves around a paradoxically circular concept of knowledge which ends in Christian faith. To the person who defines epistemology on an empirical basis, this is perhaps empty and meaningless. The knowledge about which Niebuhr writes cannot be defined by such methods. Neither can the experience of faith be established through such methods and experimentation. Niebuhr recognizes the accuracy of this predicament but still accepts the predicament on the basis of the fragmentary nature of life and on the basis of its own reality. In his reply to Paul Tillich's statement that he has no epistemology, he states:

> If it is "supernaturalistic" to affirm that faith discerns the key to specific meaning above the categories of philosophy, ontological or epistemological, then I must plead guilty of being a supernaturalist. The whole of the Bible is an exposition of this kind of supernaturalism. If we are embarrassed by this and try to interpret Biblical religion in other terms, we end in changing the very character of the Christian faith.[2]

In fairness to Niebuhr, it then becomes necessary to point out that he is not content to regard man's knowledge as being enclosed in a cosmos-puppet existence which

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Two Sources of Western Culture," The Christian Idea of Education, edited by Edmund Fuller, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957, p. 237.

[2]Reinhold Niebuhr, "Reply to Interpretation and Criticism," Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social, and Political Thought, p. 433.

looks up and beyond itself to an ultimate knowledge that is impossible because of its idealistic nature. Neither is he content to regard man's knowledge as being circumscribed with man's natural existence. Instead of accepting either of these views, he describes man's knowledge in this circular form and thus attempts to remove some of the paradoxes from it. Starting with essence, man moves to the realm of existence and then, making a full circle, comes back to a supernatural form of essence. Man's ability to think, to reason, to dream, to aspire, to hope, cannot be confined to the limits of man's naturalistic existence. These qualities are inherent in the nature of man and cannot be defined completely within the boundaries of man's environmental development. They start from a source or a relationship with a source that is outside or beyond the natural limits of man. But these attributes are spelled out and experienced and defined within the limits of man's natural existence. Although man can dream dreams and have visions that are beyond his highest forms of ecstasy, he cannot communicate those dreams and visions except within the boundaries of his natural forms of existence. He cannot think nor communicate beyond his thoughts; he cannot express beyond his powers of expression; he cannot see beyond his comprehension. But at this point, Niebuhr's epistemology moves on to complete the circle. For man's thoughts, dreams, and aspirations can move man toward a

recognition of or a sensing of the injustices which exist in this phenomenal world and urge him toward a constant and continuous striving for a kind of justice that does not existentially exist--toward a realization of himself within the realms of the neumenal world. Thus, Niebuhr's concept of epistemology is based upon a form of philosophical thought that can be defined as theistic existentialism.

In most of the writings of Niebuhr, there is a recognition of three laws which guide and motivate man in man's search for the best understanding of value. A study of Niebuhr's axiology requires that his definition and understanding of these laws be examined. These three laws are the law of existence, the natural law of history, and the Christian law of love.

Generally, the law of existence is based upon an existential interpretation of metaphysics and knowledge. Man merely exists; this is the only reality. All other attempts to explain reality are shrouded in the dimmed mists of illusion. Each man, in his own existence, becomes the essence of reality. To the person who is guided by this philosophy, there is no explaining of life nor of the things of life except on an existential level. In its more extreme forms, this philosophy rules out all concepts related to a supernatural force. Man is merely an animal, existing in a natural world. In this philosophy, knowledge becomes man's understanding of his natural existence. He knows

himself and his world by observing himself and his world. He collects all the evidences of life in an empirical fashion and evaluates those evidences in the light of his experience, both historical and contemporary. Value then becomes the creating of the best of all possible worlds, both individually and collectively. Man does not wait for a supernatural force to intervene in the course of human history and create an improved society. In the light of his knowledge, man constructs that improved world through his moral actions and attitudes.

In his evaluation of the law of existence, Niebuhr does not reject the theory of man's existential setting. He recognizes that man is a responsible creature in his natural society and that man does possess some animalistic traits. He also recognizes that empirical research into the nature of man will reveal man's existential nature. But he hastens to add that this does not complete the total nature of man, for man also possesses certain spiritual traits.

Niebuhr makes this interpretation explicit when he objects to Bertrand Russell's views on sex morality by stating that Russell "obviously disregards one important immutable aspect of the human situation, namely, the organic unity between physical impulses and the spiritual dimensions of human personality."[1] Value in the sex act, like value

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, Faith and History, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949, p. 180.

in all of life's experiences, is achieved through a recognition of the unity of physical and spiritual life.

A definition of the natural law concept becomes much more complex. Some would define it in terms of the preceding philosophy. Others would define it in terms of an innate sense of good which is an inherent part of man's individual nature and of his collective society. Niebuhr provides a somewhat loose definition of the term:

> What is usually known as "natural law" in both Christian and Stoic thought is roughly synonymous with the requirements of man as creature and . . . the virtues, defined by Catholic thought as "theological virtues," that is, the virtues of faith, hope, and love, which are the requirements of his freedom and represent the justitia originalis.[1]

Man's highest value, then, grows out of his innate sense of goodness and justice. Historically, this sense of goodness and justice has been the guiding principle which has motivated classical idealism and Christian orthodoxy.

In his analysis and evaluation of the traditionally held natural law concept, Niebuhr is immediately confronted with a dilemma. Since he bases his epistemology on Christian faith, he cannot completely reject either classical idealism or Christian theology. He must accept some elements of both since they have become closely intertwined through the processes of history. Yet he recognizes that both of them have been sifted through the experiences of

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, I:280.

imperfect natural man and that they contain significant weaknesses. Classical idealism, based on the theory of the application of general principles to particular situations, errs in that general principles are not absolutes but are ideals which are shaped by particular situations.[1] Christian theology errs in that it regards love as an absolute while love is actually conditioned by relative relationships.[2]

It is at this point that Niebuhr's dilemma with regard to the natural law concept becomes apparent. He has stated that classical idealism and Christian theology are both subject to error. He has stated that an application of the law of love finally results in relative rules. How then, can he place any credence either in the value of Christianity or in the Church? He overcomes this dilemma by pointing out that there is a difference between existential Christianity and "pure" Christianity. He makes this same observation of the Church. The Church, to him, is "the one place in history where life is kept open for the final word of God's judgment to break the pride of men and for the word of God's mercy to lift up the broken hearted."[3] With all its weaknesses the Church remains the institution

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, "Reply to Interpretation and Criticism," op. cit., p. 435.

[2]Ibid., p. 435.

[3]Ibid., p. 437.

which directs man toward Christianity, and Christianity becomes the force which directs man toward the final value--the will of God.

Niebuhr's concept of the law of love is that this law provides the highest form of value if man will but apply it to his existential setting. However, Niebuhr recognizes that the law of love is idealistic and that in the present social situation, it cannot be attained in its most pure form. Justice becomes the intermediate step which leads toward the application of the law of love. But Niebuhr does regard that form of Christian love as being relevant which results in forms of self-sacrifice in a spiritual way. If man achieves an understanding of Christian love as it was exemplified through the Pauline doctrine of Christ, man will find that he is sacrificing himself to the attainment of some form of human justice. This sacrificing of the self comes only through a submitting of the self to the will of God.

Man's way to value, then, lies not within the province of his existence, but in the realm of salvation through God's grace. Man can approach value by repentance--by a recognition of the will of God and through submission to that will. This submission in turn leads man to a vicarious concern for all of life; such concern has for its prototype the cross of Christ. The cross becomes the symbol of the incarnate law of love--the <u>agape</u> in which individual man,

like the Christ who died upon the cross, will dedicate his life to the fulfilling of God's will on earth.

Niebuhr, moreover, does not leave this concept of value in the realm of ethereal symbolization. He brings it into juxtaposition with a concept of human justice. To him, no man can look long at the cross without becoming concerned about justice for a suffering humanity. And the achievement of justice requires an understanding of some form of equality. Niebuhr's words are:

> Equality stands in a medial position between love and justice. . . . Thus, equality is love in terms of logic. But it is no longer love in the ecstatic dimension. . . . Therefore, equal justice is on the one hand the law of love in rational form and on the other hand something less than the law of love.[1]

In recognizing that equal justice is "something less than the law of love," Niebuhr again is stating that man, in his natural existence, is confronted with the problem of being man. Man cannot attain the ultimate value because the ultimate value is an ever receding ideal or hope that retreats toward elusive supernatural existence. Although some form of equal justice or love may be achieved in the world of natural existence, the final goal of value, the agape, remains beyond the existential grasp of man. In The Irony of American History, Niebuhr points out that American man's situation in the human drama has become ironic in that his very attempts toward altruistic living have led

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, Faith and History, p. 190.

toward a type of national egoism. All of man's efforts to achieve the reality of Christian love as exemplified in the cross have been thwarted by man's inability to understand the total impact of the cross in terms of his own existence. The inner conflict remains constant and Niebuhr does not perceive of ultimate value in the form of ultimate love as ever becoming the possession of man. However, he does offer some rays of hope for a better existence if not for a perfect existence. He is vaguely optimistic as he regards the commingling of experience and dogma. Man, through an understanding of his experience and through an interpretation of dogma in the light of that experience, will be able partially to overcome the inequalities which exist in his world of experience. But this partial overcoming will not guarantee man's complete redemption nor will it come even in a limited fashion, if present methods of political, social, educational, and religious trends continue. For to Niebuhr, redemption or complete fulfillment in life in its final analysis will come only beyond the boundaries of that which is now man's finite condition. But man can hope for some spiritual reflections from that infinite redemption and for the establishment of better forms of realistic justice by placing the destiny of the universe in the hands of the Creator rather than believing that it can be achieved through technocratic education. Man can never achieve perfect justice but he can achieve better forms of justice if

his contact with the Ultimate Source of all life and power is not based upon hypocrisy and if his hope is in that Ultimate Source rather than in his own existence.

In a summary of Niebuhr's philosophy, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. God is the only Ultimate Reality in the universe. Man and man's experiences in history approach reality as they are related to that Reality.

2. Absolute knowledge is not possible in an existential world, but as man uses both knowledge and Christian faith as directive principles, his understanding of the meaning of life will be more relevant and significant.

3. Christian love, as exemplified in the death of Christ upon the cross, provides the highest form of value; however, this absolute value is beyond man's natural experience. Man achieves a limited form of value as he struggles for some form of justice that more nearly approximates the ideal of Christian love.

The next chapter of this study will develop a set of purposes and aims for education, using this plan or system of philosophy as a base.

CHAPTER III

THE PURPOSES AND AIMS OF EDUCATION

Education, in the twentieth century, is faced with the challenge of creating a society in which man enjoys the best experiences for his personal and collective welfare. At the same time education is confronted with the possibility of creating a society in which man will become a puppet of technology. These two conflicting opportunities must lie at the basis of any statement of the aims of education.

To state the educational aims of Niebuhr becomes a challenging task. For Niebuhr, working as a theologically inclined minister, has not addressed himself specifically to educational philosophy. In all of his voluminous writings very little attention is given to the problem of educational philosophy. In a personal letter to Timothy Wayne Rieman, he states: "I have failed to address myself to an explication of education, i.e., to its nature, ends, and methods." Rieman states that Niebuhr, in this letter, expresses his lack of interest in educational methodology and disclaims any competence in this area.[1]

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[1]Timothy Wayne Rieman, A Comparative Study of the Understanding of Man in the Writings of Reinhold Niebuhr and

Niebuhr, however, does investigate the adequacy of our American educational system to the extent that he becomes critical of its product. In The Irony of American History, in which he bewails the fact that our Puritan heritage has ironically produced a hypocritical society, he states:

> The constant multiplication of our high school and college enrollments has not had the effect of making us the most "intelligent" nation, whether we measure intelligence in terms of social wisdom, aesthetic discrimination, spiritual serenity or any other basic human achievements. It may have made us technically the most proficient nation, thereby proving that technical efficiency is more easily achieved in purely quantitative terms than any other value of culture.[1]

But merely to point out the weaknesses and failures of an existing cultural enterprise is not sufficient. If there be a deficiency, that deficiency must be corrected. If our task is not to develop technical experts, what is it? Niebuhr would answer this by stating that the task of education is to develop a creative individual within the culture who is cognizant of his proper relationship with that culture and with the ultimate Force which rules over, not only the culture, but also the individual and the universe. Niebuhr's writings indicate that he thinks that all educational processes should contain some basic forms of teaching

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John Dewey and Some Implications for Education, Unpublished Dissertation, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University, 1959, p. 9.

[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Irony of American History, p. 60.

that create a form of spiritual inquiry and excitement within the life of the student. In a recent essay, he has stated:

> The educational inadequacies of American Protestantism must not blind us to the fact that the program of religious education under public auspices in Europe has not preserved a vital faith on the continent. The picture in Europe is almost universally that of a formal structure of Christian culture while the population is even more secularized than our own. We must profit from both Europe's and our own experience in this matter. If we do we will establish a system of religious education which will transmit the essentials of our religious traditions which can be transmitted by educational technics and yet preserve the religious vitalities which are not transmitted by formal education but by the contagion of individual and collective commitment.[1]

These statements point rather conclusively to the fact that Niebuhr is assured that our present methods of education are not considering man's total situation, since those methods are constructed on certain secular aims. The aims and purposes of education must consider the totality of man's existence and then relate that existence to the supernatural world. This would demand the inclusion of a consideration of the religious experiences of man. With this as a background, the aims and purposes of education according to Niebuhr's philosophy will include the following considerations:

1. The primary purpose of education is to develop within the student an awareness that God is the ultimate

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, "Religion and Education," Religious Education, (November, 1953), XLVIII:372.

Force of the universe. It is true that to fulfill this aim objectively would in all probability become nothing more than totalitarian indoctrination. To teach that God is the ultimate Force, the center of the universe, cannot be accomplished through objective methods. In the first place, it is not possible to present God in an objective manner, for God is experienced subjectively. Furthermore, to present the mystery of God to the students in an authoritarian manner would violate the students' rights to personal and individual free discovery. One of the points that Niebuhr emphasizes repeatedly is that if religion is to have any significance in the life of the individual, it must be an individual as well as a collective experience. Thus, to teach that God is the center of the universe must become a part of the subjective experience of the total educative process. The God-centered atmosphere grows out of the attitudes, the concerns, the ideals, the methodology, and the total social intercourse of the individual teacher, the total educational staff, and the total community. If the student is to search diligently for the final meaning of life, he must encounter a faith in the validity, the reality, and the presence of God through some subjective experience.

2. A second aim of education is to present Jesus Christ as the revelation of God and of the will of God. Again, this aim diametrically opposes the tradition of the

separation of church and state and also presents the problem of freedom in religion as well as in thought. But since the advent of Jesus and the influence of that advent become so significant to Niebuhr, the implications which grow out of that advent provide one of the basic aims of an educative process. To Niebuhr man simply cannot reach his highest fulfillment without having encountered the significance of Christ. It is foolish at this point to debate the question as to whether or not God is an illusion or if Jesus Christ is a myth. Niebuhr does recognize that man's conception of God and of Jesus Christ is limited by the finiteness of man's fragmentary condition, but to Niebuhr the God of history has existed in history from the beginning. The appearance of Jesus Christ upon the earth became God's method for revealing his real nature to man and for providing man with a pattern to guide him as he attempts to define that will in terms of life and its experience.

The theory of the revelation of God in the form of Jesus Christ can be applied more objectively to the aims of education than can the theory of the presence of God in the universe. Through this revelation of God's will in the life of Jesus Christ, including the event of the cross, man comes to realize that life does possess some elements of struggle and that the mature individual must accept his personal responsibility in the alleviating of the pain that is usually associated with that struggle. At the root of life

is struggle for justice and meaning. The cross is the point at which the struggle between perfect love and carnal selfishness meet, and every person finds this struggle inherent in his own life. The presence of the struggle is evident in Niebuhr's following conclusion:

> The Cross is the symbol of love triumphant in its own integrity, but not triumphant in the world and society. Society, in fact, conspired the Cross. Both the state and the church were involved in it, and probably will be so to the end. The man of the Cross turned defeat into victory and prophesied the day when love would be triumphant in the world. But the triumph would have to come through the intervention of God. The moral resources of men would not be sufficient to guarantee it. A sentimental generation has destroyed this apocalyptic note in the vision of the Christ. It thinks the kingdom of God is around the corner, while he regarded it as impossible of realization except by God's grace.[1]

The full implications of this aim in education do not end, however, with the development of an awareness of the eternal struggle to the students. For this presentation alone would undoubtedly lead to a sense of frustration and produce a futile attitude within the lives of the total student body. The individual student who is made aware of the struggle and who grasps no subsequent challenge will certainly find life a chaotic existence. Consequently, Niebuhr sees in the ultimate triumph of Christ through the resurrection a challenge which makes all men responsible for the betterment of society. Man is not only involved in the struggle--he is also responsible for overcoming it, at

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. 82.

least as much as it can be overcome in this world. "We must be responsible to the limits of the power with which God has endowed us,"[1] he states in a late essay. In an earlier work, as Niebuhr assumed the role of prophet by pointing out the dangers which exist in the ironic elements of American history, he placed the weight of this individual and social responsibility upon man:

> Strangely enough, none of the insights derived from this (Christian) faith are finally contradictory to our purpose and duty of preserving our civilization. They are, in fact, prerequisites for saving it. For if we should perish, the ruthlessness of the foe would be only the secondary cause of the disaster. The primary cause would be that the strength of a giant nation was directed by eyes too blind to see all the hazards of the struggle, and the blindness would be induced not by some accident of nature or history but by hatred and vainglory.[2]

In Niebuhr's philosophy of education, then, the need to acquaint the student with the reality of Jesus Christ as the revelation of God to the world is a fundamental aim. The achievement of this aim would not only acquaint the student with God's revelation of himself in history; through the paradoxical nature of Jesus Christ it would also alert man to the real struggle between good and evil in the world. And in the acquainting of the student with the reality of the struggle, it would also involve him in that struggle and indicate to him that at least partially

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, "Our Dependence on God," The Christian Century, (September 1, 1954), LXXI:1034.

[2]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Irony of American History, p. 174.

in the same way that God involved himself in the struggle in the form of Jesus Christ, the student is responsible for involving himself in that struggle as an intellectual and mature being. Thus, in the end, the truly educated and mature student, according to Niebuhr, would be one who is cognizant of the struggle in life and of his seemingly hopeless condition in that struggle, but who still lives in optimistic hope because of his faith and trust in the final triumph of God.

3. The third aim of education is that of confronting the student with the elements of truth through a confrontation-response experience. Within this context education is to confront the student with a sincere understanding of reality and to develop a sincere response within his being. Taking place within the framework of an incomplete society and involving imperfect teachers and incomplete students, this process will be one of inevitable vacillation between experience and transcendence, but in Niebuhr's system it will be honest and sincere.

This confrontation-response aim, in a more specific application, will lead the student, first of all, to experience an exploration-discovery experience. In this experience the search for knowledge will be directed in such fashion that the student will learn to ask the secular and religious questions that are relevant to his experience. In many instances, he will not find the answers within the

framework of social experience and will be forced to press his search out beyond the realms of that social experience. In fact, if he secures ready-made answers for his questions outside of his mystical experience, the chances are that his education is incomplete. He will never completely accept the answers which society gives him until those answers have been tested and proved to be relevant to his understanding of the natural world, to the total and expanding universe, and to his conception of God. Man's exploration and knowledge must go full circle; it starts on a mysterious, supernatural plane, comes down and becomes involved in the struggle for relevant reality in an imperfect world, and finally asks questions which press that reality back into the realms of the mystical. Niebuhr would state that there has been no real exploration-discovery process until the student has gone full circle in his personal search for knowledge, and made that full circle in honesty and sincerity, without any sham, pretense, or hypocrisy.

A second process in this confrontation-response aim is the experience of establishing a relevant transmission of knowledge. Surely all of the knowledge that man has acquired in his search for truth is not to be rejected. It is true that Niebuhr considers much of our cultural heritage irrelevant, but not all. There are certain elements of truth which can be carried over from one generation to an-

other. For instance, the theory that honesty is of axiological merit has been stated, at least verbally, for many generations. However, modern man proclaims the axiological merit of honesty but he fails to see the disclaiming of this age-old ideal in his practices of social and economic existence. History does have some validity in the experience of learning. Niebuhr's interpretation of this process would include the right of the individual to make the best possible choices; in fact, it would emphasize the necessity of the student's making the best possible choice for his own experience. However, Niebuhr's claim for the Christian gospel would emphatically hold that the dogmas of the Christian faith should be presented for the student's personal consideration. The transmission of cultural data must be conducted in a comprehensive fashion so that the student will evaluate that data in the light of his specific needs. Niebuhr substantiates this thesis in his defense of democratic freedom as follows:

> A free society is justified by the fact that the indeterminate possibilities of human vitality may be creative. Every definition of the restraints which must be placed upon these vitalities must be tentative because all such definitions, which are themselves the products of specific historical insights, may prematurely arrest or suppress a legitimate vitality, if they are made absolute and fixed. The community must constantly re-examine the presuppositions upon which it orders its life, because no age can fully anticipate or predict the legitimate and

> creative vitalities which may arise in subsequent ages.[1]

This, of course, would open the door to unrestrained liberalism if there were no systems of control or direct guidance. It would actually uphold the theory that the only transmissive process that is relevant to society today is that form of transmission which fairly well eliminates the data of the past. This unrestrained, liberalistic approach to the ideal of a transmission process, when considered in this way, apart from the total context of experience, is not consistent with Niebuhr's concept of reality. In order to safeguard against this type of anarchistic transmission, after having pled the cause of individual creativity or personal vitality, Niebuhr places certain limitations upon individual freedom. He observes:

> The limitations upon freedom in a society are justified . . . by the fact that the vitalities may be destructive. We have already noted that the justification of classical laissez faire theories was the mistaken belief that human passions were naturally ordinate and limited.[2]

A third experience in the application of the confrontation-response aim is that of restoration. Education is an experience in which the individual is constantly restoring that basic understanding of life that deteriorates through the natural attrition of time and social experience.

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944, pp. 63-64.

[2]Ibid., p. 67.

Niebuhr regards this loss as a significant factor and some provision should be made for a continual restoration in the life of the individual. To Niebuhr this attrition reaches its climax in his concept of man. Man is a rebellious creature, possessing the freedom to rebel against the truth of ultimate God, falling or sinning in that rebellion, and needing some restorative experience that will align him more closely with the values of God's truth. This becomes the experience of repentance.

But repentance is a theological term and does not lend itself to a set of aims for education. Furthermore, it has fallen into such ill repute through its having been used freely by semi-literate, ultra-fundamentalistic groups. Thus, the term restoration is used to designate this constant process of renewal. To define this restorative process in terms of an educational aim means that education seeks to develop within the student the powers of objective self-recognition and self-realization to the degree that he will be able, insofar as he is able, to assume a position outside himself and to discern his need for self improvement. In this restorative experience, the student will come to understand that his ultimate self will be realized and recognized only as he transcends his physical state and reaches a spiritual awareness of the power of God; he will also be aware of the fact that there are instances in which the self-interests conflict with the altruistic interests, and through this latter awareness, he will finally

come to recognize the need for some form of human justice. All of this will necessarily be a continuing experience of restoration through an intellectual interpretation of the total meaning of Christian faith.

Finally, the confrontation-response aim of education is to be achieved through the experience of self-realization. In many ways, the achieving of this experience is closely related to and dependent on the previously discussed experience. Generally, most theories of education state that for a student to achieve some knowledge of his individual potentialities and to utilize those potentialities to their utmost, he must acquire some knowledge of their scope. Logically, Niebuhr would include this experience of self-realization in a list of aims for education. He would even concur with the generally accepted theory that education should direct the student toward an understanding of his own nature that will enable him to be the sort of personality that he is meant to be. Niebuhr would qualify this, however, by stating that the student should endeavor to become the sort of personality that God meant him to be. It is true that Niebuhr's whole thought is permeated with the idea of man's inadequacy in his finite existence. But in a consideration of the two Adams, that is, the first Adam of creation, and the Christ Adam, he does perceive that man can discover a form of self-realization that will result in harmonious living even though it must

be incomplete and fragmentary. Observes Niebuhr:

> The whole character of human history is thus implicitly defined in the Christian symbolism of the "first" and "second" Adam. To define the norm of history provisionally in terms of prehistoric innocency is to recognize that a part of the norm of man's historic existence lies in the harmonious relation of life to life in nature. To define it ultimately in terms of a sacrificial love which transcends history is to recognize the freedom of man over his own history without which historical creativity would be impossible. . . . The "essential," the normative man, is thus a "God-man" whose sacrificial love seeks conformity with and finds justification in the divine and eternal agape, the ultimate and final harmony of life with life.[1]

Niebuhr's philosophy of the nature of man contends that self-realization will lead to a humility before God rather than to an arrogance before man. The student who grasps this concept will find that the real virtues in life are discovered in the striving for rather than in the acquisition of the best understanding of life. The student paradoxically learns to find himself by losing himself in his search for final truth.

4. The fourth major aim or purpose of education, according to Niebuhr's social and religious philosophy, is that of teaching the student the fundamental bases of freedom and justice. To Niebuhr freedom and justice cannot be acquired by either medieval or romantic methods of education, but only through a realistic teaching of the social, political, and religious struggles which are a part of

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, II:80-81.

man's existence.

Niebuhr, in his concept of freedom and justice, presents a pragmatic social concept. Far from being absolutistic, his social and political philosophy can be defined as being relativistic. The individual strives ever to assert his self-freedom and personal individuality. In his social relationships this leads him paradoxically in the direction of being anti-social and selfish; in extreme instances it leads him to grasp excess properties and to refuse to participate in the maintenance of social order. Immediately, strife, tension, and even forms of conflict emerge as several persons become involved in such activity. The only recourse is to discover those plans and procedures in actions that will assure the most relevant justice for the individual and for the state. This calls for a constant and continuous program of research into the various areas of social experience. In supporting this aim of education, that is, the aim to teach the student the bases of freedom and justice, Niebuhr's philosophy states that the student must be taught the relative values of property and the best social uses of property. He must also train himself to work consistently for the preservation of the best possible forms of justice through democratic procedures.[1] Furthermore, Niebuhr believes that the aim of freedom and

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, pp. 117-118.

justice cannot be promoted and maintained in a philosophical system of education short of a teaching of the fundamental dogmas and beliefs inherent in the Christian faith. Man will finally solve his problems, insofar as he can solve them, only as he comes to recognize his dependence on a higher Power. Through submissive acceptance of that Power, man may come to some forms of social and political intercourse that will more nearly proximate the ideals of freedom and justice.[1]

5. The fifth and final aim of education is that of utilizing education in a constant construction of a new culture that is based upon the true nature of the universe and of man within that universe. Niebuhr, although his final hope is in God, does not abandon all existent hope for man and for man's culture in an existential setting. It is true that he perceives the decay and disintegration of all existing cultural heritages and values, but at the same time, he does lift up an interpretation of life and of its potentialities that show some signs of moral and social progress. Such a concept becomes apparent in the bulk of his writings in which he ever avers the reality of struggle. If there were no hope for bettering cultural conditions, he would abandon the entire social and moral struggle and revert to medieval theology. But Niebuhr is ever aware of man's struggle for a better existence. Inherent

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, "Our Dependence on God," The Christian Century, (September 1, 1954), LXXXI:1034-1036.

in this constant struggle is the theory that culture can experience at least some limited forms of progress. In contradictory paradox, Niebuhr observes:

> To the end of history the peace of the world, as Augustine observed, must be gained by strife. It will therefore not be a perfect peace. But it can be more perfect than it is. If the mind and the spirit of man does not attempt the impossible, if it does not seek to conquer or to eliminate nature but tries only to make the forces of nature the servants of the human spirit and the instruments of the moral ideal, a progressively higher justice and a more stable peace can be achieved.[1]

But how can this progressively higher justice and more stable peace be achieved? What is the role of education in that achievement? In order to answer these questions, one must turn to Niebuhr's basic philosophical concepts. At least three basic assumptions must be applied to the present cultural pattern if there is to be any hope for civilization. These applications will then work toward the constant creation of a new culture that will more closely resemble the true nature of man and the nature of the universe.[2]

In the first place, any plan for cultural advancement must recognize that man is created in the image of God; thus, man is a creature of creation and a creator of creation; he cannot be comprehended except in the light of his

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. 256.

[2]Reinhold Niebuhr, Christian Realism and Political Problems, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953, pp. 175-179.

personal identity and of his present existence. Human dignity and freedom demand the free expression of every individual personality. It then becomes the role of education to stimulate and to encourage and to inspire individual aspiration.

A second assumption which must undergird the educational philosophy in the construction of a new culture is the assumption that things and events can be evaluated only in terms of their unique experiences. History is to be a teacher--not a hindrance. Since things and events assume meaning only as they apply to man and to man's experiences, they are significant and meaningful only in a consideration of them within their given context with relation to man's experiences. Thus, with a pragmatic interpretation of the significance of things and events, the way is opened toward a new life or a new culture based on man's self-giving rather than on his self-seeking. Niebuhr envisions the new life as follows:

> A new life is possible for those who die to the old self, whether nations or individuals, at any time and in any situation. But on the positive side there are also special words to be spoken to an age beside timeless words. The new life which we require collectively in our age is a community wide enough to make the world-wide interdependence of nations in a technical age sufferable; and a justice carefully enough balanced to make the dynamic forces of a technical society yield a tolerable justice rather than an alternation of intolerable tyranny. To accomplish this purpose some of our preconceptions must go and the same law of love which is no simple possibility for man or society must be enthroned as yet the final standard of every institution, structure, and system of justice. . . . A tolerable community

> under modern conditions cannot be easily established; it can be established at all only if much of what has been regarded as absolute is recognized to be relative; and if everywhere men seek to separate the precious from the vile and sharply distinguish between their interests and the demands which God and the neighbor make upon them.[1]

The third assumption that is to be a basis for the forming of a new culture is that God is the ultimate force of the universe. If all history is relative and man is a free creature with certain carnal inclinations, the obvious result will be chaos if man does not attach himself to absolute Reality through his faith in the presence of God and thus experience that Reality in performing the will of God. The new life will be new because it will be of God; the new culture will be new because it will be the will of God. This becomes the heart of the social implications of the Christian gospel; it becomes the basis on which education, according to the thinking of Niebuhr, could build a new culture.[2]

Upon the basic foundation of these three premises, the educational structure of society, following the tenets of Niebuhr's philosophy, permits the emergence of a new culture. It will be a constantly emerging culture, not fixed and absolute in its concepts and in its forms, but flexible and continuously developing in a pragmatic fashion. It will be a searching, sweating, striving culture,

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[1] Ibid., pp. 114-115.

[2] Ibid., pp. 110-111.

in which individuals are ever struggling against the hindrances of their egocentric selves and also against the vicissitudes of a fragmentary society and an unpredictable nature. This new culture will be constructed around the premise that the power of God is relevant to man's existence, and when the power of God becomes a decisive factor in man's thinking and in his conduct, the egocentric will to power which leads to tyrannical domination wanes. In short, the culture that will grow out of a pragmatic application of that which Niebuhr calls the power of God will be a part of man's existence.

This new culture will never attain the plains of Utopia, but it will evidence more meaningful forms of love and justice than are exhibited in today's culture. This expression of love and justice will be accomplished inasmuch as man recognizes the ultimate power of God and utilizes that power in his understanding of the many areas of social experience.

In this chapter five major aims of education have been presented: (1) to develop within the student an awareness of God; (2) to acquaint the student with the Revelation of God; (3) to confront the student with elements of truth; (4) to teach the student the fundamental bases of freedom and justice; and (5) to involve the educational structure in the construction of a new culture. In the next chapter these aims will be applied to the development of a curriculum.

CHAPTER IV

THE CURRICULUM

The curriculum is the tool by which the educational institution achieves its desired purposes. The effectiveness of the school's program, then, is dependent upon an intelligent use of the curriculum in an effort to reach those purposes. That there need be some rather drastic alterations in current curriculum practices becomes evident in Niebuhr's critical estimation of the achievements of current forms of education. He states this dissatisfaction, not specifically with curriculum procedures, but with the total American social scene which is influenced by the schools. Since his philosophy is based on the presuppositions of the Christian faith, his criticism is directed toward the lack of religious fervor, the lack of sincerity, and the evidence of hypocrisy which are prevalent in today's society. He critically states:

> America is at once the most religious and the most irreligious of modern industrial or technically efficient nations. It is most religious in the sense that a larger number of its citizens participate in the life of the churches and are related to them by something more than formal allegiance, as compared with the European nations, in most of which not much more than ten percent of the population claims any significant

> religious loyalty. It is the most secular of modern nations in the sense that the characteristic credos of secular liberalism have permeated the culture to a larger degree and have influenced even religious communities. As a result American Christianity is characterized by quasi-secular viewpoints to a larger degree than European Christianity. In fact the American culture could be described as a spectrum of colors in which the specific Christian faith and the definitely anti-Christian secularism of the European culture is replaced by a variety of quasi-Christian secular and quasi-secular Christian viewpoints.[1]

In this statement Niebuhr is not advocating a religious experience, and by inference an educational system like those found in Europe. For in this same discussion he goes on to disapprove of the educational products of both America and Europe. He criticizes European forms of religious education, stating that the institutions have failed to preserve a vital faith on the continent. His criticism of the American culture and obviously of the educational structures which support it, is that in America the sectarianism of Protestantism has tended to produce a synthetic approach to life. So while the American educational system is producing synthetic personalities, the European educational systems are producing lethargic personalities. Niebuhr is actually criticizing all forms of educational endeavor in the nations of Western civilization.

By 1936 he was beginning to perceive that the heart of man's problem was deeper than an intellectual problem and that man was a sinner as well as an ignorant creature.

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, "Religion and Education," op. cit., p. 371.

That he never completely rejected rational education is validated by his later statement:

> The development of reason and the growth of mind makes for increasingly just relations not only by bringing all impulses in society into reference with, and under the control of, an inclusive social ideal, but also by increasing the penetration with which all factors in the social situation are analyzed.[1]

But the use of reason alone, according to Niebuhr, is not sufficient. It is necessary, but alone it will not guarantee man a meaningful existence. In order for man to achieve a meaningful existence, he must become cognizant of the real struggle in life. By 1936 the reality of that inevitable struggle in life, which to Niebuhr is a struggle between good and evil, had become fixed in his mind. At this time he became opposed to the optimistic hope of the liberal and progressive movements. Man, if he is ever to experience any degree of hope in the conflict, must have recourse to some Power beyond his natural existence; he must hope through the experience of religious faith. As Niebuhr expresses this hope:

> The history of religion is proof of the efficacy of religious insights in making men conscious of the sinfulness of their preoccupation with self. There is nothing that modern psychologists have discovered about the persistence of egocentricity in man which has not been anticipated in the insights of the great mystics of the classical periods of religion.[2]

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. 32.

[2]Ibid., p. 141.

In this way, Niebuhr has added a deeper and more penetrating dimension to the pragmatic movement, the dimension of a mystical Absolute. Instead of making experience an absolute, as most pragmatists have tended to do, Niebuhr has made the final Absolute the presence of God. It is true that man's knowledge of God is relative and can be based only on pragmatic evaluations, but God is still the Force beyond the universe and is the only Absolute. Robert E. Fitch has analyzed Niebuhr's relationship with the pragmatic movement in these words:

> So far as Niebuhr's relation to the general history of philosophy is concerned, we may place him squarely in the great American tradition of pragmatism. He is the grateful heir of William James and the understandably uncomfortable colleague of John Dewey. It was William James who ripped open the bandbox universe to give us a pluralistic universe, and to affirm the potency therein of man's free will. It was John Dewey who put pragmatism under the disciplines of experimental science, and celebrated the glories of freed intelligence. It is Reinhold Niebuhr who has given pragmatism breadth and depth and height and vision, richness and subtlety and scope of texture, by placing it within the heroic perspective of the Christian faith. Niebuhr cannot accept James's idolatry of the human intelligence. Niebuhr knows only one absolute: the God revealed in Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, for all the differences in sensitivity and in insight, these three men belong together, in methodology and in metaphysics, like variations upon a common theme.[1]

Niebuhr, as he evaluates Fitch's work through an analysis of religious naturalism, has given his personal, later thinking on the subject of empiricism:

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[1]Robert E. Fitch, "Reinhold Niebuhr's Philosophy of History," Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social, and Political Thought, pp. 308-309.

> The only trouble with the picture is that all significant truth and facts about man and God, about the nobility and the misery of human freedom, and about the judgment and mercy of God, are left out of the picture. Thus, culture which prides itself on its "empiricism" obscures and denies every "fact" which does not fit into its frame of meaning. The frame of meaning is determined on the one hand by the concept of "nature" or the "temporal process," and on the other hand by the so-called "scientific-method" which ironically enough is meant to ascertain the "facts." Unfortunately, there are some "facts" which escape the "method." The irrationality of this cult of "Reason" is that it merely denies the reality of any fact which does not fit into its conception of rational coherences.[1]

In analyzing Niebuhr's evaluation of contemporary curriculum problems, with the attempt to discern what he would consider fallacious, one must quickly note that his evaluation, growing out of his dialectical nature, is one of both approbation and condemnation. Unlike many contemporary theologians who criticize current educational practices without any marks of qualified approval, Niebuhr finds certain aspects of them to be commendable and justifiable. He presents one of his best evaluations of American education in Moral Man and Immoral Society:

> . . . The ambition of socially minded educators (is) to save society by increasing the social and political intelligence of the general community through the agency of the school. One of the most prominent and most imaginative of these leaders in America, Professor Harold Rugg, states the social ideal of education in these words: "The new secondary curriculum will introduce youth frankly and courageously to the difficulties of experimenting with democracy in a country of large territory, of varied climate, of heterogeneous population and

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, "Reply to Interpretation and Criticism," op. cit., pp. 448-449.

> increasing urbanization. It will reveal the tendency of dominant economic classes to control local state and national government. . . . Correspondingly the creative imagination of our secondary school youth will be released and set at the task of helping to erect a nation-wide planned regime, in which the expert functions of government are performed by trained and experienced specialists in these fields." While this hope of the educators, which in America finds its most telling presentation in the educational philosophy of Professor John Dewey, has some justification, political redemption through education is not as easily achieved as the educators assume.[1]

Niebuhr does not regard a socially ambitious educational program as completely unfounded and without justification. At the same time he does state that "political redemption is not as easily achieved as the educators assume." Now, the questions become: If it is not as easily achieved as they assume, how can it be achieved? What are the inherent weaknesses which hinder its achievement? In answer to these questions one major weakness that Niebuhr sees in the assumptions of current pedagogy is its failure to find substantial basis in a form of ultimate Reality. In further analyzing his criticism and the questions which are related to it, it becomes apparent that the criticism can be regarded from two points of view. In the first place, ultimate Reality to Niebuhr is God; in the second place, our American bourgeois society has ironically placed its faith in material possessions and in material power. This is another way of stating that Niebuhr believes

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, pp. 211-212.

America has replaced the reality of God with the worship of power and material possessions.

In a consideration of the first part of his criticism, that is contemporary man's failure to recognize the reality of God, Niebuhr feels that the contemporary concept of reason has subdued man's inner instinctual awareness of the God of the universe. He remarks, "Religious faith cannot be simply subordinated to reason or made to stand under its judgment. (When this is done) reason asks the question whether the God of religious faith is plausible. . . . Thus reason makes itself God."[1] To Niebuhr this becomes absurd because, to him, the naivete of the Christian faith can alone point man in the direction of the ultimate Reality. He criticizes current philosophies in that they fail to consider the possibilities of faith, which, in his philosophy, eventually leads to God. He emphasizes this point:

> Life has a center and source of meaning beyond the natural and social sequences which may be rationally discerned. This divine source and center must be discerned by faith because it is enveloped in mystery, though being the basis of meaning. So discerned, it yields a frame of meaning in which human freedom is real and valid and not merely tragic.[2]

Thus, Niebuhr would first of all state that our current curriculum procedures have emphasized a form of materi-

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, II:165-166.

[2]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Irony of American History, p. 168.

al reality and have failed to accept the presence of God in the universe. Because of this, students, who later become the adults of society, find life to have very little meaning beyond the realms of their day by day existence. To Niebuhr this makes life a tragic existence instead of a hopeful experience. In considering the possibilities of life, he remarks:

> If we examine any individual life, or any social achievement in history, it becomes apparent that there are infinite possibilities of organizing life from beyond the center of the self, and equally infinite possibilities of drawing the self back into the center of the organization. The former possibilities are always the fruit of grace though frequently it is the "hidden Christ" and a grace which is not fully known which initiates the miracle. They are always the fruits of grace because any life which cannot "forget" itself and which makes brotherhood the instrument of its "happiness" or its "perfection" cannot really escape the vicious circle of egocentricity.[1]

This failure on the part of society and education leads to the second part of Niebuhr's criticism, namely, that current American society has tended to make possessions and property its source of reality instead of looking on to the beyond for God. In considering this aspect of our culture, Niebuhr has turned to some forms of socialism, hoping that it might possibly lead to a partial assuagement of man's physical dilemma through the establishing of some forms of justice based upon the ideal of brotherhood. For a period of time he studied Marxism and looked to it for

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, II:123.

illumination but soon rejected it. That the oppressiveness of the injustices which have ironically developed in our bourgeois democracy are still present, however, is evident in his accusation:

> The crowning irony . . . about materialism lies in the tremendous preoccupation of our own technical culture with the problem of gaining physical security against the hazards of nature. Since our nation has carried this preoccupation to a higher degree of consistency than any other we are naturally more deeply involved in the irony. Our orators profess abhorrence of the communist creed of "materialism" but we are rather more successful practitioners of materialism as a working creed than the communists, who have failed so dismally in raising the general standards of well being.[1]

In a consideration of the ironical hypocrisy or ignorant insincerity, Niebuhr's following comment can be applied more specifically to education:

> Our modern commercial civilization mixes Christian ideals of personality, history, and community with characteristic bourgeois concepts. Everything in the Christian faith which points to ultimate transcendent possibilities is changed into simple historical achievements. The religious vision of a final realm of perfect love in which life is related to life without the coercion of power is changed into the pretension that a community, governed by prudence, using covert rather than overt forms of power, and attaining a certain harmony of balanced competitive forces, has achieved an ideal of social harmony.[2]

Niebuhr would break rather sharply with the pragmatic movement at this point. He does not concur in the belief that man's daily experience provides the basis for

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Irony of American History, p. 7.

[2]Ibid., p. 12.

an interpretation of life. In applying this idea to education, he states that ignorance is not the sole cause for the injustices and inequities which grow out of a materialistic interpretation of life. The schools, as they are conducted today, cannot solve the basic problems of man's existence because they do not consider the total man. The schools, moreover, are dominated by powerful pressure groups and these groups become the real hindrance to the establishment of a society in which justice prevails.[1] The true problem lies in the fact that man, individually, as well as socially, fails to recognize that the real detriment to social progress is egocentricity which becomes to Niebuhr the basis of evil. Any real and enduring solution to the problem will come only as this condition is recognized by the individual and by the society, and as ultimate perfection is recognized as a part of the infinite and is associated with that final reality which is God. An overly optimistic society which places its hope in its own efforts to solve its problems by the elimination of ignorance will find that its hope fades into nothingness and its structure will tend toward chaos.

Niebuhr, however, with his pragmatic approach to social problems, does not eliminate the hope for social progress. He does look for limited forms of progress as man becomes aware of his proper relationship with God and

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[1] Ibid., p. 213.

thus in turn to his fellowman. Niebuhr even states that goodness might grow out of the present chaotic struggle, for this struggle might force man to recognize the true significance of that eternal value, love. He sees in the pragmatism that has characterized American history a possibility for keener recognition of true reality and the possible emergence of a social structure in which justice will more nearly prevail. Optimistically, he observes:

> The fluidity of the American class structure is primarily a gift of providence, being the consequence of a constantly expanding economy. But this good fortune has been transmitted into social virtue insofar as it has not only left the worker comparatively free of social resentments but also tends to make the privileged classes less intransigent in their resistance to the rising class.[1]

But Niebuhr's ringing challenge to education becomes clear. The problem which education faces is the problem of ascertaining the real causes for and the real character of man's dilemma. Niebuhr's hope is that curriculum patterns will open those avenues in which human justice and human freedom are not violated but which also open doors which lead to a more spiritual understanding of man and of man's problems.

The second fallacious assumption that Niebuhr finds in current curriculum procedures is a misconception of the true meaning of fragmentariness; that is, these procedures are constructed on the premise that fragmentariness in know-

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[1] Ibid., p. 103.

ledge consists of unrelated bits of experience and that this fragmentariness can be overcome by producing a unified experience. However, it should be pointed out that as he views the whole problem of the fragmentary nature of life, his charge against the current educational practices is not as violent as is that of many of the present theological educators, and that his concept of fragmentariness is constructed around a focus that is only similar to theirs. For wherein they criticize contemporary education on the grounds that there is little unified relationship between the various curriculum offerings and thereby infer that this fragmentariness will be conquered through the process of making religion the center of all education, Niebuhr conceives fragmentariness as man's inability to grasp the total truth. Instead of making religion the cohesive force which develops the unified man and unified society, Niebuhr makes man's utter dependence on God and man's submission to that dependence the illuminating force which teaches man how to live with his fragmentary condition. In this concept, Niebuhr is nearer to the philosophy of pragmatism than he is to the modern concepts of religious education, for he points toward a form of successful living with the problems of life rather than to a dark pessimism or to utter cynicism. Yet, in his final analysis, he rejects both patterns of thinking as the final means toward the end goal of man's self-realization.

In order to discuss Niebuhr's concept of the problem of fragmentariness, it needs to be pointed out that man is not aware of the total problem. For Niebuhr states:

> The hope that fragmentary portions of the truth will finally be pieced together into the whole truth, or the belief that intellectual intercourse is a kind of competition in which the truth will finally prevail against falsehood, are admirable provisional incentives to tolerance. They are, moreover, provisionally and relatively true.
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> A typical modern statement of this belief and hope is to be found in Professor John Dewey's A Common Faith. According to Dewey the divisive elements in human culture are vestigial remnants of outmoded religious prejudices which will yield to the universal perspectives which modern education will inculcate. This education will create practical unanimity among men of good will.
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> The difficulty with this solution is that it is only a provisional and not a final answer to the question of the relation of the "whole truth" to the fragmentary truths of history. Obviously this issue is a segment of the whole problem of time and eternity.[1]

In his further rejection of this idealistic solution to the problem of fragmentariness, Niebuhr points out that at the very time that Dewey was writing A Common Faith, new divisive elements of society which drove society even more into fragmentariness were emerging.

Niebuhr, then, has again turned to his paradoxical interpretation of life. Life is fragmentary because it does not have the "whole truth" except in principle. Curriculum experiences are fragmentary, not because they fail to show an intrinsic relationship, but because they fail to

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, II:237.

portray a final relationship to God through his revelation. They are fragmentary in that they are broken away from the final hope and revelation of Jesus Christ as manifest through his life, his teachings, and his resurrection. Man's experience of educating his descendants, like the experiences of adapting himself to the world and to society, will always be fragmentary because man himself is but a fragmentary creature. But Niebuhr believes that man's fragmentariness can be used to illuminate man's basic understanding of himself and of his God. To Niebuhr, the truly creative curriculum is one in which all the parts are eventually unified in a spiritual way through a comprehension of the will of God and in a manner which utilizes its very weaknesses to strengthen man's faith in God's ultimate truth.

A third inadequacy Niebuhr sees in current curricular theory and practice is too much presupposition. It is a common complaint among the religiously inclined educators to state that current educational practices are too empirical. According to this criticism, modern education is concerned primarily with the gathering of factual data and observing those data in an objective manner. Although many of these educators look upon facts as important, they argue that what is generally called a fact in education is not a fact at all; it is merely man's interpretation of the data of his contemporary experience. Similarly, these educators

state that it is impossible to be objective in any real sense of the word. Every consideration of phenomena must be strained through the personality of the viewer. Every objective view of every phenomenon carries within itself inherently the world view of the observer and also reflects his interpretation of history.

In a general way, Niebuhr concurs with these assertions. This becomes apparent in his attack on John Dewey. Although he respected Dewey in many ways and held admiration for Dewey's position in contemporary thought, it was his contention that Dewey trusted the scientific method too much and failed to recognize the magnitude of man's predicament by simply attributing the anti-social conduct of man to the cultural lag; that is, to the failure of social science to keep abreast with technology.[1] Niebuhr spells out this criticism specifically when he states:

> No one expresses modern man's uneasiness about his society and complacency about himself more perfectly than John Dewey. One half of his philosophy is devoted to an emphasis upon what, in Christian theology, is called the creatureliness of man, his involvement in biological and social processes. The other half seeks a secure place for disinterested intelligence above the flux of process; and find it in "organized cooperative inquiry." Not a suspicion dawns upon Professor Dewey that no possible "organized inquiry" can be as transcendent over the historical conflicts of interest as it ought to be to achieve the disinterested intelligence which he attributes to it. Every such "organized inquiry" must have its own particular social locus. No court of law, though supported by age-old traditions of freedom from party

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, I:110.

> conflict, is free of party bias whenever it deals with issues profound enough to touch the very foundation of the society upon which the court is reared. Moreover, there can be no "free cooperative inquiry" which will not pretend to have achieved a more complete impartiality than is possible for human instruments of justice. The worst injustices and conflicts of history arise from these very claims of impartiality for biased and partial historical instruments. The solution at which Professor Dewey arrives is therefore an incredibly naive answer to a much more ultimate and perplexing problem than he realizes.[1]

For Niebuhr, three evils follow from this view: first, biological determinism; second, a type of bourgeois optimism about man's sense of security in the world; and third, a misconception of man's final destiny.

With regard to biological determinism, contemporary educational theories regard man as a totally animalistic creature who reacts to the forces of nature in the same fashion that other animals react. To Niebuhr, this is fallacious, for in his totality, man cannot be compared with other animals. To regard the total man in an animalistic fashion is to regard him incompletely; this type of thinking does not go far enough; it fails to consider man's greatest attribute--his spirituality. Niebuhr observes:

> Every biological fact and every animal impulse, however obvious its relation to the world below man, is altered because of its incorporation into the human psyche. The freedom of man consists not only, as it were, of the windows of mind which look out from his second story; but also of vents on every level which allow every natural impulse a freedom which animals do not know. . . . Man has difficulty in controlling the vital force of the sex impulse, not because nature endowed it with an impetus beyond

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[1] Ibid., I:111.

> the requirements of human life; on the contrary the sex impulse is controlled with difficulty because it is not embedded in a total order of natural process in man as in animal life.[1]

Similarly, Niebuhr's philosophy perceives in contemporary curriculum theories the fallacious view that man is a secure being in his world and that he can confront the world with a bland, bourgeois optimism. The truth is that man is a very insecure creature and his naive optimism can be quickly dispelled with the realization of his own position as a sinner. Much of the contemporary curriculum completely ignores the fact that man is inherently a sinner, but Niebuhr will not forget it. He warns:

> Modern man has an essentially easy conscience; and nothing gives the diverse and discordant notes of modern culture so much harmony as the unanimous opposition of modern man to Christian conceptions of the sinfulness of man. The idea that man is sinful at the very centre of his personality, that is, in his will, is universally rejected. It is this rejection which has seemed to make the Christian gospel simply irrelevant to modern man, a fact which is of much more importance than any conviction about its incredibility.[2]

Niebuhr's remedy for this fallacious concept is that any life or all human life is incomplete until it has fought the struggles of life within the context of the Christian faith and therein won the temporal victory that offers temporary assuagement to man in his conflicting predicament. Niebuhr paradoxically presents the dialectical view:

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[1] Ibid., I:40.

[2] Ibid., I:23.

> The Christian doctrine of original sin with its seemingly contradictory assertions about the inevitability of sin and man's responsibility for sin is a dialectical truth which does justice to the fact that man's self-love and self-centeredness is inevitable, but not in such a way as to fit into the category of natural necessity. It is within and by his freedom that man sins. The final paradox is that the discovery of the inevitability of sin is man's highest assertion of freedom. The fact that the discovery of sin invariably leads to the Pharisaic illusion that such a discovery guarantees sinlessness in subsequent actions is a revelation of the way in which freedom becomes an accomplice of sin. It is at this point that the final battle between humility and human self-esteem is fought.[1]

A fourth fallacious assumption which seems to weave its way into contemporary curriculum theories is the assumption that man's security is an end toward which education strives. To many educators and students the final reward for educative effort is a utilitarian one. A student should be able to "sell" his education in a way that will give him some form of personal security. With this assertion, the problem of defining security becomes the task of the educator and, once it has been defined, the educational experiences will reflect this definition in all of the educational activities.

In order accurately to analyze and evaluate Niebuhr's concept of man's real sense of security, his concept of man's insecurity needs to be reviewed. Niebuhr states that man's greatest hindrance to security is his personal anxiety. Niebuhr uses the word anxiety repeatedly in his discussion of man's freedom. It is significant that

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[1] Ibid., I:26.

at this point he avoids the word homelessness--the word that is used by so many contemporary religious existentialists. Niebuhr's pragmatic interpretation of man's social condition evidently rejects the inferred incapacity of man when man is referred to as a homeless creature. To Niebuhr, the world as it exists is evidently man's home for as long as he lives in it. To be homeless would infer that man's goal is to reach home--to avoid becoming involved in the bitter struggle which attempts to better man's welfare in this world and to seek a home that is beyond the realm of practical experience. In spelling out the source or the goal of man's security, Niebuhr states:

> In short, man, being both free and bound, both limited and limitless, is anxious. Anxiety is the inevitable concomitant of the paradox of freedom and finiteness in which man is involved. Anxiety is the internal precondition of sin. It is the inevitable spiritual state of man, standing in the paradoxical situation of freedom and finiteness. Anxiety is the internal description of the state of temptation. It must not be identified with sin because there is always the ideal possibility that faith would purge anxiety of the tendency toward sinful self-assertion. The ideal possibility is that faith in the ultimate security of God's love would overcome all immediate insecurities of nature and history.[1]

It becomes obvious that among contemporary concepts of security, Niebuhr's concept more closely parallels that of pragmatism. To romanticism one of the final ends in life is security through the release of individuality. To the authoritarian, one of the final ends in life is the

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[1] Ibid., I:183.

achievement of security through the authority of dogma. For the pragmatist, as the individual develops better methods in the direction and control of knowledge, security will come as a by-product of relevant experience and discovery. For Niebuhr, as the individual develops greater faith in the relevance of God's love, personal security will be the inevitable result. But it should be noted that Niebuhr breaks with authoritarian religious dogma here and makes the faith in the relevance of God's love a personal matter and not a prescribed part of the church's authority. Thus, for both Niebuhr and Dewey, as a representative of pragmatism, the attainment of security becomes an individually pragmatic affair; to Dewey it is the product of enlightened experience; to Niebuhr it is the product of an enlightened faith. But neither of them would say that the achievement of a sense of security should be the end of education. In actuality, they infer just the opposite. Education should disturb the individual's sense of security to the extent that he will study his particular situation and the events of life, to the extent that he will attempt to find better means for producing higher forms of human experience. To both Niebuhr and Dewey, one end of education should be, not to provide the answers to life's problems, but to ask the questions that will challenge the student to an active participation in the affairs of life.

A final fallacious assumption which Niebuhr finds

in contemporary curriculum theory is undue emphasis upon physical experience. To the adherent of scientism, man's destiny is closely related to his empirical discoveries of the realities of nature. Even John Dewey's experimentalism places the essence of man's destiny within the realm of an enlightened search for methods of control. In this regard Dewey states:

> With the surrender of unchangeable substances having properties fixed in isolation and unaffected by interactions, must go the notion that certainty is attained by attachment to fixed objects with fixed characters. For not only are no such objects found to exist, but the very nature of experimental method, namely definition by operations that are interactions, implies that such things are not capable of being known. Henceforth the quest for certainty becomes the search for method of control; that is, regulation of conditions of change with respect to their consequences.[1]

But to Niebuhr no theory which evades man's spirituality completes man's final destiny. None of them goes far enough. For to him man's final destiny becomes a spiritualized form of mystical transcendence and, although it does not end in a naive conception of streets of gold and pearly gates, it does reach its final fruition in a naive form of Christian faith. This is evident as he remarks:

> . . . It is possible to make a truer analysis of human destiny upon the basis of a religious faith which has disavowed human pride in principle, though it must be assumed that any particular Christian analysis will not exhibit in fact what it has disavowed in principle. But if the Christian faith really finds its ultimate security beyond all the

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[1]John Dewey, The Quest for Certainty, New York: Minton, Balch and Company, 1929, p. 128.

> securities and insecurities of history; if it is really "persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is Jesus Christ our Lord," it may dissuade men from the idolatrous pursuit of false securities and redemption in life and history. By its confidence in an eternal ground of existence which is, nevertheless, involved in man's historical striving to the very point of suffering with and for him, this faith can prompt men to accept their historical responsibilities gladly. From the standpoint of such a faith history is not meaningless because it cannot complete itself; though it cannot be denied that it is tragic because men always seek prematurely to complete it.
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> Thus wisdom about our destiny is dependent upon a humble recognition of the limits of our knowledge and our power. Our most reliable understanding is the fruit of "grace" in which faith completes our ignorance without pretending to possess its certainties as knowledge; and in which contrition mitigates our pride without destroying our hope.[1]

Man's destiny, then, becomes highly significant to Niebuhr for it contains the essence of a spiritual experience which will be highly influential to man in his physical experience. In this conception Niebuhr is utilizing all the resources of the past, including the Greek and Hebrew influences on present day culture. After using Greek rationalism and pressing it to its limit, he turns to Hebrew mysticism. The understanding and utilization of this Hebrew mystical experience becomes a vital part of a learning process for through it, the individual's total world view, including his view of himself, is affected. Niebuhr

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, II:320-321.

suggests that any curriculum which does not include at least some reference to this spiritual concept of man's destiny is operating on the fallacious assumption that man's destiny is achieved through physical experience alone.

There is no way of determining with any degree of exactness what Niebuhr's curriculum should accomplish for, as noted earlier, Niebuhr does not claim to be a professional educator but one who has made his contribution to history in religious realms and he has not fully clarified his educational concepts. But he has left a clue to his understanding in his essay, "The Ethics of Jesus and the Social Problem." Here he discusses ethics in American culture and applies the teachings of Jesus to that problem. He states:

> We believe that it makes some difference whether a privileged group makes a stubborn and uncompromising defense of its special privileges or whether it has some degree of social imagination and tries to view its privileges in the light of the total situation of a community. Education ought to create some of that social imagination, and insofar as it does, it will mitigate the class struggle or the social struggle between races.[1]

Although Niebuhr is here dealing with the specific problem of social ethics, this statement can be applied as his interpretation of the curriculum. Education should create forms of social inquiry that will lead to social

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Ethics of Jesus and the Social Problem," Religion in Life, (Spring, 1932), I:207.

imagination. There should develop within the student an understanding of the meaning of justice and a comprehension of how to achieve it. In order to accomplish this end, the objective of the natural sciences shall be the discovery of all possible data illuminating the meanings of life. The objective of the humanities shall be the interpretation of those findings in the light of aesthetic experience. The objective of the social sciences shall be the application of those findings to the common experiences of social intercourse. The objective of religion shall be the utilization of those findings in a personal and social definition of the meaning of life.

There are those who object to the inclusion of religion in the curriculum, stating that such offerings are a violation of the individual's free thought and that any such offerings will be sectarian and thus lead to indoctrination. It is true that any religious instruction will be sectarian and will follow certain religious presuppositions which are a part of the teacher's world viewpoint and concept of history. It is also true that to ignore all religious influences and to remove all religious teaching from the educational offerings is sectarian in that such action teaches the principles of agnosticism and tends to indoctrinate the student in the light of that sectarianism. Any truly objective concept of history must recognize that its validity rests upon its relevance to the human situa-

tion; therefore, the exponents of agnosticism must be willing to subject their offerings to all the competition that religion can offer. Similarly, the exponents of religion must be willing to subject their offerings to all the competition that agnosticism can offer. Any agnosticism that has not realistically confronted the challenge of religion is mere opinion; any religion that has not realistically confronted the challenge of agnosticism is mere superstition. If agnosticism cannot endure the challenge of religion, it will dissipate and disappear; if religion cannot endure the challenge of agnosticism, it will disintegrate and die. True forms of reality must withstand all the struggles, the questions, and the vicissitudes that an intellectual consideration of the human drama can present. To curtail any part of human intellectual inquiry is to curtail man in his search for reality and will be, in a final analysis, a form of indoctrination.

There are others who maintain that all religious education should be conducted through the efforts of the home and through the auspices of the church. But to limit religious training only to the home is insufficient. In order for all areas of human thought to have a fair hearing, they must all meet on an equal plane of intellectual, social inquiry. If religious training is limited only to home training, it becomes informal and will not demand the respect to which it is entitled.

The theory that religious training should be limited to the auspices of the church presents a far greater difficulty. Protestant churches have attempted to provide this training through their "Sunday Schools" or "Church Schools." Of this effort Niebuhr states:

> . . . Even the enlarged and constantly improved "Sunday School" instruction, with which most of the Protestant churches have sought to solve their educational problems, is totally inadequate. No amount of improvement within their present framework will greatly increase their adequacy because they offer neither the time nor the professional leadership to render the education they offer sufficient.[1]

The other possibility of rendering religious training through church auspices would be a return to parochial schools. Roman Catholicism follows this plan and their private schools seem to be doing an effective task in teaching religion along with the other disciplines. But the problem here is that there is danger that such action, if it should become a total social movement, would develop certain traits of religiosity and would indoctrinate the student in preconceived ideas. His religious training would not be confronting the intellectual challenges of the human drama.

Concomitant with the first problem, that of the relationship between religion and the other disciplines, is the second problem of the separation of the church and state. Niebuhr faces this problem as he discusses the use

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, "Religion and Education," op. cit., p. 371.

of public school buildings for purposes of religious instruction:

> There is . . . no reason to believe that if the three great religious groups in this country were agreed on a program, and above all, convinced of the necessity of more adequate religious education, that a way could not be found to utilize public school buildings. After all the Constitution which prohibits "the establishment of religion or the suppression thereof" cannot in the long run be tortured to mean such a rigorous separation of church and state that no public school buildings may be put at the disposal of the churches, if this is done on a fair and equal basis. One need not be at all cynical in observing with Mr. Dooley that "the court follows election returns." The interpretation of the law is properly free from popular pressure but also properly not irrelevant to public sentiment.
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> The religious communities of this nation have, in other words, no insupperable constitutional or other obstacle in elaborating an adequate educational program, if the religious communities are determined that it shall be established. This determination depends upon a realization in all religious communities of the necessity and possibility of inculcating the Christian faith in a program in which education is properly related to personal commitment. This realization depends upon less apolegetic attitudes towards the historic traditions of our faith and a stronger belief among us that our religions have important contributions to make to our culture and to the forming of character among our young people.[1]

Niebuhr is here making a defense for a type of religious training that would be an extension or an amplification of "released time" religious training as it has been permitted in some states. However, since Niebuhr's concept of reality, knowledge, and value all reach their culmination in forms of religious faith, there is justification for believing that if such an event should become possible,

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[1] Ibid., pp. 372-373.

Niebuhr would advocate the inclusion of religion in the school curriculum. He is advocating this type of religious education merely because this seems to be the best possible stepping stone toward a goal that will eventually allow for even greater possibilities in the area of religious training. The statement is used here to substantiate the thesis that Niebuhr does not perceive of any real difficulty in the presentation of religious education in the public as well as the private schools if the public thinks that such training is necessary.

When religious education is included in the curriculum of the school, on the elementary level, the student should become aware of all the stories and events which are a part of the religious drama of history. These stories and events should be presented from a Christian viewpoint. Every child, if he is to understand the historical traditions of his culture, should become aware of the influence of religion in shaping his particular culture.

On the secondary level, the inquiry should move into the realm of comparison and evaluation. Here the student should learn to differentiate between relevant and classical myths. He will become aware of the problems of miracles and of revelation and will evaluate his awareness in the light of his particular experience. He will study the Hebrew conception of Yahweh and also the Christian conception of God's revelation in Christ. He will, in his

total educational experience, have opportunities for comparing these concepts with all the religious dogmas which are a part of the historical traditions of Western culture.

On the level of higher education, the student's religious training should move in the direction of creative religious inquiry. Here the student should study, not only those religious concepts which are a part of Western culture, but also all of the religions of the world. He should become conversant with various cultures, and out of this experience, learn to evaluate his own religious experience. In so doing he should also become involved in the questions of theology. Higher education in the area of its religious emphasis should be a creative experience in which evaluation and testing occur--an experience in which the student tries and tests historical religious dogmas according to the plumbline of man's historical drama. He should seek to find relevance in religion.

Niebuhr's failure to write much about the role of the natural sciences in society restricts considerations of science in the curriculum. But this does not imply that he fails to recognize the significance of the natural sciences in society; it simply points out that Niebuhr is more interested in man as a spiritual creature than he is in the properties of the world. He is not greatly concerned with man as a biological creature living in a world governed by natural law. This is understandable since his greatest fear

in the realm of science is that man will come to regard science as an absolute; that man will make it an end in itself, thus allowing it to replace God.

But he does not reject the role of science in society. In his "Intellectual Biography" he alludes to this problem. While refuting the charge that has been made against him by the theologians of the Barthian persuasion, he points out that science cannot be easily eliminated from the world of man's experience. He establishes his position as he states:

> These charges from opposing viewpoints prompt me to expand and defend my conception of the circular relation between faith and experience. Since a guiding presupposition, held by faith, acts as a kind of filter for the evidence adduced by experience, it would seem that the theologians are right, and that the modern scientists are wrong in making "experience" a final arbiter of truth. But the matter is more complex. Guiding presuppositions do indeed color the evidence accumulated by experience; but they do not fully control experience. Presuppositions are like spectacles worn by a nearsighted or myopic man. He cannot see without the spectacles. But if evidence other than that gathered by his sight persuades him that his spectacles are inadequate to help him see what he ought to see, he will change the spectacles. . . . Modern secularism results from the disavowal of traditional Jewish and Christian faiths on what seems to be the incontrovertible evidence of experience. These faiths assumed a mystery of a person and a will beyond the observable phenomena of the world. Science proved these phenomena to be related to each other in sequences of efficient causation, and the metaphysicians discerned higher rational essences above the level of efficient cause. It seemed unnecessary to bother with a realm of mystery in the face of this evidence, particularly since religion had discredited itself by neglecting the coherences of

natural causes in which science is interested.[1]

In this statement Niebuhr is admitting that modern science has pretty well exploded the medieval concept of God. But unlike the theologians of the Barthian persuasion, he is not ready to reject the physical world and seek solace in an ethereal existence. The world is still here and the discoveries of science about that world are still relevant. Niebuhr will merely change his perspective as evidence warrants and find an enlarged evidence of a reality which will still allow him to live in the world, and, at the same time, transcend the world. In its discoveries science forced him to re-evaluate his religion and this re-evaluation resulted in the understanding of a new dimension within the Christian faith. He defines the point this way:

> There is a difference between the implicit faith that some system of nature or reason embodies ultimate meaning, and the Christian faith which apprehends a realm of mystery above and beyond the ascertainable structures of the world. This is explicit faith because it is recognized that meaning must be discerned in the mystery above the rationally intelligible structures of existence.[2]

There is no doubt in Niebuhr's mind about the validity of this mystical experience. Although it transcends the realm of rationality, it is still a part of his total experience. Thus, while he accepts the discoveries of

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, "Intellectual Biography," Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social, and Political Thought, p. 15.

[2]Ibid., p. 17.

modern science as pragmatically relevant in that they broaden the dimensions of man's faith, he enlarges the sphere of pragmatic experience to include some forms of mystical experience.

From this discussion it becomes evident that the key word for direction in the natural science curriculum is the word discovery. All of the natural sciences should be utilized in processes which will enable the individual to grasp a more comprehensive view of the meaning of life. Mathematics should constantly unfold new understandings about the complexities of the universe. Biology should constantly open new doors to the relationships which exist in life. Chemistry should discover substances and processes which will increase the physical well-being of life. Physics should open doors that will lead to the control of natural phenomena. On the primary level the student should become acquainted with the rudimentary truths of science; on the secondary level he should explore the universe and all of its mysteries through the means of science; in higher education he should view science creatively and search for evidence of the force that is at the core of the universe.

If Niebuhr has provided a dearth of material in the realm of the natural sciences, he has provided a plethora of material in the realm of the social sciences. For again and again he has discussed and elaborated the meaning

of justice in an unjust world, the depth of morality in an immoral world, and the height of spirituality in an unspiritual humanity. And through it all he has diligently inferred what ought to be and compared that sharply, and in many cases, dialectically, with what is.

The basis of Niebuhr's social philosophy can be described as dialectical in nature. He walks a precarious path: one between pragmatism and idealism, between knowledge and faith, between the finite and the infinite, between history and eschatology. Recalling here that the objective of the social sciences curriculum is the application of science to an interpretation of life that will assure the best forms of social intercourse, Niebuhr now states his concept of the social sciences:

> The question which confronts society is, how it can eliminate social injustice by methods which offer some fair opportunity of abolishing what is evil in our present society, without destroying what is worth preserving in it, and without running the risk of substituting new abuses and injustices in the place of those abolished.[1]

In applying this risk more explicitly to the area of social science, he further states:

> The social sciences trace the consequences of human behavior into the farthest reaches of social life. They are specialized and yet typical efforts of a growing human intelligence, to come into possession of all facts relevant to human conduct. . . . If the social scientist is able to point out that traditional and social policies do not have the results, intended or pretended by those who

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. 167.

> champion them, honest social intentions will find more adequate instruments for the attainment of their ends, and dishonest pretensions will be unmasked.[1]

In his effort to discover those desired "honest social intentions," Niebuhr's dialectical development led him through many investigations. Early in his life he was influenced by the appeal of progressive liberalism, but in the area of social experience, Marxism led him to see the illusions of that liberalism. He toyed with the dreams of Marxism for a while, but then the force of classical Christianity led him to perceive the illusions of dialectical materialism.[2] In one of his later works he comes to place his greatest hope politically and economically in the ideal of democracy, stating: "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but his inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary."[3]

As his search for the meaning of justice in a world which knows injustice continued, Niebuhr finally resolved the inconsistencies in a pragmatic application of the Christian dogma of justification. His problem as a preacher was to resolve the ambiguity of the dogma; fundamentalism was stressing that justification by faith was

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[1] Ibid., p. 32.

[2] John C. Bennet, "Reinhold Niebuhr's Social Ethics," Reinhold Niebuhr His Religious, Social, and Political Thought, p. 49.

[3] Reinhold Niebuhr, The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness, p. xi.

setting man apart from the struggles and vicissitudes of social experience. But Niebuhr, recognizing that there are mystical areas in which Christians do transcend the realm of physical experience, paradoxically and pragmatically utilizes the dogma of justification to pull man's religious faith into the realm of practical experience. Thus, a man's Christian faith should affect his total social viewpoint and experience according to Niebuhr's following thought:

> Justification by faith in the realm of justice means that we will not regard the pressures and counter pressures, the tensions, the overt and the covert conflicts by which justice is achieved and maintained as normative in the absolute sense; but neither will we ease our conscience by seeking to escape from involvement in them. We will know that we cannot purge ourselves of the sin and guilt in which we are involved by the moral ambiguities of politics, without also disavowing responsibility for the creative possibilities of justice.[1]

Having welded the spiritual to the physical, there is one further process which Niebuhr's social ethics would stress in a curriculum for social sciences. He would emphasize the fact that all social experiences--political, economic, and personal--reach their fruition in Christian love. The social science curriculum should endeavor to define all of man's social experience in the light of the meaning of Christian love as that love spells itself out in forms of justice. This presentation in turn should en-

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, II:284.

courage those "honest social intentions" which will result in honest social experience. On the elementary level, students should discover those social methods that will enable them to have acceptable social experiences with others; this would include a growing awareness of the presence of people in their own culture and of those in other cultures. On the secondary level, students should not only broaden their awareness of total society, for they should also develop traits of critical examination that will enable them to evaluate correctly the political and economic problems of society. In higher education, students should develop research techniques and creatively seek to satisfy the constant social demand for recognition of types of social injustice. And through all of this, the ideals of Christian love and human justice will mingle and develop a new concept of social experience.

The objective of the humanities, including art, music, sculpture, architecture, and literature, is to interpret the findings and experiences of life through scientific research in aesthetic experiences with the desired end of granting the student some aesthetic understanding of the meaning of life. The forms of expression and of communication in the humanities area should enable the student to discern what has real meaning and significance in his personal life as well as in his collective life. Thus, the humanities become pragmatic and serve a utilitarian

purpose as well as a spiritual purpose. On the various levels, the stages of interpretation and evaluation will progress according to the ability of the students to interpret and to evaluate. Certainly one of the goals of the humanities area curriculum should be to enable the student to perceive that which is true and that which is false in the totality of man's existence.

In conclusion, Niebuhr's final goal for man is redemption--redemption from his individual and collective degeneration. The task of the curriculum is to effect that redemption through the auspices of the Christian faith. Thus, the curriculum is delicately balanced--balanced between religious idealism and social pragmatism. But in that balance it seeks to develop men and women with mystical wisdom and intellectual understanding into areas of meaningful existence.

CHAPTER V

THE NATURE OF THE LEARNER

Another significant factor in a philosophy of education is the concept of the learner. Since Niebuhr has stated that the Hebrew and Greek cultures have provided the basic sources for Western culture,[1] a brief review of the concepts which these cultures had of the learner will be helpful.

The Hebrews were early in giving serious consideration to the question of the nature of man and thus to the nature of the learner. Because of their preoccupation with events and movements, they did not state their theories philosophically, but the writings of the Psalmist in the eleventh century B.C. expressed a concept of the nature of the individual. In the eighth Psalm, the Psalmist cries out to Yahweh, "What is man that thou art mindful of him? . . . For thou has made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor."[2]

But the Psalmist does not answer his question about

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Two Sources of Western Culture," loc. cit.

[2]Psalm 8.

the nature of man; he does not develop an understanding of his own expression, "a little lower than the angels." It was not until several centuries later that Israel, when she was being beseiged by military powers and was facing national disaster, produced the prophets who could perceive a relationship between ethical morality and national strength. In doing this, the prophets went a step beyond man's knowledge at that point in history and perceived that the presence of ethical morality and ethical immorality proved the existence of an inner conflict within the life of man. Jeremiah, in the sixth century B.C., as he attempted to find sincerity in a world of insincerity, said:

> Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if you can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; . . . And though they say, The Lord liveth; surely they swear falsely.
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> I will get me unto the great men, and will speak to them; for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God; but these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds.[1]

This theory of the constant struggle within the essence of man continued to be the basic pattern of Hebrew thought through the centuries which followed.

With the dawn of the Christian era, the Apostle Paul, under the impact of the early Christian thought concerning the individuality of man, wrote to the Romans during the first century A.D., making man's existence a more

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[1]Jeremiah 5.

personal and inward experience than even the prophets had done. For he states: "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do."[1]

Through these statements there is a gradual development of the Hebraic-Christian concept of the nature of man. Starting with a romantic view in which man is "a little lower than the angels," the view moves to an active progressive view in which man has become socially responsible, and finally on into a psychologically pragmatic view in which man has become a wretched creature, struggling within himself. It should be noted, however, that in this last view there are overtones of idealism in which man can achieve his most mature nature in a submissive relationship with God.

The Greek concept of the nature of man progressed along lines similar to the concepts of the Hebrews, but more distinct differences of opinions are noted within the various branches of the Greek concept. To Homer, writing probably sometime during the ninth century B.C., man was merely a puppet of the gods. It is true that Homer's characters, specifically Odysseus and Agamemnon, encountered tremendous struggles in their confrontations with the forces of nature and with the forces of society. But the gods were always lurking in the background. When the struggles became most acute, the characters had, through ignorance or inno-

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[1]Romans 7.

cent selfishness, brought down upon their heads the wrath of some god or gods.

By the fourth century B.C., however, Greek civilization had hardened into a cultural system and man's struggle had become an intellectual struggle rather than a spiritual struggle. Among the writers of this later period, Plato becomes distinctive in his attempt to analyze correctly the true nature of man. He idealistically defines the nature of man as follows: "Have we not found . . . a path of thought which seems to bring us and our argument to the conclusion, that while we are in the body, and while the soul is infested with the evils of the body, our desire will not be satisfied? And our desire is of the truth."[1] In this statement, Plato clearly defines his dualistic concept of the nature of man.

Not all the Greeks, however, who were contemporary with Plato accepted Plato's idealistic concept in its entirety. This questioning of the concept of the dualistic nature of man becomes apparent in the works of Plato's pupil, Aristotle. Although Aristotle studied at the feet of Plato for twenty years, he could not accept this concept of the natural world and the supernatural world as realistic. To him the evidences of the natural world were real; his problem was to define the supernatural entelechies

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[1]Plato, "Phaedo," The Dialogues of Plato, Third Edition, Translated by Benjamin Jowett, New York: Oxford University Press, 1924, II:207.

within the realm of natural existence. If God is to be evident, he must be evident in the forces of the natural world; if man is to attain pure reason, he must do so through the use of his natural mind; for there is no realistic evidence of any other state in existence but the natural state. As Aristotle developed a monistic concept of the world, and of the nature of man in that world, he wrote:

> Now understanding in itself has to do with what is best in itself, and the highest type of understanding has to do with what is best in the highest degree. And an intellect understands itself insofar as it takes on its intelligible object; for it becomes intelligible by attaining and understanding its object, so that an intellect and its intelligible object are the same. For that which is receptive of something intelligible and of substance is an intellect; and it is actual when it possesses this. Hence it is the latter rather than the former state which seems to constitute the divine state of the intellect; and its act of understanding is the most pleasant and best. Therefore, if God is in that pleasureable state in which we sometimes are, this is wondrous; and if He is in that state in a higher degree, this is even more wondrous; and He is in that state. Life, then, also belongs to him; for intellectual activity is life, and God is that activity; and the essential activity of God is the life which is best and eternal. And we say that God is an animal, eternal and most excellent. Hence life and continuous and eternal duration belong to God, for this is what God is.[1]

The Greek concept of the nature of the learner is thus variegated and complex. However, there is concurrence in that these concepts conceive of the learner as confronted with the inevitability of that which we today call a psychological struggle; the inner force struggles with the outer

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[1]Aristotle, "Metaphysics," The Works of Aristotle, Translated by W. D. Ross, New York: Oxford University Press, VIII:1072.

force in the life of every individual, and the individual becomes mature or educated when the inner force subjugates the outer force and attains its highest ends.

Niebuhr's concept of the nature of the learner, recognizing the influence of the force of these two cultures, is closely related to his concept of the nature of man. Since this latter concept has been rather amply discussed in the second chapter, it is mentioned here and used as a basis for a more specific study of the nature of the particular individual who is maturing through educational processes. From Niebuhr's basic concept of the nature of man the following characteristics of the learner can be deduced:

In the first place, the student is a unified creature. As a young pastor in Detroit, Niebuhr clearly saw through what he believed to be the sham, pretense, and hypocrisy of a dualistic concept of man. He quickly noted how utterly foolish it was to preach to youngsters about the salvation of their souls while their feet were bare, their nakedness was covered with but tattered rags, and their bodies were emaciated. He discovered that the soul and the body were one. No amount of pious asceticism could offset the tragedy of the children's physical existence. No amount of spiritual mysticism could cope with their unfulfilled physical passions. By the time he wrote The Nature and Destiny of Man in 1941, his comprehension of this problem led him to take a firm stand, as the following quote reveals:

> The essential nature of man contains two elements; and there are correspondingly two elements in the original perfection of man. To the essential nature of man belong, on the one hand, all of his natural endowments, his physical and social impulses, his sexual and racial differentiations, in short, his character as a creature embedded in the natural order. On the other hand, his essential nature also includes the freedom of his spirit, his transcendence over natural process and finally his self-transcendence.[1]

By 1955 this view had crystallized even more when he stated in The Self and the Dramas of History, when speaking of man's internal dialogue, that "the fact is that there are not two distinct selves in this internal dialogue. They are merely two foci of the same self."[2]

This complex, monistic concept leads to the observation that the child or student is in the world and of the world and at the same time above the world and of the sphere that is above the world. To Niebuhr, the child is definitely an animal in a physical world--living, breathing, eating, sleeping, and experiencing all the experiences of animal flesh. The "in the world" part of him is certainly a part of the child. Any education which ignores this fact is but an empty sham. The child is also "of the world." He cannot escape being influenced and molded by the world in which he lives. All the forces of nature, including social relationships, and all the forces of history with which the

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, I:270.

[2]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Self and the Dramas of History, p. 6.

child meets place a distinctive mark upon his character. At the same time, this monistic creature is "above the world." The total personality cannot be confined nor defined within the limits of the sensational experiences of the physical body. Surely there is a difference between the maturing child and the growing animal. All the child's dreams, hopes, and aspirations, in fact, the totality of his imaginative experiences are beyond the boundaries of his physical existence. When he has invented an intricate mechanical device or created an artistic masterpiece, there is something there that is not only of the flesh; it is the expression of his "above the world" self. Finally, the child is also of the sphere above the world. He may not be able to hear the singing of the angels, but he can feel the harmony of the infinite. There is that within a child which conveys some mysterious force of infinity. This has placed its stamp upon him and continues to do so through all his mystical experiences. And all of these experiences are still the child. Remove any one of them and he is no longer the child of man seeking his identity and fulfillment. In the unity of these experiences he is a monistic creature with many complex forces within the essence of his being.

Niebuhr's philosophy also states that the child or learner is a unique individual. It can be observed that all children do not sing in the same key; they do not dream

the same dreams nor have the same aspirations. They do not all use their hands in the same way, express their love in the same manner, nor have the same hopes for adult accomplishment and security. But Niebuhr makes the uniqueness of the individual the product of the "above the world" experience. In this regard he states that "what is unique in man . . . may be translated as 'spirit' but the primary emphasis lies upon the capacity for thought or reason."[1] Niebuhr develops the theme more specifically as he discusses man's experience of self-transcendence:

> Human capacity for self-transcendence is also the basis of human freedom and thereby of the uniqueness of the individual. Human consciousness not only transcends natural process but it transcends itself. It thereby gains the possibility for those endless variations and elaborations of human capacities which characterize human existence. Every impulse of nature in man can be modified, extended, repressed and combined with other impulses in countless variations. In consequence no human individual is like another, no matter how similar their heredity and environment.[2]

In Niebuhr's criticism of current educational procedures, this area of the uniqueness of the individual provided him with one of the areas in which he became most critical.[3] Current bourgeois society attempts to stamp the mark of conformity on every student. Education tends to treat all students as if they have the same intelligence,

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, I:6.

[2]Ibid., I:56.

[3]Ibid., I:82f.

the same hope for attainment, and the same possibility of achievement, without recognizing that each one possesses a unique character that is private and personal. If formal education is to perform its function with due dispatch, it needs to remember that each child will be motivated best by those instructors who are cognizant of the child's unique capabilities and incapabilities. In attempting to discover the secret of the individual, Niebuhr was forced to consider the basis of motivation. In the pastoral experience in Detroit, he observed that psychological factors and motivation are related; it does make a difference as to how the child is received in his home and in his social experiences. The poorly motivated child is one who does not experience acceptable social relationships. Niebuhr recognized that the social relationships of the children in Detroit influenced the child personally and thus influenced the methods whereby he developed his unique qualities. In analyzing this situation, Niebuhr gives his interpretation of the role of the teacher as a psychologist:

> The psychological sciences discover and analyze the intricate web of motivation, which lies at the base of all human actions. . . . If the psychological scientist aids men in analyzing their true motives and in separating their inevitable pretensions from the actual desires which they are intended to hide, he may increase the purity of social morality.[1]

Thus, every learner is a unique creature possessing individual possibilities and individual expressions. Some

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. 32.

of the latter are mere pretensions and alert educational leadership can, through psychological devices, discern the true individuality of the learner. In doing this, that leadership will direct the child to his own unique end.

Niebuhr further states that the learner, in his uniqueness, possesses freedoms and limitations. The learner's freedom lies within his uniqueness and also in his ability to transcend the realms of his physical existence. Niebuhr states:

> To a certain degree man is free to reject one environment for another. If he dislikes the spiritual environment of the twentieth century, he may consciously choose to live by patterns of the thirteenth century. If he finds his physical environment uncongenial, he has the capacity to modify it.[1]

But at this point Niebuhr becomes critical of contemporary social structures, stating that these structures have failed to recognize that man's freedom does contain limitations. He continues:

> The pride of modern man has sometimes tempted him to forget that there are limits of creatureliness which he cannot transcend and that there are inexorable forces of nature which he cannot defy. It is nevertheless important to remember that human spirituality is sharply distinguished from animal existence by the measure of human freedom and the consequent degree of discreet and unique individuality in man.[2]

In this last statement the full impact of Niebuhr's concept of the limitations of man becomes apparent. In

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, I:55-56.

[2]Ibid., I:56.

applying this to current educational concepts and practices, Niebuhr contends that in educational experiences, educators tend to ignore the fact of man's real limitations.[1] He also points out that those limitations are related to man's final form of spirituality. The learner can soar--but he can soar only so high.

Finally, according to Niebuhr, the learner finds fulfillment through his individual relationships. There are innumerable relationships in life, but Niebuhr makes only three of them significant in man's search for achievement: the relationship of the self with the self; the relationship of the self with other selves, and the relationship of the self with God. Of the first two, he states:

> The self which knows itself guilty is the transcendent self. Or, to speak more precisely, the self in the moment of transcending itself. The self in the moment of transcending itself exercises the self's capacity for infinite regression and makes the previous concretion of will its object. It is in this moment of self-transcendence that the consciousness and memory of original perfection arise. For in this moment the self knows itself as merely a finite creature among many others and realizes that the undue claims which the anxious self in action makes, result in injustices to its fellows.[2]

Niebuhr thus believes that the learner will not reach a satisfactory stage in his development until he learns to distinguish and to comprehend his own intrinsic self. The individual must first of all experience a rewarding association with himself. To Niebuhr, this can come

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[1] Ibid., I:82f.

[2] Ibid., I:277.

only as the learner, by self-transcendence, sees himself in his finite limitations and imperfections. By the very act of recognizing these limitations and imperfections, he can seek forms of assuagement for those limitations and finally learn to live satisfactorily with himself through the process of repentence.

The second relationship involves Niebuhr's concept of social justice. The individual, in his attempts at self-transcendence, in his anxiousness about himself and his security, often unconsciously disregards his relationships with his fellowman and thus ironically develops forms of coercion and social injustice. Certainly society will not adequately supply the needs of mankind until some forms of justice have supplanted injustices which are now prevalent. As the learner perceives these individual acts of aggression within himself--as he becomes aware of his own selfishness through repentance--and seeks to develop more humane relationships with his fellowman, the problem of social injustices will proportionately disappear. But it must be remembered that Niebuhr does not envision the disappearance of these social injustices through any mystical means; social injustices will disappear only as men struggle to overcome social injustices.

But the relationship of man to man goes even deeper. Certainly this is a part of the ideal of social justice, but Niebuhr is sufficiently realistic to observe that the

individual, in his relationships with others becomes a part of a social whole--a universal soul--which is the product of the total social picture. Just as the learner lives in the world and is of the world, his relationships with others reveals his nature and the relation of that nature to the religious idea of man. Man's relationships with others become just as much a part of the individual as do the relationships which exist between the parts of the individual.

Of man's relationship with God, Niebuhr states:

> At its best the contemplating self is the finite self which has become conscious of its finiteness and its relation to God as the limit and fulfillment of its finiteness.[1]

The learner will not have reached a satisfactory stage of development until he has developed a satisfactory relationship with his God--until he has repented and worked out an understanding of himself in relation to the total structure of things.

In order to evaluate Niebuhr's concept of the learner and to apply that concept to contemporary educational philosophy, his concept of the learner must be compared with prevailing contemporary concepts. Today, these concepts can be classified in three general categories. Certainly there are wide deviations in each of the classifications but basically the three divisions in educational philosophy are still discernible. For this reason, the modern concepts

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[1] Ibid., I:259.

of that nature of the learner will be discussed in this study from the viewpoints of these three major philosophical concepts: (1) the romantic progressive view; (2) the active progressive view; and (3) the authoritarian view.

The romantic progressive view has gone through many cycles and has been classified under many headings. On the current scene it reaches its pinnacle of expression in the general term of naturalism. In pedagogical circles, naturalism usually is closely related to romanticism, looking upon man as a creature worth redeeming. This becomes the impact of naturalistic pedagogy; if man is but a baneful disease and a blight upon the natural earth, there is little need for expending the effort of trying to redeem him. But naturalistic pedagogy does not accept this negative thesis, and most naturalistic educators, in considering the plight of man, look upon man as being educable and they interpret the education process as one in which the individual develops his natural abilities.

One of the leading modern exponents of pedagogical naturalism was Herbert Spencer, an English pedagogical philosopher. Spencer looked upon the learner as a little savage who, through his natural contacts with the forces of nature and with the restraints of society, would develop most efficiently if restrained as little as possible and allowed to develop according to his individual, natural instincts. Deploring the artificiality of parental and

teacher restraint, he upholds the theory of cause and effect:

> . . . Right conceptions of cause and effect are early formed; and by frequent and consistent experiences are eventually rendered definite and complete. Proper conduct in life is much better guaranteed when the good and evil consequences of actions are rationally understood, than when they are merely believed on authority. A child who finds that disorderliness entails the subsequent trouble of putting things in order, or who misses a gratification from dilatoriness, or whose want of care is followed by the loss or breakage of some much-prized possession, not only experiences a keenly-felt consequence, but gains a knowledge of causation: both the one and the other being just like those which adult life will bring.[1]

A contemporary of Spencer, the American pedagogical philosopher, G. Stanley Hall, expressed the naturalistic philosophy through a more specific emphasis on the little savage:

> . . . The spontaneous expressions of this best age and condition of life (youth), with no other occupation than their own development, have shown reversions as often as progress. The rupture of home ties stimulates ever wider vicarious expression of the social instinct. Each taste and train can find congenial companionship in others and thus be stimulated to more intensity and self consciousness. Very much that has been hitherto repressed in the adolescent soul is not re-enforced by association and may become excessive and even aggressive. While many of the race-correlates of childhood are lost, those of this stage are more accessible in savage and subsavage life. Freedom is the native air and vital breath of student life. The sense of personal liberty is absolutely indispensable for moral maturity. . . . The student must have much freedom to be lazy, make his own minor morals, vent his disrespect for what he can see no use in, be among

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[1]Herbert Spencer, Education: Intellectual, Moral and Physical, New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1914, pp. 189-190.

> strangers to act himself out and form a personality of his own, be baptized with the revolutionary and skeptical spirit, and go to extremes at the age when excesses teach wisdom with amazing rapidity, if he is to become a true knight of the spirit and his own morality.[1]

According to this naturalistic philosophy, true education becomes a self-imposed process in which the learner, through the expression of his natural instincts, desires, and needs, learns the validity of the universal law of cause and effect. He learns which represented truths are most valid for the production of the best possible effects. For this reason, the authority of education must be sympathetic and wise, performing the role of a counselling service in which the learner teaches himself those truths which will develop a rhythmical relationship with the rhythms of nature.

Where the naturalistic viewpoint of the nature of the learner regards the basic individualism of the individual as the primary concern of education, the active progressive viewpoint also starts with the individual learner. The distinctive mark of difference between the two philosophical systems lies, not in the subject, but in the definition of the subject. While naturalism regards the learner as basically an animal, responding to stimuli which stimulate animal responses, the active progressive

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[1]G. Stanley Hall, Youth: Its Education, Regimen, and Hygiene, New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1914, pp. 228-229.

viewpoint regards the learner as having higher, more aesthetic drives which should stimulate the animal drives to seek achievement in more idealistic experiences. The student is animal but he is more than other animals. He also possesses a socially learned desire to elevate the welfare of himself and of the human race; he responds to this desire through artistic devices, through intellectual attainment, through scientific inquiry, and through the media of communication. The outstanding proponent for this view on the contemporary scene has been John Dewey with his experimental philosophy.

As a young philosopher and teacher, John Dewey adhered to the tenets of conservative idealism, being strongly influenced by the works of Hegel.[1] But as his philosophy matured through his own research and observation, he came to reject all forms of idealism connected with the concept of the supernatural and developed his private form of empirical idealism which becomes pragmatic in its expression. To him reality was present only in that which supplied the demands of the individual and of the society. Not that he rejected all the theories and arts of history as has so often been ascribed to him. In fact, in his study on moral ethics, he has stated that in the quest for moral theory one can draw from such sources as (1) the historical

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[1]J. Donald Butler, Four Philosophies and Their Practice in Education and Religion, p. 440.

concepts of what is fair and equal; (2) the elaborated material of legal history, judicial decisions, and legislative activity; (3) the combined knowledge of the various sciences such as biology, physiology, hygiene and medicine, psychology, psychiatry, as well as statistics, sociology, economics, and politics; and (4) the entire body of theoretical history for the last two thousand years.[1] He did not discard all the old truths; but the old truths became truths only insofar as they proved to be relevant to the pressures and demands of necessity which are a part of contemporary life. In order to discover more fully that which is relevant, Dewey advocated the submitting of all experiences, events, actions, and thoughts to a scientific scrutiny and then to evaluate them on the basis of their present value. In describing this empirical attitude toward history, he stated:

> To re-establish a connection of histories within a longer course of events and a more inclusive state of affairs, requires delving, probing, and extension by artifice beyond the apparent. To link the things which are immediately and apparitionally had with one another by means of what is not immediately apparent and thus to create new historic successions with new initiations and new endings depends in turn upon the system of mathematical-mechanical systems which form the proper objects of science as such.[2]

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[1]John Dewey and James H. Tufts, "The Nature of Moral Theory," A Modern Introduction to Ethics, edited by Milton K. Kunitz, Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1958, pp. 5-14.

[2]John Dewey, Experience and Nature, New York: Dover Publications, 1958, p. 138.

Through this statement Dewey is presenting a view of his concept of the nature of the learner by implying that the learner is involved in the processes of evaluating relevant culture and also of creating new cultures. In pointing out what he considered to be some of the fallacious assumptions of traditional concepts of the nature of man, he presents his personal concept:

> . . . There is a contrast between physical objects and objects as they are believed to be, even though what they are believed to be is an unescapable medium in observing what they are. Where is such a contrast to be found in the case of existing social institutions and standards? The contrast is not, as it seems to be in the case of knowledge of physical existence, between a belief, desire and aspiration for something which is better but non-existent.
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> Such facts exemplify the difference between a bodily or a psychic self with a mind and mind as individual. Either the better social object is sheer illusion, or else individual thought and desire denote a distinctive and unique mode of existence, an object held in solution, undergoing transformation, to emerge finally as an established and public object.[1]

The learner, then, as he experiences the processes of the growth of his intellect, including the development of his storehouse of verifiable data based upon empirical speculation and his unique imaginative person, becomes the person. There is no dualism here; the individual is one, reaching the pinnacle of his own individuality through the experiences of his own mind. A tightly woven mesh of coherence within the individual unifies him in such a way

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[1] Ibid., pp. 219-220.

that to separate him into parts is violating his intrinsic personality.

The third interpretation of the nature of the learner to be discussed here is an interpretation which looks upon reality as residing in some form of an idealistic absolute--an interpretation which usually results in an authoritarian concept of education. There are certain absolute truths which remain aloof above the warp and woof of everyday experiences. The learner, coming into life in a state of innocent ignorance, must be taught these absolute truths. The learner, in his earlier experiences, is untutored and empty; his intellectual powers are to be developed through the process of acquainting him or filling him with the substances of absolute truth. Whether this form of absolute truth is the authority of a religious dogma or the ideal of pure knowledge makes little difference in the concept of the nature of the learner; the learner is still to receive his intellectual growth by the learning of truths which are revealed to him through authoritarian methods.

In educational circles, elaboration of this subject reveals that the effective teacher, according to authoritarian standards, becomes the symbol of absolute truth, and the learning process is an experience in which the learner, almost a non-entity at this point in his preparation, acquires insight into absolute truth. In all authoritarian education, knowledge is an absolute beyond and outside the

sphere of experience of the neophyte learner, and the learner is of a mutable nature which can receive and accumulate knowledge when it is imparted to him. The same observation can be made of all forms of idealism which make knowledge an ideal outside the realm of the learner's pragmatic experience. Any system of philosophy which makes an ideal idea or concept an absolute, eventually must regard the student as removed from the absolute but able to comprehend portions of it when it is transmitted to him.

When Niebuhr's view of the nature of the learner is compared with the contemporary views, Niebuhr makes eclectic choices from all of them, utilizing that which he finds valid and relevant and rejecting that which he conceives invalid and irrelevant. He largely rejects the concept of romanticism and yet, even though he does regard man as a sinner, he also sees opportunity for man to experience certain pleasures in life through the development of man's personality. Niebuhr's emphasis on justice compares favorably with Dewey's concept of relevant action.

In other areas, Niebuhr would object to the authoritarian methods generally, but he does have his own brand of idealism in his interpretation of an absolute God. He is authoritarian in that God, as revealed through Jesus Christ, is the final absolute of the world. Niebuhr's point of departure with many authoritarians occurs in that where they look to certain social systems for authority,

Niebuhr looks pragmatically to a personal relationship with God. But even this must be qualified, for when Niebuhr makes history meaningful, he is making an interpretation of history a form of authoritarian power.

From all these comparisons it can be observed that Niebuhr develops his own personal and particular interpretation of the nature of the learner. That interpretation grows out of his observations of the learner as that learner experiences the events and the flow of history and of society. It is an interpretation that can be loosely described as romantically and pragmatically idealistic--an interpretation that is based on a dialectical interpretation of the nature of the totality of life.

CHAPTER VI

DISCIPLINARY CONTROL IN EDUCATION

Niebuhr's theory of disciplinary control in the total life of man, and thus also in education, is embedded in his monistic concept of the nature of man. In this monistic concept, which recognizes at least two conflicting parts, the natural and the spiritual, Niebuhr contends that man's final obligation in this life is to subjugate the physical drives and impulses to the transcendence of the spiritual forces. Inherent in this idea is the theory that discipline, in its final application, becomes a personal matter; it cannot be determined by forces outside the individual; it must be based upon inner action--an inner compulsion, by which the individual becomes responsible for his conduct and action. This is not to say that Niebuhr does not validate the use of certain social laws and even the use of force in the maintenance of those laws for the establishment of justice in society. Certainly some laws and some force in society are necessary and sometimes the force which will maintain those laws needs to be active, aggressive, and even violent if forms of justice

are to be preserved. These laws reflect the accumulated goals of cooperating individuals and in turn they have as their aim the welfare of the total society. But Niebuhr's pragmatic interpretation of society would indicate that laws are no stronger than the will or determination of the individuals who live under those laws. Every individual has the power to break the law; thus, the true factor in any system of disciplinary control is the intelligent use of freedom on the part of the individual.

This theory places extensive responsibility upon education generally and upon the educator specifically. It would be a comparatively simple matter to enforce specific rules and regulations in the classroom or on the campus if all students were controlled all the time. At least, it would be simple to gain this goal on the surface. It becomes a much more complex matter and a much more difficult procedure to develop traits of character within the individual students--traits of character which will not only maintain but also exhibit realistically and pragmatically the most ideal forms of human virtue and justice. To force a student to be "good" is one thing; to guide and to inspire students to be "good" is quite another matter.

In order to present and then to understand Niebuhr's theory of disciplinary control demands a more careful study of his system of social ethics. Niebuhr's position in the problems of sex and race will be considered extensively.

Brief reference will then be made to the problem of economic and social justice.

In confronting the romantically-inclined, naturalistic, psychological attitude toward sex, Niebuhr has specifically attacked two contemporary observations. In the first place, he challenges the contemporary psychological view that sex is a natural instinct and that it has reached significance in society because of the repression and secrecy with which society has regarded it. In confronting this theory, Niebuhr quotes from L. F. Shaffer's The Psychology of Adjustment:

> In the lower animals in a state of nature, and natively in man, the sex drive is a glandular and physiological one, satisfied by direct (though learned) mechanisms when it arises. In civilized man the direct satisfaction of the sexual urges is thwarted at their appearance in infancy and at their strengthening in the glandular changes of adolescence by social conventions and economic obstacles. This thwarting directs attention to the drive and attaches it to many substitute stimuli and substitute responses.[1]

To which Niebuhr responds:

> Both modern and traditional Christian thought would agree that sexual passion is a particularly powerful impulse which has expressed itself more vigorously throughout human history than the physical function of procreation requires. The usual modern explanation for this hypertrophy of the impulse is that it has been accentuated by repression. This explanation fails to take account of the fact that the social disciplines, which civilized society has thrown about the satisfaction of the sex impulse, are made necessary by the very fact that the impulse has exceeded the necessities

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[1]L. F. Shaffer, as quoted in Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, I:235-236.

> of the preservation of the species, from the very beginning; and that even in primitive man sex has never been merely "glandular and psychological." The sexual, as every other physical impulse in man, is subject to and compounded with the freedom of man's spirit.[1]

Niebuhr's second attack upon a psychological interpretation of the problem of sex appears in his analysis of the Kinsey report.[2] In his evaluation of this report, Niebuhr lists three weaknesses as follows:

> The report assumes that the modern revolt against sex disciplines is primarily due to the inadequacy of the standards established by the "Judeo-Christian" tradition, and that more adequate standards will be achieved by defining "normal" behavior through a statistical study of actual behavior. The first proposition is not altogether wrong. Neither Catholicism nor Protestantism has ever completely realized the ideal of relating sexual life sacramentally to the whole of personality and to the whole of a loyal community of persons in the family partnership.
>
> But the second proposition of the Kinsey report proves how much more grievously modern secularism errs in dealing with these issues. If the Christian faith has failed to bring tumultuous stuff of the sexual life under adequate discipline or sublimation, the philosophy behind the Kinsey report proposes to solve the problem, simply by ignoring all deeper aspects of human existence. Sexual drives are analyzed as if they were merely biological impulses and "sexual objects" are discussed as if "impulses" had to find their "objects" without the overarching of personality in each case.
>
> Even more dangerous is the assumption that new norms can be created by a statistical study of the actual sex practices of the day. Here we have the modern sociological approach to the problem of norms reduced to its final absurdity. A learned doctor,

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, I:235.

[2]Reinhold Niebuhr, "Sex Standards in America," Christianity and Crises, (May 24, 1948), VIII: 65-66.

> reviewing the Kinsey report asks the relevant question, whether the fact that most people have colds in the winter establishes the cold as "normative."[1]

The reflective observer will quickly note that there is a discrepancy here if Niebuhr's system of social ethics is defined as pragmatic. The error lies in the usual definition of the term pragmatic. In this evaluation, Niebuhr is stating that there are higher realms for determining the basis of man's social ethics than the realms of normative action. Niebuhr is cognizant of this philosophical gap and overcomes it in a later essay in which he points out that the intrinsic desire on the part of man to transcend his physical realm is a part of his pragmatic world--a part that is just as much an element of existential existence as are the actual experiences in human conduct. Man is in the world and also above the world. Niebuhr bridges this philosophical gap by reinterpreting the true meaning of man's freedom and uniqueness. Man's freedom consists of a spiritual freedom as well as of a physical freedom. Man does not achieve real freedom until the spiritual freedom has sublimated the physical freedom to those habits of conduct that will allow for spiritual freedom. This is as true of the sex impulse as it is of any other physical desire or drive.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 65.

[2] Reinhold Niebuhr, "Sex and Religion in the Kinsey Report," Christianity and Crises, (November 2, 1953), XIII:138-141.

In attempting to summarize Niebuhr's interpretation of the role of the educator with regard to the problem of sex, his earlier statements about the intrinsic nature of sex reveal his application of that which he terms the true Christian interpretation, not only of sex, and not only of love, but of all of life. In relating that Christian interpretation of life to sex, he states:

> From the standpoint of "pure nature" the sex impulse is a natural basis of "alteregoism"; for it is the method by which nature insures that the individual shall look beyond himself for the preservation of the species. The fact that upon the purely instinctive basis both the self and the other are involved in sexual passion makes it possible for spirit to use the natural stuff of sex for both the assertion of the ego and the flight of the ego into another. The sexual act thus becomes, in human life, a drama in which the domination of one life over the desires of another are in bewildering conflict, and also in baffling intermixture. Furthermore these corruptions are complexly interlaced and compounded with a creative discovery of the self through its giving of itself to another. Thus the climax of sexual union is also a climax of creativity and sinfulness. The element of sin in the experience is not due to the fact that sex is in any sense sinful as such. But once sin is presupposed, that is, once the original harmony of nature is disturbed by man's self-love, the instincts of sex are particularly effective tools for both the assertion of the self and the flight from the self. . . .
>
> An analysis of sexual passion thus verifies the correctness of the seemingly contradictory Christian interpretation of the relation of sensuality to self-love. It contains both a further extension of the sin of self-love and an effort to escape from it, an effort which results in the futility of worshipping the "creature rather than the Creator."[1]

In applying this paradoxical interpretation of sex

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, I:236-237.

to the role of the educator in disciplinary control in education, Niebuhr's statement that the cross of Jesus Christ is the idealistic and supreme norm for a basic understanding of the nature of human action and conduct becomes relevant.[1] The cross is the focal point in history that gives meaning to all the experiences of life and in turn to the proper attitude toward and the effective use of the sex impulse. As Jesus Christ volitionally gave his physical life on the cross in order to reveal the ultimate meaning of Christian love, the individual who finds the true meaning of Christian love will perceive that the sex act is an outgoing expression of love. Instead of this experience consisting of a violently-directed selfish grasping, it will be an action through which each of the persons involved in the experience will be expressing the deepest meanings of his love for the other. This does not indicate that Niebuhr ignores the complexity of the action; he does perceive self-aggressiveness and escape. Oftentimes that aggressiveness and escape will become the dominating pattern of the experience. This is merely a part of the dialectical nature of man. Man desires and even strives for the realization of Christian love through the experience of sex, but in his carnality, this experience often degenerates into little more than an expression of self-love and violent power.

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Two Sources of Western Culture," op. cit., p. 240.

But those attitudes of self-aggressiveness and escape become sublimated in an attitude of outgoing love which adds the spiritual dimension to the sex act, when that act is perceived and comprehended on the level of idealistic Christian love.

This makes the educator's task of disciplinary control in education complex and yet simple. Essentially, it consists in converting the student, when the term converting is used in a non-theological way. The student simply learns to aspire toward an attitude in life which makes the spiritual realization of life an ultimate goal. But thus to convert the student is a difficult and serious task.

The educator brings about this transformation process through two media. In the first place, his own life speaks for itself as being honest, sincere, and truthful as it reflects the philosophy which he submits in the educational experience. In the second place, the educator, through his more objective educative contacts, enumerates, analyzes, and evaluates the ethical ideals and the implications of those ideals which society objectively supports. Certainly at this point in our civilized society, society still maintains, at least objectively, that fidelity in sex through a monogamous relationship is to be desired. The laws of the land still so read even though evidence reveals that many individuals do not live this idealism on the practical level. Niebuhr would concur with the legal ideal-

ism, but not for the sake of legality. His concept of Christian love would point out that the attainment of spiritual freedom is man's most impractical and yet practical desire and that spiritual freedom, with all its complexities and paradoxes, is best achieved through the intimate relationships which accompany fidelity and monogamy. From a practical viewpoint, it would be rather difficult for either a man or a woman to give himself or herself completely and wholly to another and thus attain the merits which accompany Christian love through promiscuous sexual relationships. The nature of the love of God for man becomes most uniquely dramatized through the mutual and faithful enactment of the love experience. The task of the educator is to portray this idealistic truth to the students, both objectively and subjectively.

In a second consideration, Niebuhr's concept of the best forms of disciplinary control can be ascertained through a consideration of his attitude toward the racial problem. For racial conflict, as it has emerged at this point in the twentieth century, cries out for a clearer definition of the meaning of the equality of men and the meaning of disciplinary control in the application of that equality. It is a well known fact among sociologists, and even theologians, that racial conflict presents one of the most acute social and religious problems of the century. Gordon Harland states:

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> A profound revolution in race relations involving incalculable cultural consequences is taking place in America. No one can foresee all that is entailed, but everyone senses that it contains within it a dynamic that will have a far-reaching impact upon the total culture.[1]

Niebuhr's attitude toward the racial problem is theological with certain sociological and psychological implications. This is not to state that he does not confront the problem pragmatically. Twelve years before the tragedy of Little Rock, he stated:

> Racial conflict has become the most vicious of all forms of social conflict in the nation. And the racial tensions will become worse long before they will become better.[2]

But Niebuhr does make the problem primarily theological when he further states:

> Racial bigotry is, in short, one form of original sin. Original sin is something darker and more terrible than mere stupidity and is therefore not eradicated by enlightenment alone, though frequently enlightenment can break some of its power by robbing it of some of its instruments of stupidity.[3]

Niebuhr's theological concept of the problem becomes even more apparent when he states that at its base, racial tension is a form of idolatry:

> Both the dignity and the misery of man are greater than modern culture understands. The misery of man is derived from his idolatry, from his partly conscious

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[1]Gordon Harland, The Thought of Reinhold Niebuhr, New York: The Oxford Press, 1960, p. 255.

[2]Reinhold Niebuhr, "Christian Faith and the Race Problem," Love and Justice, edited by D. B. Robertson, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957, p. 129.

[3]Ibid., p. 128.

> and partly unconscious effort to make himself, his race, and his culture God.[1]

Niebuhr's method for solving the race problem, like his analysis of the problem, is basically theological. As he continues in his statement concerning race, he states:

> Race bigotry . . . must be broken by repentance and not merely by enlightenment.[2]

And in these brief statements is the essence of Niebuhr's approach to the race problem. But this is not to state that Niebuhr's cognizance of the problem and his solution for it can be dismissed lightly and easily. When he states that the solution to the problem is repentance, rational thinkers are immediately confronted with the artificiality that is usually associated with the term. Repentance, in its use, usually refers to a so-called acceptance of the grace of God and the observance of certain ritualistic acts that are connected with church dogma. But when Niebuhr speaks of repentance as it relates to the racial problem, he is advocating that through this experience the individual who is repenting will become aware of two facts; in the first place, the individual will perceive the reality of racial idolatry and will recognize that he is trying to make himself, his race, and his culture God; in the second place, he will recognize that in the truly Christian interpretation of the nature of man,

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[1] Ibid., p. 129.

[2] Ibid., p. 128.

all men, regardless of race, hold equal recognition for dignity within the realm of God's grace. Niebuhr does not thus state that all men are equal and that all men should have equal opportunities. This platitude is not a part of his theological system. He does know that men are unequal in knowledge and in ability and that inequality leads to much struggle and tension in the total social enterprise. His equality is within the realm of God's grace and the truly Christian directed individual will allow that grace to temper the violence of his racial bigotry.

Niebuhr is most critical of current forms of religiosity with regard to this idolatrous experience. He does not see the contemporary forms of religion as aware of the idolatry of race. Niebuhr squarely places the task of redemption in this area within the spheres of the organized churches but is not too complimentary in his remarks about what the churches have done to relieve racial tension. He states:

> If, for instance, the church were to make a rigorous analysis of the motives that underlie the white man's pride and fear, if it allowed the word of God to be sharper than a two-edged sword, . . . it might help white people to see to what degree the very hysteria of their attack upon the Negro is the evidence of an uneasy conscience.[1]

But the church in America has been woefully lax in making this penetrating experience a part of the repentance process. It is a well known fact that the American churches

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Negro Issue in America," Love and Justice, p. 144.

have remained predominantly segregated. Consequently, if the racial problem is to be solved, it will be solved through an educational process. The schools will develop national disciplinary control as they direct students toward this type of repentance experience.

Niebuhr apparently looks upon repentance as a paradoxical experience which includes a personal, inner experience and an outer, communal experience. The first becomes a dynamic factor in terms of man's personal relationship with God; the second becomes a dynamic factor in terms of man's relationship with God expressed in man's relationships with others. The church, when it adheres to the tenets of Christian love, becomes a guiding influence in this vital paradoxical experience. The school, when it develops forms of social disciplinary control, becomes the force that makes possible this paradoxical experience. The pragmatic test of the school requires that its part in the repentance process lead the individual to the place where he recognizes the hypocricies and artificialities which are a part of day by day living.

The second part of a true repentance experience alerts man to the fact that all men possess a natural dignity in the eyes of God. In his discussion of this facet of repentance, Niebuhr is cautious and avoids the use of platitudes. The God-given dignity of man assumes a much deeper connotation than glib statements about the equality

of all men. In fact, Niebuhr sets about to disprove this naive interpretation of the racial problem and searches for a deeper, more spiritually oriented solution. In commenting on this naivete, Niebuhr refers to a Primer on Race, issued by the Council on Christian Social Progress of the Northern Baptist Convention. The primer declares: "Science concludes that there is no good evidence of inborn mental differences between races."[1] To which Niebuhr replies:

> All this marshalling of scientific evidence for the essential equality of the races is perfectly good propaganda for the Christian idea of racial brotherhood. Yet there is something faulty with this scientific treatment of the race issue from the Christian standpoint. Most of our modern anthropologists assume that race bigots are ignorant of the facts of life and that they have been confused by certain superficial differences in racial traits to assume the inferiority of the minority group.[2]

Niebuhr rejects this scientific approach to the race problem, stating that it is based upon history, and history illustrates that any group, when it becomes privileged, tends to become a superior race. The mere proof of a fact scientifically does not penetrate the depths of the racial problem; Niebuhr states that the predisposition to think ill of a divergent group is a dark and terrible abyss of evil in the soul of man.[3] Racial prejudice is a form of

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, "Christian Faith and the Race Problem," Love and Justice, p. 125.

[2]Ibid., p. 125.

[3]Ibid., p. 126.

hatred that grows out of man's selfish nature. Niebuhr sees man working his way out of the abyss only by means of comprehending the meaning of sin or evil:

> The preaching of the ideal possibilities of brotherhood that is not accompanied by a careful and pitiless analysis of the motives, of the inner fears, self-accusations, and self-justifications of those who deny brotherhood is not religious. It moves on the plane of secular idealism and does not bring the terror of the judgments of the living God to bear upon the soul. Only if this is done can the mercy of God also heal the hurt that men have in their own heart and that prompts them to hurt each other.[1]

Repentance, then, in its final analysis, as far as the educational experience is concerned, leads man to see his unworthiness before God and also his hope in God. It should become the basis for a type of world brotherhood; it should provide direction in the area of disciplinary control in that when man perceives his utter dependance on God, he will not be quite so prone to elevate himself to the point of ostentatious exhibitions of self-superiority.

This attitude toward the race problem, then, provides a guiding principle in the area of disciplinary control for the educator. For through Niebuhr's insistance upon repentance, he is advocating that repentance be sufficiently penetrating to reveal the hypocrisies of selfish living. True repentance makes the individual aware of his fragmentary condition; in order for him to remove some of the insufficiencies of this condition, he must develop cer-

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Negro Issue in America," op. cit., p. 144.

tain patterns of self-control.

Thus, the task of the educator becomes one of developing patterns of self-control, based upon spiritual intelligence. In doing this, his role becomes a dialectical role: his entire educational impact must be objective enough to have meaning for the student, but subjective enough to warrant student participation and experience. Disciplinary control must be a part of the student's outward expression of inner strengths. Disciplinary control must be a part of the student's personal fortitude. But to state that the student must have personal fortitude is one thing; for him to possess spiritual strength and to apply that strength to his personal situation is another thing. For this reason, education which deals with personal control and disciplinary action must be education that is not artificial nor completely vicarious to the student; it must be a part of his daily spiritual experience.

Niebuhr's concept of economic and political justice is one in which the ideal of Christian love is the ideal norm for ethical conduct. But as he applies that norm directly to human conflict in the realistic world with concern for political and economic injustices, he points out that it is an ideal or a product which becomes possible only when more directive or pragmatic measures are applied in the realms of human existence. Recognizing that the intermediate stage between selfishness and love is justice,

he makes justice the pragmatic, workable plan for disciplinary control. As he specifically works out his system of social ethics, he breaks violently with the naive optimism of liberalism and the glibness of authoritarianism. The following quotation contains the core of Niebuhr's pragmatic, dialectical, social ethics and states his dialecticism as it bridges the gap between the idealism of Christian love and the harsh reality of social experience:

> Once it is recognized that the stubbornness of human selfishness makes the achievement of justice in human society no easy matter, it ought to be possible to see that war is but a vivid revelation of certain perennial aspects of human history. Life is never related to life in terms of a perfect and loving conformity of will with will. Where there is sin and selfishness there must be a struggle for justice; and this justice is always partially an achievement of our love for the other, and partially a result of our yielding to his demands and pressures. The intermediate norm of justice is particularly important in the institutional and collective relationships of mankind. But even in individual and personal relations the ultimate level of sacrificial self-giving is not reached without an intermediate level of justice. On this level the first consideration is not that life should be related to life through the disinterested concern of each for the other, but that life should be prevented from exploiting, enslaving, or taking advantage of other life. Sometimes this struggle takes very tragic forms.
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> It is important for Christians to remember that every structure of justice, as embodied in political and economic institutions: (a) contains elements of injustice that stand in contradiction to the law of love; (b) that it contains higher possibilities of justice that must be realized in terms of institutions and structures; and (c) that it must be supplemented by the graces of individual and personal generosity and mercy. Yet when the mind is not confused by utopian illusions it is not difficult to recognize genuine achievements of justice and to feel under obligation to defend them against the threats of tyranny and the negation of justice.

> Love must be regarded as the final flower and fruit of justice. When it is substituted for justice it degenerates into sentimentality and may become the accomplice of tyranny.[1]

In this statement, Niebuhr discerns that dialecticalism becomes the only practical method for solving the world's ills, especially in the areas of economics and politics. Christian love is still present, but that love has been tempered into the steel which cuts and hews at society until all forms of exploitation have been diminished.

When this theory of social ethics is applied to the role of the educator, that role becomes a position of exceptional responsibility. For the enlightened educator does not have the smug assurance of authoritarianism nor the naive optimism of liberalism. He is working pragmatically with the development of youth who even in their educational relationships are exploiting and being exploited; in fact, the educator himself is experiencing this ebb and flow in the drama of human struggle. The guiding principle becomes the creation of a social situation in which all problems, insofar as it is possible in the human drama, are worked out on the basis of justice--of justice which approaches the mystical norm of Christian love but is not necessarily directed by it--of justice which builds, through its approach to that mystical norm, a practical, workable norm which will guarantee higher forms of justice in the

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, "Christian Faith and the World Crises," Love and Justice, pp. 282-283.

ethical relationships of man. The dynamic force of this social situation becomes the method of disciplinary control in all social institutions, including the educational structures.

CHAPTER VII

AUTHORITY IN EDUCATION

The problem of man's exploitation of his fellowman has been apparent since the beginning of world history. The Greeks with their democratic idealism were aware of this problem. Plato accepted the theory that in a society there will naturally be those who will rule over the lives of others; that some will utilize and benefit from the mechanical skills of others. In his plan or scheme for controlling exploitation, the exploitation was to be kept at a minimum through the beneficent wisdom of the philosopher kings. In their wisdom they were to control the society by skillful and tactful methods of pre-conditioning.

Among the early Hebrews a similar philosophy of society developed. In this system, established by Moses, there were Levite kings or judges who ruled over the masses of the society, providing for their personal livelihood by utilizing the sacrificial products of the common laborers.

On the contemporary scene, numerous examples indicate that all of the problems associated with the use of authority have not been solved. This is especially true of authority in education. Consequently, this study, which

attempts to comprehend and to evaluate Niebuhr's theory of authority, seeks to analyze the problem objectively. For in every system in which organization occurs, either formally or informally, there is some form of authority which controls that organization.

In searching for a definition of authority, the writings of Chester I. Barnard, whose The Functions of the Executive has become a classic in the field, are useful. Barnard has defined authority as follows:

> Authority is the character of a communication (order) in a formal organization by virtue of which it is accepted by a contributor to, or a "member" of, the organization as governing the action he contributes; that is, as governing or determining what he does or is not to do so far as the organization is concerned. According to this definition, authority involves two aspects: first, the subjective, the personal, the accepting of a communication as authoritative, . . . and second, the objective aspect--the character in the communication by virtue of which it is accepted. . . .[1]

This definition is adequate and supplies some basis for an understanding of authority. Its one weakness, however, lies in the fact that it is concerned primarily with formal structures and formal authority; in educational circles there is some authority that is exerted on an informal basis and is actually promoted through informal association and communication. Consequently, this study turns to a broader discussion in the field of authority and discovers in the translation of Max Weber's Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft

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[1]Chester I. Barnard, The Functions of the Executive, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954, p. 163.

by Henderson and Parsons that the translators have rendered Weber's definition as follows: "'Imperative control' (Herrschaft) is the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a group of persons."[1]

Having thus established a definition of authority, Weber then lists the possible forms of legitimate authority:

> There are three pure types of legitimate authority. The validity of their claims to legitimacy may be based on:
>
> 1. Rational grounds--resting on a belief in the "legality" of patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands (legal authority).
>
> 2. Traditional grounds--resting on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority under them (traditional authority).
>
> 3. Charismatic grounds--resting on devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him (charismatic authority).[2]

In those states which follow democratic patterns of government, the attempt is usually to employ rational-legal forms of authority. The leaders are elected by the people--elected on the basis of their ability to perform the particular tasks of leadership for which they are elected. In the most idealistic forms of democracy, every citizen of the state becomes a participant in the total authority of

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[1]Max Weber, The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, translated by A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, New York: Oxford University Press, 1947, p. 152.

[2]Ibid., p. 328.

the state, exerting that authority at the voting booth. When the theory of bureaucracy is utilized in a rational-legal system of authority, certain leaders are appointed to specific positions, again on the basis of their technocratic skill in the particular area to which they are appointed.

Traditional authority is usually found in more primitive cultures. There is a tendency for primitive cultures to embrace traditional authority, to turn later to charismatic authority with the advancement of civilization, and then to turn even later to some form of rational-legal authority. In those primitive cultures where the society is usually tribal, the traditional chief is usually found. But in those tribal societies, it is not at all unusual to find elements of charisma developing, especially in the acquiring of a new chief. On the other hand, the more civilized states frequently vacillate between charisma and rational-legalism, and sometimes bring in elements of traditional authority.

Charisma as a predominant force is most usually found in modern states in the forms of totalitarian governments. Hitler in Germany and Mussolini in Italy, with their Fascistic systems of government, based their authority on charisma. Fidel Castro in Cuba is attempting to guide a charismatic state at the present time. Although Marxism was predominantly rational-legal in its earlier theories, practical experience in Communistic Russia is

filled with illustrations of authority which is basically charismatic.

Charisma has also usually been the motivating form of authority in religious circles. Whether or not Jesus of Nazareth planned to establish a permanent system of religion is still open to question, and, if he did plan to establish one, whether or not he planned that its ongoing form of authority should be charismatic is similarly open to question. His personal experiences are certainly expressive of charismatic authority. From that day, religious systems have historically tended to be either traditional or charismatic, with a predominance on charisma. Weber used the hierarchical system of the Roman Catholic Church, with its theory of the infallibleness of the Pope, as one of his specific examples of charisma.[1] However, the application does not end at this point. For in Protestant circles, even in the most congregational or sect forms of Protestantism, even in the smallest of congregations, when the minister is ordained on the basis of a "call" or on the basis of inherent personality traits, and not on the basis of technical proficiency, the authority has become charismatic. Even in those congregations or "gatherings" where there is no officially ordained minister but in which some resident of the community rises up as the "bishop" or leader of the group on the basis of his "natural" leadership, he has become a charismatic

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[1] Ibid., pp. 371-373.

leader.

This factor is important for education in the United States. Historically, education was managed predominantly under religious auspices and for a long time the teachers were ordained clergymen or members of certain religious orders. Today, the influence of the church-related colleges is still being felt and in those institutions in which a large number of staff members consist of ordained clergymen or "dedicated" laymen, the necessity for understanding the various theories of authority becomes apparent, for this understanding is directly related to the student's developing philosophy of life and to his acquisition of those technical skills which will enable him to live in a technical society. On the other hand, the same analysis can be applied to secular systems of education. In those institutions, the theoretical form of authority is rational-legal, but whenever a superintendent or a president is employed on the basis of his personality instead of on the basis of his administrative skill, the form of authority becomes charismatic. In still another consideration, if, in the secular institution, the rights of academic freedom--that is, the recognition of employees as expert in their specific fields --is ignored, the authority is charismatic. It is even possible to have the most ideal forms of academic freedom and yet have charisma authority in the classroom. For it is possible, even in the most democratically liberal of schools, to have teachers whose teaching procedures reflect

a concept of "divine right" rather than an adequate supply of technocratic skill in a particular field of study.

Clearly for Niebuhr, ultimate authority in the universe rests with God and is revealed in Scripture. Necessarily, therefore, he has a wider perspective on the problem than does one whose view is limited to natural surroundings. Through this wider perspective, his concept of authority states that authority cannot be confined within the limits usually ascribed to it by traditional thought and historical Christianity. Niebuhr does possess a degree of quasi-optimism about the improvement of man's condition in this world of social experience. One of these is in the area of individual economic improvement;[1] the second is in the area of the establishment of a system of world order.[2] However, it should be pointed out that these optimistic views are a part of Niebuhr's idealistic metaphysics and are not to serve as actual directive measures in his pragmatic interpretation of society. These idealistic optimisms become the connecting links between the spiritual and the physical--the forces which propel man toward the achievement of that form of pure justice which is the heart of Christian love. But they are only motivating forces--they are not guiding principles which will effectively

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. 256.

[2]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness, p. 188.

develop simple forms of justice in all the relationships of a living and struggling society. To Niebuhr, in his later and most mature thought, the idealism with which Christian liberalism sought to build a new world--the Kingdom of God --is illusionary and unrealistic. The artificial piety with which the pacifists "turn the other cheek" is also illusionary and is the evasion of participation in the desperate struggles of social responsibility.[1] The role of human experience demands that all responsible persons become involved in the struggle for the rights of human justice--for the elimination of all forms of exploitation from the social scene.

The first and primary principle in authority in Niebuhr's writings is that all human relationships must be directed, insofar as it is possible, by the virtues of honesty and sincerity. Or, to attack the problem as Niebuhr does, no social system can long endure which has hypocrisy and artificiality inherent within the lives of the individuals who make up that social system. In discussing the problem of world government, Niebuhr states: "The law in fact presupposes . . . mutual trust; and where it is lacking, no constitution can function."[2] No system of organization is any stronger than the mutual trust which grows

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Quaker Way," Love and Justice, pp. 296-301.

[2]Reinhold Niebuhr, "Can We Organize the World?" Love and Justice, p. 216.

out of the honest and sincere relationships which exist between the people of the organization. The words, honest and sincere are not used here in an artificial fashion. Niebuhr is constantly striving for pure forms of communication. If people are to adjust to living satisfactorily with other people in this world, and if the world is to survive its present crisis, some social patterns must be established that are constructed around the true identity of the individual. This becomes the problem of the individual--the problem of the discovering of the human identity. The end of this searching is not easy for in the complexities of human nature no person is able completely to reveal his true identity to himself--much less understand that of his neighbor or reveal his identity to his neighbor. But Niebuhr would rest his theory of authority on the premise that man can be much more honest and sincere than he generally is.

In analyzing the complex social structure of America, including the economic, political, and religious patterns of the nation, Niebuhr states that two forces have combined and have become the basis of that social structure. These are the charismatic power with which sectarian religion conquered the frontier and the optimistic hope which made economic success the mark of a good and happy life.[1]

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, "Piety and Secularism in America," The Atlantic, (November, 1957), C:180-184.

These two forces have united until the American ideal of the good and happy man is that man who is prosperous and powerful.

Niebuhr, however, as he probes more penetratingly into the problem of authority in a comparatively recent book, The Structure of Nations and Empires, reveals that the delineations of authority are not as easily circumscribed as Weber's analysis would indicate. Niebuhr's basic thesis that life, including man, is of a dialectical nature, necessitates that his concept of authority provide for this dialecticalism. In this work he observes:

> Man is that curious creature, who, though partly determined and limited by the necessities of nature, also possesses a rational freedom which enables him to harness the forces of nature in the world and to transmute the natural appetites and drives in his own nature so that he can conceive ends and entertain ambitions which exceed the limits which pure nature sets for all her creatures except man. Man's freedom consists not only of the rational capacity for analysis and conceptual understanding which enables human beings to transcend the flux of temporal events by conceiving the patterns which give meaning to the flux. It consists, in addition, of the unique capacity to transcend himself and the flux of finite causes in which he, himself, is involved. Therefore he is able to choose between various alternative ends which present themselves to him and also to choose between the various forces which presumably determine his actions.[1]

Niebuhr, here, obviously, is describing man generally, but since general man is a collective extension of particular man, the statement is relevant in that it provides a basis for the individual's attitude toward authority.

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Structure of Nations and Empires, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959, pp. 287-288.

Beyond those natural boundaries which limit man there is a surging drive for the expression of individual freedom, for the attainment of individual goals. The fact that these goals are beyond the reach of man's grasp does not alter the truth that the constant striving for attainment is present. For Niebuhr continues:

> It is man's ineluctable fate to work on tasks which he cannot complete in his brief span of years, to accept responsibilities the true ends of which he cannot fulfill, and to build communities which cannot realize the perfection of his visions.[1]

These two statements taken alone would place Niebuhr's concept of authority parallel to Weber's rational-legal system. Niebuhr has stated that man has the capability "to choose between the various forces which presumably determine his actions" and that "man accepts responsibilities which are beyond the powers of his ability." In the realm of authority, these statements recognize the possibilities of man's freedom and if these alone directed a concept of authority, that concept would provide for democratic processes.

Niebuhr, however, does not envision the structure, whether it be social, political, or educational, as existing in such a neatly defined situation; the limitations are not so easily described. Democracy is a utopian ideal and it may be an ideal worthy of man's support. But in the area of social experience its limits become apparent and become

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[1] Ibid., p. 298.

influential forces in the controlling of the authority. The powers or prestige of the state are not always the result of cooperation on the part of the members of the organization. Niebuhr states:

> The prestige of a democratic government is clearly only partly derived from the idea that it speaks with the "consent of the governed." It must fashion equilibria of social and political power which will impress the people with its capacity to preserve order and to extend justice. If it fails in this purpose generally, if it operates only with the confused notion of Rousseau's "general will," it will either lose the tacit consent of the whole people, haunted by the fear of anarchy, or it will lose the confidence of a section of the people, which feels itself particularly defrauded of justice. In that case it must meet rebellion with force.[1]

Furthermore, the Anglo-Saxon democratic tradition recognizes this necessity for some form of a strong central power in the actual experiences of social existence. In another statement Niebuhr makes this necessity more factual as he states:

> The people may have "a right to resume their original liberty"; but a simple theory which makes the principle of consent both a right and a power obscures the components of authority, both force and prestige, which implement the right in specific instances. Fortunately the Anglo-Saxon democratic tradition, in both England and America, was not limited to a theory which only implied, but did not explicate, the actual experience by which the people achieved their rights, while the prestige and power of government remained in its traditional position.[2]

In order to clarify fully his meaning of "force and prestige" authority, Niebuhr states:

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[1] Ibid., p. 61.

[2] Ibid., p. 56.

> For the traditional "majesty," a word which described the authority of the state in traditional governments, we (in America) have substituted the more inclusive but weaker concept of "prestige" in order to include the reality in foreign relations as well as in domestic national life. We have assumed that "power" and "authority" are in essence synonymous because they both describe the capacity of a government or state to gain obedience or compliance. The two sources of this power or authority are "prestige" or "majesty"--which includes all the forces of tradition and history which induce obedience and compliance--and "force," the capacity to coerce. Usually the "majesty" of a state is the very source of its authority to use force, for the sake of coercing recalcitrants. But force, while always minimal in a well-established state, in comparison with "prestige" or "majesty," may itself be a source of authority, at the beginning of a reign or after a revolution. Coercion enforces obedience until the authority of the government has been established, when it may win uncoerced consent by its prestige.[1]

A democratic government, then, can be democratic, using the term in its generally accepted definition, which regards some form of equality, to only a limited extent. In this discussion, "majesty" and "prestige" can be identified as having those attributes which Weber calls charismatic. This "authority by consent" becomes even more authoritarian when Niebuhr identifies the terms as traditional. Thus his concept of authority has been expanded to include elements of both charisma and traditionalism, and even goes so far as to recognize the necessity of using force to maintain that authority. But in order to preserve some of the desired ideals of democracy, he limits that authoritarianism when he writes:

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[1] Ibid., p. 8.

> If the sources of democratic governments are fully measured, it will be clear that the prestige of a state which allows the hazardous alteration of particular governments by explicit consent rests upon this (the) implicit trust of the people. This confidence is necessary to overcome disappointments in the preservation of what they conceive to be their vital interests in the short run. Implicit consent is, in short, not the fruit of a purely rational process or calculation. It is informed by emotions and attitudes which are not quickly formed and re-formed.[1]

From this statement it becomes obvious that Niebuhr's concept of authority, recognizing the necessity for forms of traditional and charismatic force, also recognizes that authority is limited and directed by the attitudes of the governed. This then leads to his summarizing statement about authority which follows:

> Through the long and tortuous decades modern men have learned that the absolute and irresponsible power of traditional monarchs is dangerous to the justice of the community, tending to sacrifice it so much to the boon of order that the order becomes more and more oppressive in a community of varying vitalities and awakening and growing interests. But they have also learned that the majesty of government is not simply derived from the rational and explicit consent of the people; and that the order and justice, necessary for the preservation of its prestige, are not simply the fruits of freedom or of reason. They are difficult products of a free expression and manipulation of social forces.[2]

Thus, Niebuhr has rejected any form of authority that is based on any of Weber's pure forms of authority. In an earlier essay, Niebuhr has rejected charismatic authority more explicitly on the theory that it blinds the masses to

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[1] Ibid., p. 62.

[2] Ibid., p. 64.

the illusionary characteristics of their condition.[1] Although he does not attack traditional concepts of authority violently, he does note the injustices which grow out of one family's accumulation of vast amounts of wealth.[2] This kind of authority tends to enslave the masses and subjects them to the whims and caprices of the few who are powerfully wealthy. He rejects pure bureaucracy, not only in his remarks in The Structure of Nations and Empires, but also in The Nature and Destiny of Man, stating that there are limits to planning and that man is too weak on his own power to fulfill the responsible role demanded of him in a bureaucracy and will therefore allow himself to become a part of a regimented machine.[3] This rejection becomes even more apparent in his statement that in America, the people are now in danger of becoming the servants of an economic system.[4] This type of servitude certainly violates Niebuhr's theory that man's greatest end is to transcend his temporal surrounding and to achieve true identity in mystical experiences.

Consequently, according to both Niebuhr's earlier and later statements, his concept of authority must be based

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, "How Philanthropic Is Henry Ford?" Love and Justice, pp. 98-99.

[2]Ibid., p. 101.

[3]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, I:111.

[4]Reinhold Niebuhr, "Piety and Secularism in America," The Atlantic, p. 181.

on man's basic nature--man's "image of God" self and his carnal self. In this the primary elements will be struggle and compromise. The system would surely have a structural pattern somewhat like Weber's rational-legal pattern in that the leaders should be selected on the basis of merit. But after they are elected on this basis, they then must rely upon limited forms of charisma and traditionalism for the force necessary to perpetuate their authority. For he states explicitly:

> Our best hope, both of a tolerable political harmony and of an inner peace, rests upon our ability to observe the limits of human freedom even while we responsibly exploit its creative possibilities.[1]

Furthermore, instead of Niebuhr's authority relying upon optimistic scientific research as is true of rational-legal authority, it would rely on struggle and compromise, with the hope that Christian love might supply a form of metaphysical norm. In this complex system of authority, Niebuhr's faith in the validity of the democratic principle indicates that he believes higher forms of justice can grow out of struggle and compromise.

In addition, Niebuhr's ideal of authority would contain some spiritual charisma in that he regards the Hebrew prophets as true leaders of their day. Similarly, he would ascertain that certain persons develop their "image of God" characteristics more than their carnal characteris-

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Structure of Nations and Empires, p. 299.

tics, and that these persons surely possess a spiritual insight that is beyond those insights of persons who develop a more carnal nature. However, it should be noted that Niebuhr's identification of pride as the chief sin of man places limits and restrictions on this charismatic leader. For Niebuhr, spiritual charisma is a true gift of God but whenever the leader becomes consciously aware of his charismatic leadership, he has fallen prey to the sin of pride and has made his charisma carnal. True spiritual charisma must be unconscious and also used in altruistic accomplishments. Whatever there is of it is subjective and is a part of man's "above the world" experience.

When Niebuhr's theory of authority is applied to the structural pattern of an educational institution, that structure will, on the surface appear similar to Weber's rational-legal conception. Outwardly, it will resemble experimentalism's pragmatic conception. However, where in pragmatism individuals work together cooperatively, possessing the optimistic view that they are building a new culture and the perfect society through that cooperation, Niebuhr's individuals will know that that cooperation consists of struggle and compromise--oftentimes vicious and bitter struggle and reluctant compromise, between all the branches of the educational system and also between individuals personally. In addition, the goal of the authority in the

institution will be to maintain order and to preserve justice among the individuals in the institution, but the final force and authority of all of life will remain beyond the boundaries of the physical institution. The spiritually alert educators will know that their final achievement--the attainment of their final destiny--is beyond the limits and powers of man and that destiny resides in that mysterious Force which men call God.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to develop a religiously oriented philosophy of education through a study of the works of Reinhold Niebuhr. In this concluding section the outstanding weaknesses and strengths of that philosophy will be considered as well as a general assessment of Niebuhr as an educational philosopher.

In Niebuhr's basic philosophy, the most significant weakness is his tendency to disregard the implications of modern psychology. This is especially true in the area which deals with the nature of man. In Niebuhr's effort to revitalize the Christian faith through an interpretation of man as a sinner, he noticeably ignores much of the psychological learning of the past hundred years. To him, man departs from the norm of virtuous conduct because man is a sinner. Very little is said in Niebuhr's writings about the psychological factors which might cause those ethical departures.

This fact creates a chasm in the realm of human experience. The historical Christian ideal in the area of more personal social contacts is too far removed from the

world of real experience to be practical. Niebuhr states that justice should be the intermediate step between hate and love, but in the world of actual experience, there needs to be an intermediate step between hate and justice. That step is modern psychology. Perhaps the process of educating youth to perceive the causes of fears and frustrations will not come easily; perhaps it will be a slow development. But a psychological understanding of inner hopes, desires, fears, and frustrations will provide youth with better resources for meeting both the interior and exterior conflicts of human existence. If repentance and conversion could deliver man from his hates and fears, the world would long ago have "beat its plowshares into pruning hooks." The leap from hate to justice is too great; the growing youth needs the aid of psychological understanding.

This same weakness is apparent in Niebuhr's discussion on the problem of sex. Perhaps it is true that sex should achieve spiritual dimensions and that both Catholicism and Protestantism have failed to regard sex sacramentally. But to state simply that sex should become a sacrament lays the foundation for a type of social conduct that could develop modern forms of fertility cults similar to those which existed in primitive cultures. Again, the ascent from the world of actual experience to the idealistic, spiritual realm is too great; the leap is too far for modern man to make without the aid of disciplined psychological instruction.

These factors challenge a religiously oriented philosophy of education to give psychology high priority in its total effort. If any form of religion is to survive the test of the present spiritual crisis, the youth of today need to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the psychological nature of man and to associate that understanding with the experiences of life. A comprehensive understanding of this nature will probably meet with resistance in contemporary religious circles. For it will reveal the fact that traumatic experiences of repentance and conversion usually result in at least minor forms of perversion. This understanding will reveal the masochistic tendencies which historically have been a part of the Christian interpretation of life, and also the sadistic tendencies which accompany other forms of religion such as Islam. Defenders of the faith will resist the idea that certain church leaders such as Paul, Origen, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin accepted masochistic, and in some instances, sadistic roles as a part of Christian faith. But only as the inquiring and growing youth of today grasp this fact will they be able to understand and utilize the spiritual forces that are inherently theirs. Or to state the assumption more practically, as the youth of today confront the historical truths of religious faith with the scientific, psychological fact of man's nature, and out of this develop a new religious faith, they will

find a faith that is relevant to their lives. Any other type of religious experience will not be meaningful to them. In many ways the resistance with which religious circles meet the psychological facts today is quite similar to the resistance with which religious circles met the mathematical, scientific, and physical discoveries of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Man is a sinner, but some of that sin grows out of his early experiences in life and is not necessarily a product of Providence. He will overcome that "sin" as he better understands himself. Historically, repentance and conversion have not been sufficient; psychological understanding becomes the necessary link that will make repentance and conversion relevant.

In today's naturalistic society, in spite of all the fears and frustrations that are a part of that society, the fear of God's judgment will no longer frighten the thinking man to the extent that he will lead an exemplary life. In this situation, the unthinking man might turn to traumatic forms of religious fervor that will result in perverted experiences; but the thinking man will either reject all religious experience or turn to more realistic ways for confronting today's problems. For that thinking man, the enlightenment of psychological understanding, when it is fused with the hope of Christian faith, can provide the means by which he can lead a life that is acceptable to himself and to his society.

The second weakness that is apparent in Niebuhr's philosophy, as far as educational philosophy is concerned, is in Niebuhr's emphasis on the sinful nature of man. Niebuhr is so preoccupied with the reality of man's depravity, he fails to see the reality of man's altruism. It may be true that in a realistic interpretation of man's accomplishments, the depravity has historically overshadowed the altruism, but this does not eliminate the fact that altruism might still exist. In order to find any theory of social progress in the writings of Niebuhr, one must search a plethora of social accusations and state this theory only by inference. Perhaps Dewey's theory of the reconstruction of society through education is somewhat idealistic and optimistic; but at the same time, a penetrating criticism that is not alleviated with some form of hope can easily result in a feeling of despair. Surely in all the dramas of human history, man's altruism has served as a leavening process sufficient to warrant at least some faint gleams of hope. Niebuhr infers this in his ruthless attacks upon the injustices of contemporary culture, but a more positive statement would provide educators with a more enthusiastic approach to their total task. Without this hope and enthusiasm, their task can be a very futile effort.

The outstanding strength in Niebuhr's basic philosophy is in the area of absolutes. He has presented cogent arguments to show that paradoxes can be absolutes. In a

philosophical system that is influenced by naturalism, it becomes quite easy to categorize all paradoxes as unrealistic--to state that a paradox is merely a failure to confront life realistically. This, in its end result, leads to forms of nihilistic thinking.

The attempt to reconcile religious idealism and practical living simply cannot be accomplished through rationalistic devices. There are too many inexplainable assumptions. Rationally, the omnipotence of God becomes impossible if one accepts the theory of the freedom of man. If man has the privilege of disobeying the will of God, then God is no longer omnipotent; God's power has been limited, at least in the life of the individual man. The same discrepancy is apparent in the acceptance of a theory of evil. If God's will is for perfect goodness, and if there is a possibility for less than perfect goodness, then God is no longer omnipotent. But Niebuhr avoids the tragedy of nihilistic confusion by stating that the nature of God is paradoxical. This paradoxical element in the nature of God seems to be about the only way that rational man can still retain any faith in the absolute nature of God.

When Niebuhr's philosophy is applied to the problems of education, that philosophy presents a significant weakness in that Niebuhr does not adhere to any consistent philosophical pattern. His theory of metaphysics is stable since it is based upon an idealistic spiritual reality. At

this point, however, his philosophy becomes insecure since it vacillates around his dialectical interpretation of man and of society. A stable theory of knowledge is extremely important to education since so much of education is confronted with the acquisition of knowledge. When the theory of knowledge is not interpreted clearly, those factors which relate to knowledge will not be defined clearly.

This is also true of value. Education strives to develop within students some distinct images of that which is valuable in life. When those values are stated in vacillatory terms which move indiscriminately from the real to the ideal, the end result will be one of confusion.

This weakness becomes apparent in the discussion of the purposes and aims of education. The first two aims as stated in Chapter III, which relate to the ideals of Christianity, can be stated clearly and succinctly. The other aims, which relate to the social and physical experiences of the student, cannot be stated with as much assurance and clarity. They are vaguely inferred in Niebuhr's writings, but his dialecticalism makes their definition vague. Confronting the student with the elements of truth is surely a part of Niebuhr's plan for the bettering of humanity, but when truth remains a spiritual ideal beyond the comprehension of natural man, that truth is inaccessible. The inference that a better society is possible is apparent in Niebuhr's writings, but the statement that an ideal society is impossible

makes the inference somewhat meaningless. Thus, the aims and purposes of education become ambiguous.

There is, however, a significant strength in Niebuhr's purposes and aims of education. His unwavering faith in the omnipotence of God with regard to historical destiny provides a secure foundation for a world that is searching for stability. An educational philosophy which is founded on an immovable faith in God should remain secure in spite of the ambiguousness of social conditions. A culture which has looked to itself long enough to discover that it cannot find anything but a nihilistic basis within itself can construct a relevant, religiously oriented culture around the theory of the omnipotence of God. An educational system which is confronted with the dialectical tendencies of history can possibly adjust to those dialectical tendencies with more stability if there is a Power above the world that is immovable.

Niebuhr's philosophical vacillation also influences the task of curriculum development. Niebuhr's weakness here is his proneness to offer adverse criticism of current efforts but hesitancy about offering constructive advice toward the construction of more effective procedures. Furthermore, the development of any clearly prescribed curriculum from Niebuhr is impossible since his criticisms are in the main general and do not relate to specific curriculum problems. His understanding of the curriculum is necessar-

ily based on inferences and generalizations.

Niebuhr's positive contribution in the area of curriculum development lies in his insistance that religion be a part of every student's education. For it is true that a student's comprehension of Western civilization is strengthened through an unbiased, objective study of those religious concepts which have been influential in the total humanities area.

The outstanding weakness in Niebuhr's concept of the nature of the learner is his failure to recognize the psychological nature of the student. The student, like man in general, is moved and directed by psychological impulses and any education which is not cognizant of this fact will have difficulty in motivating the student to his highest level of achievement.

In contrast, however, Niebuhr's concept of the nature of the learner can make a positive contribution to education through his concept of the learner as a unified, unique creature who is heir to both freedoms and limitations--who is at the same time "above the world" and "in the world." For this concept will enable the educator to regard the student as an individual with unique possibilities. It will also expand the educator's concept of the student in that the educator will be working with a creature who is responsive to both spiritual and physical inner impulses.

Niebuhr's dialectical theory of disciplinary control is weak in that it is based on an impossible-possibility theory. Christian love is the ultimate goal or aim in disciplinary control, but Christian love is impossible in actual experience. Thus, the educator finds himself somewhat bewildered as he struggles back and forth between hate, justice, and love.

The significant strength in Niebuhr's dialectical theory of disciplinary control grows out of his insistance on honesty and sincerity. This insistance can provide a contribution for contemporary education through its revelation of the hypocritical and artificial tendencies which are a part of contemporary cultural experience. For man is hypocritical and artificial. He is constantly making certain idealistic pronouncements orally, but living according to radically different patterns. Too many empirical studies into cultural behavior have demonstrated the truth of this charge for it to be refuted. Man sings about the ideal of liberty and equality, especially in religious circles, but resists making any changes that will alleviate the tensions of racial prejudice. Man proclaims the ideal of brotherhood, but his thought is not significantly disturbed by the fact of the starving masses. He upholds the ideal of economic justice, but except in those experiences in which individuals are affected by labor disputes, they are lethargic. Man deplores the evils of war, but is not anxiously

concerned about the emergence of new and free nations. Man talks about equal educational and occupational opportunities, but is reluctant to confront the problem of over-population with realistic studies into the possibilities of birth control. In most of the major issues which confront society today--race, labor, political justice, war, over-population--man makes his statements in platitudes that humanity is not willing to support nor to live by.

This fact is most significant in educational circles, for the youth who sit in classrooms are aware of these discrepancies. Their candid conversations, their responses to class discussion, their overt and covert revolt, all confirm this fact. And yet, they discover that in order for them to survive educationally, they too must make this artificiality a part of their basic patterns. For too often the student is interested in achieving marks or grades in his studies instead of being concerned about an educational experience. In too many cases the student is forced to reflect the teacher's thinking rather than express his own creative thought. His awareness of this fact provides one of the causes for student revolt. Niebuhr's repeated emphasis on the artificialities and hypocrisies of contemporary culture could direct educators to seek more realistic expressions of true social ethics and religious idealism.

One of Niebuhr's most obvious weaknesses is in the

area of authority. For there is no clear definition of authority nor any plan for cooperative activity in his writings. His vacillation from charisma to traditionalism to rational-legal patterns of social structure fails to provide a prescribed pattern for social conduct. Carried to their extremes, his discussions of authority could lead to overpowering tyranny on the one hand and to violent revolution on the other.

But in between these extremes, Niebuhr's contribution to a comprehension of authority becomes apparent and provides a strengthening influence for educational philosophy. For paradoxically, history does reveal that there is a degree of accuracy in his analyzations. In attempting realistically to confront these paradoxes, contemporary education can benefit from Niebuhr's struggle and compromise method for settling differences.

In America, noticeably, although the ideal of Christian humility has been a part of national ethics, the personal goal for success has resulted in many forms of conflict. Democratic cooperation is a beautiful ideal, but in many instances its beauty has been destroyed by the conflicts which grow out of personal ambitions. Perhaps this beauty cannot be achieved under existing social conditions, but it can be more nearly proximated when individuals are free to express their ambitions through struggle and compromise. Such a program requires wisdom and judiciousness

on the part of all those who are involved in the processes of an educational institution, but where there is opportunity for free expression with the privilege of compromise, the result will be more realistic than that which is found in an idealistic pleading for cooperation or a charismatic demanding of obedience. The lines which separate the fields of academic activity among expert teachers cannot be drawn explicitly enough to avoid certain forms of exploitation. Consequently, Niebuhr's ethical theory of struggle and compromise is highly relevant to the democratic processes in educational institutions.

To evaluate Niebuhr as an educational philosopher becomes almost impossible since he himself denies that he is an educational philosopher. Yet he has, through his writings and his teaching in Union Theological Seminary, had a profound influence on the theological thinking of America and of the world. Undoubtedly, this influence has been felt in educational circles.

His chief contribution to future education should lie in two areas: (1) his undying determination to understand the reality of a situation and (2) his dialectical interpretation of man and of society.

His determination to find truth should be an inspiration to future educators. It will be perplexing and confusing because it has led him to make contradictory statements. The import of the contradictions, however,

diminish before the realization that he has had the courage to change his opinion when experience has proved that opinion to be in error.

Niebuhr's dialectical interpretation of man should prove valuable to future education because it should enable education to avoid wandering into extremism. Niebuhr's emphasis on the spiritual nature of man should keep education from becoming too obsessed with the material dimensions of life. On the other hand, his concern for social justice should save education from returning to the dangers of religious determinism.

Thus, Niebuhr is sufficiently alert to the seemingly insurmountable problems of human existence to balance his philosophy precariously between the different forms of extremism. In this, his philosophy parallels the efforts of conscientious educators throughout America.

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