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THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF MARTIN LUTHER
KING, JR.

THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA, PH.D., 1978

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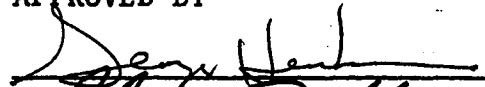
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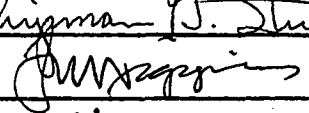
A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
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BY
CLYDE MUSE
Norman, Oklahoma
1978

THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

APPROVED BY



Chairman P. S. Stuart


DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

BY: CLYDE MUSE

MAJOR PROFESSOR: GEORGE HENDERSON, Ph.D.

This study was concerned with the development of the educational philosophy of Martin Luther King, Jr. Special consideration was given to his childhood, social class, education and developmental experiences. From primary and secondary sources King's philosophy was determined. His philosophy was then elaborated into its educational consequences.

Between 1955 and 1968, America experienced a period of social unrest that was second only to the Civil War of the 1860's. Black people--led by Martin Luther King, Jr.--set an example for the oppressed people of the world to imitate. Whether the action for freedom took a violent or nonviolent, moral or immoral, educated or illiterate form is the issue addressed by King's philosophy. His method presents an alternative problem-solving approach that deserves thorough consideration in view of the increasing potential for conflict in modern society.

King raised questions about America's institutions that pointed up the need for a radical restructuring of the architecture of American society. A new value system must replace the evils of racism, poverty and militarism. Economy must become more person-centered than property- and profit-centered and government must depend more on its moral power than its military power. Changes as fundamental as these must be effected by the basic institutions of a society, one of which is the school.

King's approach for the use of the school in effecting these basic changes in society is presented in this dissertation.

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THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Few voices heard in the twentieth century have spoken more eloquently or forcefully of the need for social change than that of Martin Luther King, Jr. His eloquence and force held thousands in rapt attention when he spoke of his dream for America at the Lincoln Memorial in 1963. He motivated thousands more to persevere even in the face of uncompromising opposition. Perhaps what breathed life into his words and enrobed them with vitality was King's honesty, commitment and involvement. He not only spoke of the need for social change, but initiated and led efforts to secure these changes. Social change, then, became the task that consumed most of his life.

While his utterances were many and his efforts pervasive, Martin Luther King, Jr. did not formulate a structured approach for abating the nation's educational problems. This is not to suggest that he failed to assign education a role in the overall program that he proposed. "Schools have to be infused with a mission if they are to be successful," he wrote. "The mission is clear: The rapid improvement of the school performance of Negroes and other poor children."¹ Speaking of the inadequacies of our schools for Black Americans, he concluded:

The United States is far from providing each child with as much education as he can use. Our school system still primarily functions as a system of exclusion. For the oldest generation of Negroes the time for effective educational remedies is already past; but there is still an enormous reservoir of talent among Negroes and poor youth. This society has to develop that talent. The unrealized capacities of many of our youth are an indictment of our society's lack of concern for justice and its proclivity for wasting human resources.²

It is important that we examine King's educational philosophy and extrapolate possible strategies for implementing his philosophy. To ignore this dimension of the man is to neglect a piece in his philosophy of human liberation.

¹Martin Luther King, Jr., Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community? New York: Harper & Row, 1967, p. 193.

²Ibid., p. 196.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study is: What was the educational philosophy of Martin Luther King, Jr.?

Review of the Literature

Four persons have written dissertations on Martin Luther King, Jr., that have relevance for our study. Each examines a different aspect of King's philosophy and its impact on society. Walter Haynes, Jr.'s The Political Philosophy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.³ is an inquiry into the political philosophy of King. Haynes defines and evaluates the nature and general character of King's political philosophy as well as the special concerns of those who helped to build it. In addition, he discussed the national attitudes toward King's activities.

By employing evaluative analysis--comparative and historical methods--Haynes attempts to determine the ultimate values and proposals for social action inherent in King's political ideology. The essential difference between Haynes' study and this dissertation is in objective. While both studies look at much of the same material, this study will focus on different issues. Specifically, Haynes studied King's writings to gain insight into his political thought, but ignores King's epistemology. Haynes' foremost objective was to determine King's philosophy and proposals

³Walton Haynes, Jr., "The Philosophy of Martin Luther King, Jr." (Ph.D. dissertation, Howard University, 1967).

as they influenced his political action. Clearly, from this same philosophy one can deduce King's concern for education.

Bennie E. Goodwin's dissertation, Martin Luther King, Jr.: American Social Educator,⁴ presents King as a social educator who, by advocating specific ideals, influenced a significant segment of twentieth century American society toward positive social change. Goodwin asserts that King's civil rights activities were nurtured with specific ideas and social action woven in a fabric of symbolism that demonstrates methodology and educational process worthy of affirming him as a major social educator of this century. This statement is possible because of Goodwin's definition of the term education: a dialogical process in which ideas are presented via symbols and/or symbolic acts with the intention of influencing the mutual thinking behavior of the participants toward a positive goal. Further, Goodwin's definition of education attempts to clarify the role of a social educator in two primary ways. First, it distinguishes the social educator's role from that of other persons in the society, and secondly, it distinguishes the role of the social educator from that of other educators.

While King's thought and activities have usually been described through the use of religious and military terminology, Goodwin hypothesized that King's overall pur-

⁴Bennie E. Goodwin, "Martin Luther King, Jr.: American Social Educator" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1974).

poses, perspectives, programs and procedures can legitimately be perceived as educational and that King can justifiably be seen as a social educator of considerable merit. Although Goodwin's study treats the educational techniques of King, it does not spell out his philosophy of education.

Clarence White, Jr.'s dissertation, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's Contribution to Education as a Black Leader,⁵ investigates the historical development of the theories and ideologies of several civil rights movements in general and the contribution to education by King in particular. He lists three objectives of the study: (1) to define King's theories and ideologies of various civil rights movements, (2) to examine the educational contribution of King as a Black leader, and (3) to show that human rights can exist only in a stable society that supports racial integration. In the treatment of the second objective, White asserts that King's contribution to education was primarily in his insisting that education concern itself with the moral as well as with the intellectual development of students. In this vein, King's system of teaching moral values made other subject clear. In the end, students should be able to apply their classroom moral education to life as a whole. In summary. White stated that King's major contribution to education was the assertion that the main task of formal

⁵Clarence White, Jr., "Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Contribution to Education as a Black Leader" (Ph.D. dissertation, Loyola University of Chicago, 1974).

education is to build up intelligence with moral character. White identified and classified King's ideas into a concise social, economic and political pattern, but he did not address King's formation of a broad educational philosophy.

Joseph Carpenter, Jr.'s dissertation, The Leadership Philosophy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: Its Educational Implications,⁶ is an attempt to show how King's unique personal and philosophical qualities were able to initiate, stimulate, coordinate and direct the activities of many Americans toward solutions to our social and educational problems.

Carpenter's research was limited to providing a historical analysis of the leadership philosophy of Martin Luther King, Jr. in the American racial crisis from December 5, 1955 to April 4, 1968. Within this time period, the basic research question was: What were the positive educational implications of Dr. King's leadership philosophy for the educational process in America? Two terms in the question had working definitions that one must be aware of in order to follow the development of the proposition. Positive educational implications was used in the sense that the nation was given specific proposals as well as definite guidelines wherein the various conflicting groups that

⁶Joseph Carpenter, Jr., "The Leadership Philosophy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: Its Educational Implications" (Ph.D. dissertation, Marquette University, 1970).

participate in the educational process may resolve their differences in the ever-changing social order--not with destructive violence, but via such constructive techniques as: (1) legal redress, (2) ballots, (3) economic boycotts, and (4) creative confrontation in the form of direct non-violent action. Leadership evolves around two interrelated conditions. First, the leader is one who initiates, stimulates, coordinates and directs activities of his followers in the solution of some common problem or the achievement of some specific social (as opposed to individual) goal. Second, individuals who achieve high status positions, or meet with notable success in terms of group value are likely to be identified as champions of the group's basic values, since they have achieved goals that the group considers important.

Quoting extensively from King's writings and speeches, Carpenter agreed with the critics who stated that King's educational proposals for the development of the new social order appear to be almost as idealistic as those found in Sir Thomas Moore's Utopia.

Lerone Bennett's, What Manner of Man,⁷ is a biography that treats the life of Dr. King under the subtopics of soil, seed, sower, symbol, and man. Insights gleaned from this

⁷Lerone Bennett, Jr., What Manner of Man (New York, Pocket Books, 1974).

treatment are invaluable in attempting to understand the total man. Andrew Billingsley's discussion of the King family in his book, Black Families in White America,⁸ shows that Martin's personality was nurtured in the fertile soil of dignity and self respect. This condition also characterized both his paternal and maternal forebears.

James Bales presents another perspective of King in his book, The Martin Luther King Story.⁹ A religious fundamentalist and a political conservative, Bales described King as an anarchist, apostate, pacafist, leftist and collaborator with Communists. Bales' adherence to fundamentalism (a twentieth century Protestant movement based on belief in the literal inerrance of the Scriptures, the second coming of Christ, the virgin birth, physical resurrection and the substitutionary atonement) and political conservatism (the disposition to preserve what is established) stand in clear contrast to the portraits of King painted by non-fundamentalists and politically liberal writers. Obviously, the fundamentalist view does not allow a positive reading of King's actions or writings.

⁸Andrew Billingsley, Black Families in White America (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1968).

⁹James D. Bales, The Martin Luther King Story (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Christian Crusade Publications, 1968).

Methodology

This is an historical/analytical study. The following procedure has been used. Special consideration has been given to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s childhood, social class, education and developmental experiences. Primary reference sources consist of King's books, speeches, and sermons. Secondary sources are materials written about him. From these data the author has attempted to determine King's philosophy, then elaborating his philosophical position into its educational consequences. Harry Broudy discusses this approach as follows:

Inasmuch as education aims at something called the good life, it is in ethics, metaphysics, and epistemology that we should find the formula for it. Pick a philosophy and see what sort of education you need to bring that kind of good life about . . . Using this method we can elaborate every philosophical position into its educational consequences--if any;--We begin by asking what the nature of reality (metaphysics), the nature of knowledge (epistemology), and the nature of goodness (ethics), then deduce the kind of curriculum, method, and school organization that would seem to follow from it.¹⁰

Significance of the Study

Whether they agreed or disagreed with his philosophy during his lifetime, most writers concede that King changed the course of history in America. With the wind of change blowing all over the world, members of minority groups are rising up demanding their place in the sun. Black people

¹⁰Harry S. Broudy, Building a Philosophy of Education 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1961), p. 13.

in America--led by Martin Luther King, Jr., in the late 1950's and early 1960's--set an example for the oppressed peoples of the world to imitate. Whether the action for freedom takes a violent or nonviolent, moral or immoral, educated or illiterate form is the issue addressed by King's philosophy. His method presents an alternative problem solving approach that deserves thorough consideration in view of the increasing potential for conflict in modern society.

King gave twentieth century America a glimpse of nonviolent direct action as a means to confront governments and secure relief for citizens held in suffocating cages of poverty. As fine as it sounds, this approach should be given a critical evaluation by educators and social practitioners.

Limitations of This Study

This study is limited in scope to those data that reveal King's philosophy of life, which in turn make formulation of an educational philosophy possible. No attempt is made to evaluate King as an educator. Some pertinent information may not have been located because sources of information used in this study are scattered. There are, of course, the limitations peculiar to the methodology employed. Conclusions reached are the result of the author's interpretation of historical events. While every possible effort was made to remain objective, there is still the possibility that some conclusions drawn are affected by the author's bias.

CHAPTER II

KING'S EMERGING PHILOSOPHY

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Life and Background

It was with a feeling of honor and privilege that Martin Luther King, Jr. attended and addressed a meeting of educators at Syracuse University in 1965. His speech was on education, a subject of primary concern to the Civil Rights Movement and to King personally as the father of four young children.

He began his speech by quoting a statement made by President Lyndon B. Johnson on July 2, 1965 in an address to the National Education Association: "We are not going to stop until every child in this great and beautiful land of ours can have all the education of the highest quality, which his or her ambition demands or his or her mind can absorb."¹ In the speech that followed, King identified the causes of many of the problems of education and suggested

¹Lyndon B. Johnson address to the National Education Association on July 2, 1965. Quoted in an address by Martin Luther King, Jr., at Syracuse University on July 15, 1965.

possible approaches that might result in the solution of the problems and the honoring of that lofty promise made by the President of the nation.

Thirty-six years earlier, on the wintery morning of January 15, 1929, the weather was cold and the occupants of the house at 501 Auburn Street in Atlanta, Georgia, were absorbed with what was for them an equally consuming interest, the birth of Martin Luther King, Jr. This, the eldest son of the Kings had been an especially troublesome prenatal experience and even up to the time of his birth Martin Jr. seemed determined to defy tradition and make his entry upon his own terms. Little did any one in that busy house think that just thirty-six years later Martin Luther King, Jr., would command the attention of a renown group of educators such as were assembled at Syracuse University.

Martin Luther King, Sr., was one of ten children of James Albert King, a sharecropper on a plantation in Stockbridge, some twenty miles from Atlanta. At the time of the birth of Martin Luther King, Jr., the father, having left the plantation at age sixteen, through industry and hard work had finished high school and earned an undergraduate degree at Morehouse College.² Alberta, Martin Jr.'s mother, had attended Spelman Seminary and Hampton Institute. She was the daughter of Adam Daniel Williams, the pastor of Ebenezer

²Bennett, What Manner of Man.

Baptist Church.

The contrasting personalities of the parents accentuated the suggestion of order and balance that was the heritage of young King. The father was volatile, emotional, and trigger-tempered; the mother was calm, cool, slow to anger, and deliberate of speech and action. Their eldest son was an exquisite cross between these two temperaments.³ This couple collaborated during a time of extreme hardship and suffering to provide for their children an atmosphere of security.

Even though King was born on the lip of the great depression and grew up in an area where sixty-five percent of the population was on public relief, he, his sister Christine, and his younger brother Alfred Daniel, were never severely touched by poverty.⁴ While King's parents effectively shielded him from the economic deprivation of his surroundings, it was none-the-less impossible to protect him from the realities of being born Black in America. Speaking of childhood incidents that affected his religious development, King wrote:

. . . The second incident happened when I was about six years old. From about the age of three up until this time I had had a white playmate who was about my age. We always felt free to play our childhood games together. He did not live in our

³Ibid., p. 14.

⁴Ibid., p. 13-14.

community, but he was usually around every day until about 6:00; his father owned a store just across the street from our home. At age six, we both entered school--separate schools, of course. I remember our friendship began to break as soon as we entered school, of course this was not my desire but his. The climax came one day when he told me that his father had demanded that he would play with me no more. I never will forget what a great shock that was to me. I immediately asked my parents about the motive behind such a statement. We were at the dinner table when the situation was discussed, and here, for the first time, I was made aware of the existence of a race problem.⁵

His initial response to the race problem was one of shock and a determination to "hate" every White person. This feeling grew in spite of his parental admonition to love White people. (The hatred was moderated through the experience of working with Whites in interracial organizations during his college years).

The continual interplay between subtle and open racial attacks and the reaction and fortification provided by both parents, especially his mother's quiet reassuring counsel and his father's open hostile reaction to the "system," did much to equip King with the strength to overcome.

An example of his father's reaction is seen in the account of an incident that for most other men might have

⁵Martin Luther King, Jr., "An Autobiography of Religious Development" (Boston University Library, January 5, 1970), pp. 1-5 quoted in Carpenter, "The Educational Philosophy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr: Its Educational Implications", p. 26.

been but one more of the many indignities that Blacks suffered without resentment. At about the age of eight, King went downtown with his father to buy a pair of shoes. Father and son took seats in the front of the store. A White clerk offered to serve them but requested that they take seats at the back of the store. As if failing to understand, the father protested that nothing was wrong with the seats they had. When the clerk insisted that they would have to take seats at the back, the elder King flared up and declared, "We'll either buy shoes sitting here, or we won't buy any shoes at all" and with that, he took the hand of his son and stormed out of the store.⁶ Thus, the young son had seen his father's reaction to the system and yet he had also seen his father's powerlessness to really do anything about the insult they both had suffered.

The terror and vague fears that characterized the childhood years of all are intensified for the Black child who must come to terms not only with himself but with the uneasy knowledge that the world knows something about him and about his past, something shameful and demeaning. Even though Martin was more secure in his world than most Black children, the same shadow that menaced other Blacks obscured equality from his view. Long before he could understand what it all meant, he could feel its impact. There were places he could not go, things he could not do that forced

⁶Bennett, What Manner of Man, p. 16.

the grim realization that Blacks somehow were different. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s education was better than average. According to what was expected of the best families or of "families on the make," each of the three King children attended private school for some part of their elementary school education. Private schools provided better educational opportunities than the public schools.⁷ Yet there were inescapable limitations of private Black schools, i.e., the inferior status of blackness obviously detracted from the energy and the effort that might have otherwise been directed toward general educational interests. In retrospect, however, King found no fault with his own education.

I was exposed to the best educational conditions of my childhood. At three, I entered nursery school. This great childhood contact had a tremendous effect on the development of my personality. At five, I entered kindergarten and there I remained till I entered the first grade.⁸

At Younge Street Elementary School, young King soon made acquaintances that compensated for the loss of early childhood White playmates. After a couple of years at Younge School, he transferred to David T. Howard School (then an elementary but later became a high school), and here he completed the sixth grade. From Howard he went to the Laboratory High School of Atlanta University, a private

⁷Billingsley, Black Families in White America, p. 115.

⁸Martin Luther King, Jr. "An Autobiography of Religious Development", p. 1-5 quoted in Carpenter, "The Educational Philosophy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: Its Educational Implications", p. 27.

institution patterned along progressive education lines. The Laboratory School was discontinued for economic reasons after King had been there two years. He completed his high school education at Booker T. Washington High School, where he skipped the ninth and the twelfth grades. His practical education consisted of the experiences shared with friends, William Murphy, Real "Rooster" Cash, Oliver "Sack" Jones, Howard "Mole" Everett and others, who saw him as an "uncomplicated companion, a good mimic, and an excellent amateur athlete."⁹

At the age of eight, King delivered the Black daily newspaper, and at thirteen years of age he delivered the Atlanta Journal, the White daily. These excursions into the exercises of self-reliance and mastery of money were considered an indispensable developmental experience for the sons of privileged Black families. As a teenager, King spent a large portion of the proceeds from his paper route on clothes. Obviously, he spent well, for he was called "tweed" because of his penchant for stylish and exquisitely woven suits. He gave equal attention to footwear, always luminously buffed patent leather shoes whose cost increased with the years.¹⁰ King's early obsession with books and big words and his attraction to well tailored suits were major characteristics of his personality.

⁹Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 15.

In many ways, King's childhood was a relatively uncomplicated period in which he was permitted to search for and to find answers to basic personality and ethnic group identity questions. More important than his deepening interest in oratory was the steady unfolding of a theme that was to dominate and shape his life. From his early teens onward, he was increasingly sensitive to the daily insults Blacks suffered in the south. Slowly, he became less sympathetic with the value system of the Black middle class. Consequently, he gradually developed a sense of identity with the Black masses rather than imulating the Black middle class tendency to become further removed from them.

Lawrence Riddick, King's biographer and friend, summarizes the first fifteen years of King's life:

Thus, the first fifteen formative years of Martin's life had been fortunate. Diverse influences had helped shape and integrate his personality. One of his Grandfathers had been a sharecropper; the other a college-bred minister. One Grandmother he never knew personally, the other he loved dearly. His own mother was gentle; his father was fearless and protective. He and his brother and his sister were bound together by a thousand common experiences. And yet, each respected the individuality of the other. He had pals of his own and was recognized and accepted by countless friends of the family. Physically, Martin was healthy; intellectually, he was slightly ahead of his age group. Socially, he was enjoying the threshold years of self discovery and the companionship of the opposite sex. He wore good clothes, had a little money in the bank--and was willing to work for more. Martin was aware of mean policemen and curt clerks but there were friendly white teachers at the

Lab School. He was happy in his family, his neighborhood, his school and most of the time his Atlanta. The church was almost a part of the home. Hostile forces did not come upon him often, but when they did, he would stand for what he believed was right and fair. At the same time, by nature and by choice he was opposed to physical violence as an instrument of dealing with fellow human beings. Though but fifteen years old, he was ready for college.¹¹

The atmosphere at Morehouse College provided the kind of stimuli that encouraged King's search for an effective method of resistance to the demonic determination of southern Whites to depersonalize Blacks. To young King, no one at Morehouse was afraid of Whites. Thus, King moved from Booker T. Washington High School to Morehouse College, his father's alma mater, for the continued development and refinement of intellectual powers that would ultimately stimulate thousands of Americans to resist racism nonviolently.

Although King was not active in the social life of the campus, he did belong to the Morehouse Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and to the Intercollegiate Council, an interracial body composed of students from the Atlanta University Center and several White schools in Atlanta. The latter experience somewhat reassured him about the fundamental decency of Whites.

¹¹Lawrence D. Reddick, Crusader Withoug Violence (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), p. 61.

The wholesome relations we had in this group convinced me that we have many White persons as allies, particularly among the younger generation. I had been ready to resent the whole White race, but, as I got to see more of White people, my resentment was softened and a spirit of cooperation took its place.¹²

Between school sessions King secured jobs that exposed him to the plight of the Negro masses. Even though he could have gotten white collar jobs, he chose instead to work as a laborer, toiling one summer at the Railway Express Company unloading trains and trucks, and another at the Southern Spring Bed Mattress Company as a stockroom helper. In this tentative inchoate way, he was reaching out to the Black masses.¹³

The depth of his perception not only into the fundamental issues of life but also the role of education as a corrective institution is seen in his assessment of education as it appeared in the college newspaper, The Moroon Tiger in 1948 under the title, "The Purpose of Education."

At this point, I often wonder whether or not education is fulfilling its purpose. A great majority of the so-called educated people do not think logically and scientifically. Even the press, the classroom, the platform, and the pulpit in many instances do not give us objective and unbiased truths. To save man from the morass of propaganda, in my opinion, is one of the chief aims of education. Education must enable one to sift and weigh evidence, to discern the true from the false, the real from the unreal, and the facts from fiction. The function of education, therefore, is to teach one to think intensively

¹²David L. Lewis, A Critical Biography (New York: Washington Praeger Publications, 1970), p. 24.

¹³Bennett, What Manner of Man, p. 22.

and to think critically. But education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society. The most dangerous criminal may be the man gifted with reason, but with no morals.

The late Eugene Talmadge, in my opinion, possessed one of the better minds of Georgia, or even America. Moreover, he wore the Phi Beta Kappa Key. By all measuring rods, Mr. Talmadge could think critically and intensively, yet he contends that I am an inferior being.

We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character--that is the goal of true education. The complete education gives one not only power upon which to concentrate, but worthy objectives upon which to concentrate. The broad education will, therefore, transmit to one not only the accumulated knowledge of the race, but also the accumulated experience of social living.¹⁴

This statement would be remarkable for its content regardless of the age or of the accomplishments of its author; but when one considers that it was written by a nineteen year old undergraduate student, it is even more arresting. Early in his development, King displays the ability to gather and to correlate ideas developing out of diverse points of view that needed to be dealt with. This peculiar talent was to serve him well in the years ahead.

During his junior year at Morehouse, King decided to enter the ministry. The decision had been delayed because he had been somewhat repelled by the emotionalism characterizing the religious groups with which he was familiar. Because of this and for other reasons he did not think that

¹⁴Ibid., p. 23.

preaching could be intellectually respectable and socially relevant. So he considered the professions of medicine and law, finally deciding upon law until he gave in to the strong urge to follow in his father's steps. To a great extent, it was Benjamin E. Mays and George D. Kelsey who changed his thinking about the ministry. Both of these renown Black educators were preachers and their styles of delivery and the content of their messages favorably impressed King.

Of course, there were other influences that contributed to this decision and while he was a student at Crozer Seminary, King listed some of them in a paper dealing with his own religious development. In this paper, he reviewed his developmental years, giving attention to the impact of loving parents, comfortable relationships with siblings, never knowing the pangs of hunger as a constant companion, early educational experiences, and the place of the church, to name a few, and then he concluded:

One may ask at this point, why discuss such factors as the above in a paper dealing with one's religious development? The answer to this question lies in the fact that the above factors were highly significant in determining my religious attitudes. It was quite easy for me to think of the universe as basically friendly, mainly because of my uplifting heredity and environmental circumstances. It is quite easy for me to lean more toward optimism than pessimism about human nature mainly because of my childhood experiences. It is impossible to get at the roots of one's religious attitudes without taking into account the psychological and historical factors that play upon the individual. So that the above biographical factors

are absolutely necessary in understanding my religious development.¹⁵

Thus heredity and environment were clearly instrumental in molding out of exceeding malleable material the man who would fuse the teachings of Christ and the methodology of Ghandi into an effective weapon against the bastions of racial injustice in this country.

At Crozer, King was a perfect student, maintaining an "A" average for the three year course. In addition to his work at the Seminary, he also took supplemental courses in philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania. Following a schedule that consumed most of his working hours, he still was not satisfied. His coursework did not provide answers to the burning questions that troubled him. Therefore, he began to read ravenously, searching book after book in a serious intellectual quest for a method to eliminate social evil. Of the many authors whom he read during this period, he was more deeply impressed by Hegel and Rauchenbusch. Hegel's analysis of the dialectical process and of progress and growth through pain became central elements in his emerging philosophy. In 1950, during his senior year at Crozer, King came across a copy of Rauchenbusch's Christianity and the Social Crisis. Although he did not agree with all of Rauchenbusch's philosophy, he was fascinated by the great theologian's application of the social principles of Jesus

¹⁵Carpenter, "The Leadership Philosophy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: Its Educational Implications", p. 24.

to the problems of the modern world.¹⁶

While still a student at Crozer, King traveled to Philadelphia one Sunday to hear a sermon by Mordecai Johnson, President of Howard University. Johnson had just returned from a trip to India and he spoke on the life and teachings of Mahatma K. Ghandi. King said, "His message was so profound and electrifying that I left the meeting and bought a half dozen books on Ghandi's life and works."¹⁷

In addition to receiving the theological training necessary for his vocation as a minister, Crozer Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania, provided King with the opportunity to further moderate his views concerning Whites and to lay another foundation stone in his emerging philosophical structure.

Especially significant to King's decision to attend Boston University for doctoral studies were his seminary exposures to Hegel, Rauchenbusch and Ghandi. Stimulated by his coursework and the extra study of the philosophy of Hegel, Rauschenbusch and Ghandi, King graduated in 1951 from Crozer Theological Seminary. He left Crozer with an enviable record. He won the Plafker Award as the most outstanding student, was president of the senior class, and received the J. Lewis Crozer Fellowship of \$1200 for graduate study at the

¹⁶Bennett, What Manner of Man, p. 27.

¹⁷Martin Luther King, Jr., Stride Toward Freedom (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 78.

university of his choice.¹⁸

These accomplishments, together with the fact that King applied to and was accepted by both Yale and Boston universities no doubt strengthened his self-confidence. He chose Boston University because he wanted to study under the proponents of the philosophy of personalism, especially Edgar S. Brightman and L. Harold DeWolf. While he was not a personalist at this time, his choice of Boston University indicates his strong leaning in this direction. And of his studies at Boston University, King wrote:

I studied philosophy and theology at Boston University under Edgar S. Brightman and L. Harold DeWolf. Both men greatly stimulated my thinking. It was mainly under these teachers that I studied personalistic philosophy--the theory that the clue to the meaning of ultimate reality is found in personality. This personal idealism remains today my basic philosophical position. Personalism's insistence that only personality, finite and infinite--is ultimately real strengthened me in two convictions: It gave me metaphysical and philosophical grounding for the idea of a personal God, and it gave me a metaphysical basis for the dignity of and worth of all human personality.¹⁹

Other events important to the development of the man that arose from relative southern obscurity to world-wide recognition must include the one occurring on June 18, 1953, when Coretta Scott consented to marry him. They exchanged vows in a fashionable garden wedding ceremony in Heiberger,

¹⁸Bennett, What Manner of Man, p. 30.

¹⁹King, Stride Toward Freedom, p. 82.

Alabama. Thus, she became not only his companion in marriage but also an invaluable supporter who in her own quiet, unassuming way filled a void in King's life. Another occurred at a 3:00 p.m. meeting of the hastily formed Montgomery Improvement Association on December 5, 1955, in the Mount Zion AME Church. At this meeting, Martin Luther King, Jr., without a dissenting vote, was selected president of the organization that was later to become the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

No treatment of the life of Martin Luther King, Jr. is complete if it fails to include something of the social and economic conditions existing between 1955 and 1968.

It was the combination of King's unique background and preparation plus the special demands and opportunities of the time that thrust him forth as an outstanding social critic and tireless leader of America's Black masses.

Data describing the social and economic conditions of the period will help one to see the motivation for many of King's statements and proposals. By comparing the data of that era with the most current facts available on the same subject, the relevancy of King's educational proposals for the present can be established.

In The Negro Revolt, Louis E. Lomax describes what being Black in America meant in terms of the "dues" that all Blacks paid. After listing the "dues" of professionals he concludes:

If you are just a common man--and thats what most of us are--"dues" are what you pay when the rents are high, apartments are filthy, credit interest is exhorbitant and White policemen patrol your community ready to crack heads at any moment. In a phrase, "dues" are the day to day outlay--psycho-logical and economic--every Black American must pay simply because he is Black.²⁰

The threat of physical violence was also a constant and nagging companion. Lomax says:

Violence was always in the air. Seldom a week passed that we didn't get word of some Negro who had been beaten or lynched by White mobs. (Some four thousand Negroes had been lynched between 1899 and 1922, the year I was born). And we lived in constant awareness that our lives were not ours to keep or to protect. Our only hope was to stay in our place.²¹

A partial list of the violence perpetrated against Negroes during the 1955-1968 era must include: in 1955 fourteen year old Emmitt Till was lynched in Mississippi; in 1959 Mack Parker was lynched in Poplarville, Mississippi; in 1963 Medgar Evers, a prominent civil rights leader was assassinated in the doorway of his home; in 1963 four Black girls were killed in the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama; in 1964 James Chaney, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman, three young civil rights workers, were murdered in Philadelphia, Mississippi (Schwerner and Goodman were White); in 1965 twenty-six year old Jimmie

²⁰Louis E. Lomax, The Negro Revolt (New York: Signet Books, The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1963), p. 55.

²¹Ibid., p. 64, 65.

Lee Jackson died in Selma, eight days after being clubbed and shot from ambush shortly after beginning a 220 mile voting rights pilgrimage from Memphis, Tennessee to Jackson, Mississippi.

With the exception of Till, each of these instances of violence were inflicted upon Blacks because of their refusal to continue to accept the denial of basic rights such as the right to vote peacefully. Humiliating signs designating separate restrooms and separate drinking fountains in public places existed in abundance. Blacks could not frequent amusement parks, beaches, theaters, hotels, motels nor public lunch counters, all of which were either supported by or protected by tax dollars Blacks were required to pay.

In February, 1968 the Presidents National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders issued an exhaustive report on the causes of the civil disorders that disrupted the nation in 1967. The Commission identified the major cause of the rioting as the existence of two separate bodies in America-- "one black, one white, separate and unequal." It charged that "white racism, more than anything else, was the chief catalyst in the already explosive mixture of discrimination, poverty and frustration that ignited so many urban ghettos in the tragic summer of 1967."²²

The planned economic exploitation of ghetto dwellers

²²Report of the National Advisory Committee on Civil Disorders (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1968).

was carried out with carefully arranged precautions to prevent Negroes from going into business to serve thier own communities. Lomax cites 125th Street as an example of exploitation in Harlem.

For years White businessmen worked every trick in the book to keep Negroes from opening business along the "main drag" . . . The Negroes that finally got to be members of the 125th Street business association were representatives of non-competitive enterprises--Negro insurance companies, funeral homes and newspapers.

Take a walk along the Negro "Diamond Mile", 125th Street from New Haven Railroad Station to St. Nicholas Avenue. There are four Negro candy stores and three Negro restaurants, but not a single Negro-owned clothing store, jewelry store or for that matter, pawn shop.

This is no accident. The Negro ghetto is considered ripe for the plucking; the prices are higher, the credit rates exorbitant; the buyers are less informed; their job status makes it difficult for them to get credit and, as a result, they leap for whatever buy-now-pay-later plans are offered them.²³

The economic condition of Blacks in America worsened between 1950 and 1960 and the United States Civil Rights Commission Report Number Three, published in 1961 carried the following information:

Although their occupational level has risen considerably during the past twenty years, Negro workers continue to be concentrated in the less skilled jobs. And it is largely because of this concentration in the ranks of the unskilled and semi-skilled, the groups most severely affected

²³Lomax, The Negro Revolt, p. 75, 76.

by both economic layoffs and technology changes, that Negroes are also disproportionately represented among the unemployed . . . Negroes continue to swell the ranks of the unemployed as technological changes eliminate the unskilled or semiskilled tasks they once performed. Many will be permanently and chronically unemployed unless some provisions are made for retraining them in the skills required by today's economy. The depressed economic status of Negroes is the product of many forces, including the following:

Discrimination against Negroes in vocational as well as academic training.

Discrimination against Negroes in apprenticeship training programs.

Discrimination against Negroes by labor organizations--particularly in the construction and machinists' crafts.

Discrimination against Negroes in referral services rendered by state employment offices.

Discrimination against Negroes in the training and "employment" opportunities offered by the armed services, including the "civilian components."

Discrimination by employers, including Government Contractors and even the Federal Government.²⁴

Lomax concluded:

This economic straight jacket has everything to do with the breakdown of family life and general morality in the Negro community, it is the basic explanation for the inordinate crime rate; it is the fundamental cause of our high welfare roles and abundant relief chiseling; this is why we live in ghettos; . . . ²⁵

And this is why the Negro revolt came about, as Lomax said, "something happened, a dream busted, in the

²⁴Ibid., p. 79.

²⁵Ibid., p. 80.

fifties; times got better but things got worse."²⁶

St. Clair Drake's article, "The Social and Economic Status of the Negro in the United States" shows another dimension of the Black person's problem during the 60's. The income of Blacks was systematically limited by a combination of forces that Drake identified as the caste-class system.

This system had, in his opinion:

. . . served, over the years, to concentrate the Negro population in the low-income sector of the economy. In 1961, six out of every ten Negro families had an income of less than \$4,000 per year. This situation among Whites was just the reverse; six out of every ten White families had over \$4,000 a year at their disposal.²⁷

Education improved the chances for and the level of employment opportunity for Blacks, yet education did not make a significant difference when compared with Whites who had similar educational levels. Statistics reveal that Blacks with one to three years of high school earned \$207 less annually than Whites with less than eight years of elementary school. Blacks with one to three years of college had an annual income of \$357 less than Whites with one to three years of high school; Blacks with four years of college earned \$1,440 less per year than a White with comparable

²⁶Ibid., p. 83.

²⁷St. Clair Drake, "The Social and Economic Status of the Negro in the United States" in Black Conflict in White America, ed; Jack R. Van Der Slik (Columbus: Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1970), p. 12.

training.²⁸

The social implications of the job ceiling and income gap were disastrous for Black families. Drake points out:

. . . in 1960, half of the White families were being supported by a husband only while just a few more than a third of Negro families could depend upon the earnings of one male bread winner. In six out of ten non-white families where both husband and wife were present, two or more persons worked. Yet less than half of the White families had both husband and wife working. But even in those families which commanded an income of over \$7,000 a year, twice as many non-white wives had to help earn it as White.²⁹

In the article, "Education and the Economic Status of Negroes", Abram L. Harris points out some of the consequences of this condition:

Preparation for the world of work does not begin with formal school training. It begins informally in the home. It is here that the habits and aptitudes in speech and the handling of figures are developed in the early formative years of childhood. It is, also, here that the basic values of the community, including those connected with work, are first taught, and ambition and incentive first inspired. In the discharge of these normal functions, the homes of Negro children in low-income and migrant families are handicapped long before they begin school.³⁰

Listed among Lomax's consequences of the economic straight jacket forced on Blacks was "living in ghetto's."

²⁸Ibid., p. 19.

²⁹Ibid., p. 17.

³⁰Abram L. Harris, "Education and the Economic Status of Negroes" in 100 Years of Emancipation, ed; Robert A. Goldwin (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1963), p. 151.

This living in ghettos naturally consigned Black children to the ghetto schools. Drake observed:

Ghetto schools are, on the whole, inferior. In fact, some of the most convincing evidence that residential segregation perpetuates inequality can be found by comparing data on school districts in northern urban areas where de facto school segregation exists.³¹

Drake's presentation includes a chart which showed that per student appropriation was \$342 for White but only \$269 for Black. Annual teacher's salary per pupil was \$256 for White as compared to \$220 for Black. Expenditures other than those utilized for teacher's salary per White student was \$86, for Blacks it was \$49.³²

These conditions of violence and deprivation that could be repeated over and over again all over the nation constituted the motivation for Martin Luther King, Jr.'s efforts. These conditions, as a continuing reality, forced him to recommend a complete reordering of America's value system. That the system as it then existed had not given equality of protection and opportunity to Blacks was ample evidence that it either could not, or would not do so. History has vindicated Dr. King in those convictions. There are many now, including some Blacks, who think that America's wrongs against Black

³¹Drake, "The Social and Economic Status of the Negro in the United States", p. 16.

³²Ibid., p. 16.

citizens have all been corrected and that any further corrective action is in fact "reverse discrimination."

Statistics show that the comparative condition of Blacks has actually worsened since 1969. An Equal Employment Opportunity Commission study, "Black Experience versus Black Expectation", shows that at the present rate of progress, it would require thirty years to attain parity in wages among Blacks and Whites. In 1969, 1.5 per cent of officials and managers, 2.0 per cent of professionals, 5.6 per cent of technicians, 4.0 per cent of salesworkers, 6.1 per cent of office and clerical workers and 5.0 per cent of craftworkers were Black. By 1974, 2.9 per cent of officials and managers, 3.1 per cent of professionals, 7.3 per cent of technicians, 5.5 per cent of salesworkers and 7.0 per cent of craftworkers were Black. Blacks constitute 11 per cent of United States population, yet in no area except unskilled and menial jobs do they constitute 11 per cent of the workforce. Black employment increased in all categories between 1969 and 1974 by 61,000. Had Blacks been given their fair share of increase at all levels, there would have been an increase of 105,000. Blacks provided 479,000 of the nation's office and clerical workers. If fair share had been granted the number would have been 578,000. Of 348,000 fair share quota of Black salesworkers, Blacks were actually 108,000. 472,000 positions was the fair share of craftworkers, Blacks had only 308,000. Between 1969 and 1974 Blacks should have earned, according to fair standards, 104.7 billion dollars. Blacks actually

received 43.7 billion, thus, employment discrimination cost Black workers 61 billion dollars over this five year period.³³ According to a 1975 EEOC report entitled Job Patterns for Minorities and Women in Private Industry, Blacks hold approximately 60 per cent of jobs held by all minorities.³⁴ Yet, according to the United States Bureau of Census, Blacks constitute 92 per cent of the United States minorities. Barbara Becnel, Associate Director, Department of Urban Affairs AFL-CIO, in profiling the Black worker as of January 1978 gives the following: the first eleven months of 1977, 1.4 million non-white workers or 14 per cent of non-white labor force was out of work. 303,000 of these left the labor force due to discouragement. 305,000 were working part-time involuntarily. What this means is that including the two categories cited above, 19.7 per cent of non-white labor force were unemployed during the period.

The same study notes that as of 1976-77, median family income for Blacks was \$9,242. For Whites, it was \$15,537; a difference of \$6,295 annually. The difference in median incomes during this period is equal to the median income for Blacks during 1969-70.

³³Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Research Report No. 53 (Washington, D. C., 2401 E. Street, Northwest, 1977).

³⁴EEOC Report/75, Job Patterns for Minorities and Women in Private Industry, Vol. 1 (Washington, D. C., 2401 E. Street, Northwest, 1977).

Black participation in the labor force is equally disturbing. For Black men of prime working age, the decline in labor force participation from 1958 dropped from 96 per cent to 88.5 per cent. This drop occurred in men whose age was between thirty-five and forty-five. Since 1964, there has also been a drop in labor force participation among the ages of twenty-five through thirty-four. These revelations are especially significant because they concern the power to earn at a time that is especially crucial to the welfare of the family unit.³⁵

In the booklet, Chicago's Black Population, the chapter on education shows that the check given America's Blacks on the bank of education is still being returned marked "insufficient funds."

In 1970 the Black population of Chicago had less schooling than the nonblack population. The median number of school years completed by Black females twenty-five years of age and over was 10.9 compared to 11.2 for nonblack females. Black males had completed 10.7 years of schooling and nonblack males, 11.5 years. In the suburbs, Black females had completed a higher median number of school years than had Black males; the opposite was true for nonblacks. Chicago's Black population had a higher level of education than the nation's Black population as a whole, and ranked fourth among major cities.³⁶

³⁵AFL-CIO, Department of Urban Affairs, Profiling The Black Worker (Washington, D. C., 1978).

³⁶Chicago's Black Population Selected Statistics (Chicago, Illinois: Department of Development and Planning, May, 1975).

In 1977 the "Journal of American Labor" reported that 56 per cent of those with Spanish surnames and 44 per cent of Blacks tested out at the functional incompetent level. This compares with 16 per cent of White. In the 1970 census, a majority of all Americans 25 and over were high school graduates for the first time; 12.1 years of school was the median for all Americans, 12.2 years the median for Whites. But for Blacks and Indians, also 25 and over, the median figure was only 9.8, for Puerto Ricans it was 8.7, and for Mexican Americans it was 8.1 years.

Similarly, more minorities drop out before completing the eighth grade. About one-fourth of White adults, 26.6 per cent, dropped out at that level, but the percentages swell to 43.5 per cent for Indians, 43.8 per cent for Blacks, 54.1 per cent for Puerto Ricans and 58.9 per cent for Mexican Americans.³⁷

These statistics confirm the continuing need for Affirmative Action to address inequities that now exist. They also show that our social, economic, political and educational systems as they are presently structured are incapable of effecting any meaningful change in the foreseeable future.

³⁷The AFL-CIO American Federationist, Vol. 84, No. 6 (June, 1977).

CHAPTER III

PERSONALISM

Having found through the study of King's life that he professed personalism, the first section of this chapter will review personalism's perspectives on reality, knowledge and the theory of values. Then King's position on these divisions of philosophy will be presented making a comparison of the two possible. The purpose is to provide information that will enable the reader to see the parallels between King's positions and personalism and not to present a definitive treatment of personalistic philosophy.

Toward a Definition

Our treatment of personalism will draw heavily on Albert C. Knudson's The Philosophy of Personalism because of the encyclopedic nature of this work. Other works are cursory by comparison and tend to examine only certain aspects of the system. For example, in A History of Philosophical Systems by E. S. Brightman, one of the chief exponents of personalism, offers an historical analysis of

personalism by using Knudson's book as his primary source for data. Knudson defines personalism as:

That form of idealism which gives equal recognition to both the pluralistic and monistic aspects of experience and which finds in the conscious unity, identity, and free activity of personality the key to the nature of reality and the solution of the ultimate problems of reality.¹

In formulating his definition, Knudson cites the historical use of the idea of personality in Greek thinking but shows that its use must be considered primarily as a contribution of the Christian religion to philosophic and theistic reasoning. After tracing the development of personality, Knudson suggests:

We would find in personality four, instead of three, fundamental elements: first, individuality, which includes unity and identity; second, self-consciousness in the sense of power to know as well as to feel; third, will or free activity; and, fourth, dignity or worth.²

It was by applying these four fundamental elements of personality to the peculiar ideas of philosophical systems known as personalism that Knudson eliminated the etheistic personalism of J. M. E. McTaggart,³ the pan theistic personalism of William Stern,⁴ the absolutistic personalism of

¹Albert C. Knudson, The Philosophy of Personalism (New York: Abingdon Press, 1927), p. 87.

²Ibid., p. 83.

³J. M. E. McTaggart, Studies in Hegelian Cosmology (Cambridge: University Press, 1901).

⁴William Stern, Person and Sache: System des kritischen Personalismus (Leipzig: Barth, 1923).

Mary W. Calkins,⁵ the relativistic personalism of Charles Renouvier,⁶ and the teleological personalism of George H. Howison⁷ as "abberant forms" of personalism, each perhaps contributing to personalism as a system but being none-the-less sufficiently deficient to be set aside as not representative of typical theistic personalism.

Typical theistic personalism is in agreement with traditional theism in the following respects. (1) Both affirm the metaphysical absoluteness of God as the one independent causal ground of the world. All beings depend upon the Absolute and derive their existence from it. In this sense, God is omnipotent. But omnipotence does not deny other beings a measure of independence. Such independence may be provided by God limiting himself either by his own nature or by calling into existence other beings to whom relative independence is granted. (2) Both typical personalism and traditional theism ascribe to God efficient causation. Both make creation a free act of the divine will and thus eliminate all emanation theories. (3) Both are dualistic rather than monistic in their epistemology. There is clearly a distinction between thought and thing. Reality is something other than and deeper than thought.

⁵Mary W. Calkins, The Persistent Problems of Philosophy (New York: McMillian Co., 1907).

⁶Charles Renouvier, Monadologie Essais de Critique generale (Paris: A. Colin, 1912).

⁷George H. Howison, The Limits of Evolution, and Other Essays Illustrating the Metaphysical Theory of Personalism (New York: McMillian Co., 1901).

While there are significant similarities or points of agreement between typical personalism and traditional theism, there are also some important differences. (1) Personalism is inclined toward the idealistic view of nature. Theism has looked upon the world as the creation of God who maintains a sort of independent existence. Personalism rejects this notion and sees in the material world a phenomenal order maintained by a spiritual causality. Thus from a personalistic perspective, nature in and of itself has no independent reality. To know reality, therefore, one must look beyond the material world. (2) In the development of this difference, Knudson says:

Personalism finds the ontologically real only in personality. And he quotes A. S. Pringle-Pattison, "Inexplicable, as man's personal agency is--nay, the one perpetual miracle--it is nevertheless our surest datum and our only clue to the mystery of existence." It is in our own inner experience that the idea of causality has its concrete source, and it is only through it that we can receive a valid interpretation. Causal reality must be interpreted in personal terms.⁸

While this point was acknowledged by realistic theists, they did not make it determinative in their theory of causality and reality in general.

A final significant difference between personalism and classical and traditional theists is in the disposition of the latter to be rationalistic. At this point King leans

⁸Knudson, The Philosophy of Personalism, p. 66.

more to personalism than to theism. It was personalism's insistence that only personality, finite and infinite, is ultimately real that gave him metaphysical and philosophical grounding for the idea of a personal God. Traditional theists have inclined to the view that the existence of God can be demonstrated theoretically and that the theistic argument is logically conclusive. Personalism, on the other hand, lays more stress on the will than on the intellect and believes that life is deeper than logic. Formal argumentation is important, but mere reason cannot bridge the gulf between thought and reality. At this point, faith alone is sufficient. Demonstration is, therefore, impossible when belief in God is under consideration. Faith becomes the ultimate ground of every philosophical system.

For personalism, the reality of the "soul" or "self" or "I" is fundamental. One may subscribe to a form of personalism and not believe in God, but one cannot be a personalist while denying the self or finite person. The basic question concerning this concept has to do with the nature of the soul or self; in the view of personalists there are two schools of thought. One view is substantialistic, ascribing to the soul a substance. And there are historically three ways of describing substances: material substance or the common-sense view; immaterial substance, the view of Plato; and thinking substance or the view of Descartes.

The second view of the nature of the soul is called activistic. There are three theories in the activistic camp and these have grown up as a result of the dynamic and idealistic interpretations of reality that have appeared since the time of Descartes. The first of the activistic theories argues that materiality or extension is an effect of the underlying force, and that this force in the last analysis must be conceived as spiritual. In this way, souls are the causes of material phenomena, and therefore, must be regarded as active in nature. To this basic idea propounded by Leibnitze,⁹ Berkeley added the idea that the primary as well as the secondary qualities of things are ideas in our minds, that the essence of things consist in their being perceived.¹⁰ Therefore, things or ideas are passive but the percipient soul is active. Yet another activistic theory was contributed by Kant who set out to show just how the soul was active.¹¹ By a thorough analysis of human reason, Kant showed that the mind does not passively receive its knowledge from without: it is creative and by virtue of certain principles or categories of thought that predetermine the framework of

⁹Gottfried W. Leibnitze, The Philosophical Works of Leibnitze, trans. George M. Duncan (New Haven, Tuttle: Morehouse and Taylor Co., 1908).

¹⁰George Berkeley, Theology & Philosophy (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., 1968).

¹¹Emmanuel Kant, Critique of Practical Reason (New York: Longman, Green & Co., 1923).

experience, the mind makes experience possible, it builds up its world for itself. Thus, the world of nature as we know it is the product of the understanding.

It was Lotze¹² who interpreted reality in terms of self-consciousness thus answering the critics of Kant who said that by showing that the only soul we know is the conscious soul was equivalent to a denial of its reality. This seemed the logical consequence of Kant's distinction between the empirical self and the ontological self, the ontological being unknown and unknowable. For Lotze, there was no consciousness without a subject, no thought without a thinker and, hence, the very consciousness of unity and of self-identity put the stamp of reality upon the soul.

Thus, the complete activistic theory of the soul finds the reality of the soul in self-consciousness and self direction, and affirms that when it is in a state of complete unconsciousness and passivity, the soul does not exist. Typical personalism subscribes to the activistic view of the soul and that in a libertarian view as opposed to a deterministic view of man.

Personalism is idealistic in its view of the world. It finds that only the personal is metaphysically real and the key to reality is personality. There are two different ways in which the phenomenality of the material world may be

¹²Herman Lotze, Metaphysic, In Three Books, Ontology Cosmology and Psychology, trans. Bernard Bosanquet (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1884).

conceived: the panpsychistic and the occasionalistic. Both these views have been widely held.

According to panpsychism, material things are simply outside appearances of underlying psychic realities. Hence, all nature has at its center, active beings. In this view, matter becomes simply undeveloped mind, and natural laws are firmly fixed habits. Selves or psychical agents thus constitute intervention of God, a ceaseless product of the divine energizing. Personalism leans toward the occasionalistic view since panpsychism reduces selfhood to such low terms that one is at a loss to determine in what its reality consists.

Equipped with the insights gleaned from this brief review of personalism as a philosophical system, we turn next to its teachings on epistemology, metaphysics and value.

Epistemology

There are four fundamental principles that undergird personalism's epistemological structure. These principles have to do with two fundamental problems of epistemology. The first problem concerns the validity of knowledge in general and the first three principles address this problem. First, the duality of thought and thing bears upon the problem of the validity of knowledge in that it separates subject from object. Further, this epistemological dualism

protects the integrity and separateness of the person as opposed to an epistemological monism which does not differentiate between thought and thinker so that the two become fused into one.¹³

Next, the fact that things are not always what they seem to be suggests the possibility that our minds are not passive recipients of impressions made upon them by active stimuli; but neither are the objects of our senses the creation of our minds as idealism suggests. In the idea of the creative activity of thought we see that the mind takes the phenomenal "given" and, through an active process, transmits to the individual a "perception" of the given that may or may not be identical with the given. Thus, the phenomenal real for us is always conditioned by the mediating process of the mind. The validity of the knowledge attained in this way is also conditioned by the receiving mechanisms. It is the realization of this fact that accounts for the complete acceptance of the scientific method within personalistic philosophy when questions dealing with phenomena are involved. However, when the area of inquiry is the metaphysical, the causal ground of phenomena, personalism takes a position that favors reason over sense and the third of our epistemological principles is brought to bear: the trustworthiness of reason. For if thought does not directly and immediately apprehend external reality, it may misapprehend it. This is at the

¹³Knudson, The Philosophy of Personalism, p. 148.

least theoretically possible. Treating the question, "How can the fact of error be harmonized with the trustworthiness of reason?", Knudson says:

We are introduced to one of the most characteristic features of the personalistic philosophy as expounded by Bowne. It is his persistent contention that freedom alone can provide a solution to the problem. The positive argument runs as follows: Our faculties are so constructed that they have a native capacity for truth; but in order that truth may actually be attained, they must be used with care. When they are not so used or are deliberately misused, error arises. Truth, in other words, is made possible by the essential trustworthiness of our faculties. . . . But while the trustworthiness of our faculties makes truth possible it does not guarantee its attainment. Our faculties do not operate automatically in the sense that they necessarily lead to truth; this would deny the fact of error. They need to be guided by a standard immanent within them, and this guidance is possible only on the assumption that the human spirit is free.¹⁴

Freedom of the individual to misuse the faculties resulting in error should not be allowed to cause us to doubt the trustworthiness of reason nor to opt for a necessitarian system that not only would fail to guarantee truth but also would destroy any potential for rational thought. For on the necessitarian theory the distinction between truth and error or between rational and irrational beliefs would vanish; and if retained, there would be no rational standard to determine which beliefs are true and which are false. If such a standard did exist, only a free being could use it.¹⁵

¹⁴Ibid., p. 151.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 161.

The second epistemological problem, the objectivity of values, is treated by the fourth fundamental principle, the primacy of practical reason. The Kantian doctrine of the primacy of practical reason was developed in response to the empiricism of Hume, which denied the validity of the categories of substance and cause, rejected the soul as the datum of experience, and undermined religious faith altogether. For Kant, it was through theoretical reason that we gain knowledge in the phenomenal realm, but beyond that it has no jurisdiction. In a total world-view, theoretical reason warrants affirmations about ultimate reality, and these affirmations are in the nature of practical postulates rather than intellectual insights. These are matters of faith rather than of knowledge, and faith in this case is grounded in the moral nature, and moral nature in this instance represents an independent realm of value, that in and of itself justifies a theistic world-view.

Therefore, thought cannot complete itself without the category of purpose and purpose involves the idea of a good to be attained. Mechanical categories--space, time, and causality--leave us among isolated things and events. They give us no systematic totality. It is only as we consider free causality, guided by purpose, that we are able to bring the scattered fragments of reality into a coherent whole. The insufficiency of disinterested intellect

¹⁶Ibid., p. 162.

to produce a systematic totality by the use of theoretical reason only is compensated through practical reason. Knudson concluded:

Knowledge, before it can become a rounded system, must call in the category of purpose, a principle borrowed from the practical reason; and so at its very inception, in its most elementary forms, it requires as its presupposition an act of faith, which likewise is rooted in practical reason. Knowledge begins by assuming that the world is intelligible and that we are able to understand it. That this is so, we can never demonstrate. We simply accept it on faith, and faith is primarily an act of volition. It springs out of the vital needs and interests of the mind. These needs and interests are subjective; they are practical and ideal in nature, a kind of *modus vivendi* with the universe; and they are also fundamental.¹⁷

The doctrine of the primacy of practical reason does not necessarily mean that theoretical reason is limited to the phenomenal realm; but rather that all knowledge rests ultimately on faith. Faith in reason is the beginning of knowledge, and faith can be justified only by itself. We cannot demonstrate the validity of faith. We begin with it, and in this sense, the primacy belongs to it or in Kantian terms, to the practical reason.

The preceding four epistemological principles constitute a distinctive body of doctrine through which personalism takes a mediating position on the two fundamental problems of epistemology. Personalism avoids the extremes

¹⁷Ibid., p. 163.

represented by monism on one hand and skepticism on the other. By accepting the dualism of thought and thing in the accented form by the doctrine of the creative activity of thought and yet holding to the trustworthiness of reason, a conviction founded on our instinctive faith, personalism stands between agnostic dualism and an impossible identification of thought and thing.

The second problem concerns the conflict between a one-sided intellectualism on the one hand and an equally one-sided voluntarism on the other. On this problem, personalism leans toward voluntarism; it holds to the primacy of practical reason, while rejecting the more extreme form of voluntarism.

Metaphysics

In approaching personalistic metaphysics, Knudson lists three conclusions reached in the study of epistemology that had a direct and an important bearing upon metaphysics. (1) That knowledge should not be limited to the phenomenal realm; (2) that reality is "given" to us, we do not create it, we find it, and; (3) reality, or our knowledge of it is not necessarily to be confined to the limits set by the perceptual and logical faculties. To limit knowledge to the phenomenal realm and thus deny the possibility of a rational theory was in itself an irrational act. One could not, of course, employ a rational theory in denying the possibility of a rational theory, but this self contradictory position

is exactly that of those who would affirm the absence of anything beyond the phenomenal. That reality is given does not mean that the mind is a passive recipient of ready-made knowledge, it does mean though that reality is objective, to us, that it is not a mental creation. That while our percepts are all mediated by the creative activity of thought, our thought has no resources within itself which enables it to create reality or to determine what in detail it must be.

When we allow reality or our knowledge of it to be confined to the limits of our perceptual and logical faculties, we deny the ultimate ground of all knowledge which is faith. The proposition that reality is an orderly structured system capable of being understood is assumed and intellectual inquiry is begun, the proposition is not and cannot be theoretically demonstrated before inquiry is begun. Hence, all knowledge rests on faith. All conviction whether founded on the theoretical or on the practical reason, derive their ultimate validity from faith, faith in our intellectual, moral, aesthetic or religious nature. And faith in one form is in principle just as valid as any of the other forms of faith.¹⁸

In his treatment of reality, Knudson lists six principles considered fundamental to personalistic metaphysics: individuality, unity, activity, volitional causality, the phenomenality of matter, and personality.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 175.

Personalism begins by affirming that reality is individual and concrete. Universals and abstracts are important as ideas and without them thought would be impossible. But to them personalism does not assign metaphysical reality. Ontological existence was first assigned to ideas by Plato, who, in doing so, had gone beyond the notion of Socrates that knowledge consists in ideas. This argument had been constructed by Socrates in response to the relativism and skepticism of the sophists. But he had not carried his thought beyond the moral realm. Plato gave to the idea universal validity and also ontological existence. Accordingly, Plato held that true reality is to be found in the supersensuous realm of ideas.¹⁹ Aristotle rejected this extreme form of universalism or realism of Plato and carried on a vigorous protest against it.²⁰

It was Leibnitz who first developed the principle of individuality in a thorough manner. His monodology stands opposed to every system that subordinates the individual and concrete to the universal and abstract. Personalism pronounces realism or universalism in its abstract ontological form a stupendous illusion. The unity of personalism is not that unity which is implied in the idea of

¹⁹Plato, Dialogues, trans. B. Jowett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953).

²⁰Aristotle, Aristotle On His Predessors, trans. A. E. Taylor (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1907).

individuality, but the unity suggested in the notion of a universe or world-ground. The quest for ultimate unity goes back to the beginning of philosophy and the quest has, on occasion, been carried to extremes.

The principle of individuality has been threatened with destruction and the world of concrete reality has been reduced to the realm of vague and empty abstractions. Reactions evoked to this outcome have in their more extreme expressions taken the form of dualism, pluralism, and positivism. None of these reactions, however, have succeeded in suppressing the demand for unity. And while sense experience is manifold and pluralistic, reason is systematic and unitary. The principles of logical subordination and causality point to a unified whole or to a unitary world-ground. Things are connected as well as distinct from one another. There is community as well as individuality of being. Reason is especially concerned with directing attention to "community" and seeks a clear conception of it. The universe is evidently a system; cognition would be impossible without it. Since no ultimate system can be made up of independent units, if a system is real, its units must be subordinated to the total system. To insist on regarding the union of individual as the ultimate reality is not an act of reason. Reason demands a fundamental unity that cannot be denied.

While recognizing elements of truth in both pluralistic individualism and monism and seeking to effect an even

balance between them, personalism is activist. Personalism holds that reality resides in the power of action. The mass or lump is the phenomenal product of the ceaseless activity of the sum or aggregate of existing atoms or electrons.

The three main objections raised by sense metaphysics against activism are as follows. (1) The mark of being is to be found in its sense qualities, not in its activity. (2) Matter as given is manifestly passive and inert. (3) We must differentiate between being and power, or matter and force. In their defense, personalists counter with the following arguments. (1) Things exist whether they are perceived or not. The distinguishing mark must be found, therefore, elsewhere than in perceptibility. It must be found in something that causes them to be perceived, and this causal something implies that things are in interaction with one another. (2) Matter only appears to be passive and inert. For as stated above, the mass or lump is the phenomenal product of ceaseless activity of the sum of existing atoms or electrons. (3) The differentiation between being and power has meaning as a conceptual process, but in reality they are dependent--one cannot exist without the other or one cannot be perceived without the other. Therefore, personalism concludes that reality is something we must accept; we cannot deduce it. But if it is to perform its function in the system of thought, and have any definite meaning, it must be conceived of as cause.

In discussing volitional causality, Knudson identifies three diverse conceptions of causality as positivistic, rationalistic, and voluntaristic. After an analysis of the three conceptions, he concludes:

Our analysis of causation thus drives us to the conclusion that it is only in its volitional form that causality can be made intelligible and self-consistent. Two things must be provided for in any adequate world-view. One is unity and identity and the other is plurality and change.²¹

He then argues the inadequacies of the impersonal and necessitarian plane and states the only escape from the impasse is to be realized through rising to the personal plane. Two powers of the soul, its unifying and identifying consciousness and its power of self determination, remove the contradiction in the causal idea. While some personalists place little stress on the idea of freedom, without it we could neither arrive at a unitary world-view nor could we escape the abyss of infinite regress. Volitional causality must be regarded not only as psychical or self-conscious but also as free and self determined.

Personalism holds that reality is causal and causality is volitional and, consequently, not only the passive matter of sense experience but also the dynamic matter of scientific materialistic theory is phenomenal. Upon examinations it will be found that the complete phenomenality of matter is a fundamental tenet of positivistic and absolute

²¹Knudson, The Philosophy of Personalism, p. 214.

idealisms as well as of personal idealism. However, there are two different ways of conceiving the phenomenality of matter: panpsychistic and occasionalistic. The panpsychistic view holds that soul is the essence of all existing things, materiality is simply their phenomenal form. While there are arguments in favor of this view, the difficulties brought about through it significantly outweigh its positive qualities. The argument presents us with an inexplicable angelology, but more importantly, it reduces soul to such a low level that it is impossible to decide the question of value. For example, how does one determine the value of the soul of the atom that is only a small part of the lump or mass?

The occasionalistic view of matter reduces it in its entirety to a phenomenal product of the divine energizing. Individual things in this view have no inner life, they are not real causes but occasional causes; they furnish the occasions of the divine activity. The only real cause is God. Occasionalism does not see in every material thing the phenomenal manifestation of a soul. For it matter as such is de-animized and grounded directly in the divine activity, not in the activity of independent spirits. It is also important to an understanding of personalism's view of reality to know that ontological reality is not given to space or time.

The statement, personality is the key to reality, sums up the metaphysics of personalism. That the real is individual, that unity is basal, the place of causality, and that causality is volitional, and what is said about the

phenomenality of matter all point to this underlying tenet of personalistic metaphysics. Or in the words of Knudson, "It is in personality that individuality finds its only adequate realization. It is personality alone that has the characteristics necessary to a basal unity."²²

This conception of personality, while fundamental to personalistic metaphysics, is not new. It is implied in theism and there are several elements in the Platonic, Aristotelian and Augustarian philosophies that point toward the unique reality of the self. The immateriality of the soul, its unique power of self motion and its freedom, its synthesis of unity and plurality, and the primacy of self certainty are doctrines that for various reasons were left for centuries in a state of arrested development. Knudson observed:

The doctrine is fundamentally empiricistic. Personality is something given. We do not create it, nor do we know how it is created. It is an ultimate fact, but as such it contains the "key to the whole puzzle of reality" so far as this puzzle admits of solution. The basal problem connected with "reality" is how it can combine unity with diversity and identity with change. The response is that the combination is actually effected in personality.²³

²²Ibid., p. 232.

²³Ibid., p. 237.

Theory of Values

The theory of value is of central and fundamental interest to personalists. As a statement of the position of personalists, Brightman quotes T. H. Green's axiom that value is "in, of, and for a person as typical."²⁴ Personalists acknowledge no platonic form, no mere norm, no extra-personal state of affairs, as possessing intrinsic value. Every person, as Kant held, has "dignity"--an intrinsic worth for which there is no equivalent. Butler outlines the general theory of value of idealistic philosophy in the following propositions.

(1) The values human beings desire and enjoy fundamentally are rooted in existence. They are real existents. (2) The values of human life are what they are largely because there are individual persons to possess and enjoy them. (3) One important way in which individual persons can realize value is by actively relating parts to wholes.²⁵

By the first principle, personalists insist that values are rooted in existence. They are part and parcel of reality. We enjoy values, not only because our emotions and sentiments are appropriately aroused so that we have certain desirable feelings but also because the things we value are realities which have existence themselves and

²⁴Edgar S. Brightman, "Personalism," in A History of Philosophical Systems, ed. Vergillius Fern (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1950), p. 348.

²⁵J. Donald Butler, Four Philosophies and Their Practice in Education and Religion (New York: Harper & Row, 1951, 1957), p. 206.

are rooted in the very structure of the Cosmos.²⁶ Values viewed from this perspective are stable, attaching themselves to realities rather than being rooted in human sentiment or what may be socially acceptable at a given point in time. Values become the standards by which acts and experiences are evaluated.

King's Philosophy

This section will compare King's positions on epistemology, ontology and axiology with those of personalism. It may then be determined if and to what extent King was a personalist. This section also contains King's view of human nature and his social thought because of their relevance to education.

King's View on Epistemology

King's view on epistemology is gleaned from his article on the purpose of education written while he was still an undergraduate. The basic positions set forth in this article were restated in his later writings. For King logical and scientific thinking was one of the outcomes expected from education. With this ability one would be able to sift and weigh evidence, discern the true from the false, the real from the unreal and thereby be saved from the morass of propaganda.

²⁶Ibid., p. 207.

When this statement of the purpose of education is analyzed, we see how the two major problems of epistemology, the validity of knowledge and the objectivity of value were addressed by King. The question of the validity of knowledge or how does one know that what one knows is true, the first problem, is solved in personalism by three principles.

THE DUALITY of THOUGHT and THING. King's epistemological dualism is revealed in the fact that mediums of communication do not give unbiased truths. If the conception fails to be coextensive with the thing conceived, then clearly the thought and the thing are not one and the same. Just to acknowledge the possibility of error on the part of the person who communicates, or on the part of the one who receives the communication, implies epistemological dualism. To develop one's capacity to perform critical examination is to guard against such deception.

THOUGHT or MIND is ACTIVE UPON the PERCEPT rather than the OPPOSITE. The ability to think intensively and critically, another of King's educational outcomes, requires mental activity. In his statement, ". . . our minds are constantly being invaded by legions of half-truths, prejudices and false facts . . .",²⁷ one might sense an inclination toward accepting the notion that the mind is in fact a tabula rasa upon which ideas make their imprint. Closer

²⁷Martin Luther King, Jr., "A Tough Mind and a Tender Heart" in Strength to Love (New York: Pocket Books, 1963), p. 2.

examination of his overall position reveals that he regarded the mind as active and in fact mediating the percepts as they are received. In King's view, failure to critically evaluate sense data results in a dilemma human beings inflict upon themselves by their tragic misuse of freedom and their failure to use their minds to the fullest capacity.²⁸ Just as intense critical thinking brings us nearer to the "real", we can, by choice, refuse to be mentally active and guarantee that our concepts will be false.

REASON IS TRUSTWORTHY. King believed that education should enable one to sift and weigh evidence--an ability that requires that one have a reference point against which comparisons are made. All truth is not subject to empirical validation. According to King, scientific investigation should concern itself with facts which when understood, led to power to harness and utilize the phenomena on our planet. Relatedly, religion's province is spiritual interpretation through which humans achieve moral wisdom which is another form of power. The legitimate field of science is environmental matter and the proper area of religion is human values. In the area of values, science is impotent, hence reason is the standard of judgement.

The objectivity of value, the second problem in personalism's theory of knowledge, is settled by the fourth fundamental principle that undergirds personalism's epistemology.

²⁸King, "Love in Action" in Strength to Love, p. 39.

THE PRIMACY of PRACTICAL REASON. This principle deals with the purpose of thought and, consequently, the question of value. In identifying "intelligence plus character" as the goal of education, character is posited as a value. Further character is set forth as a "practical postulate" fulfilling the need to ground our search for answers in faith rather than empirically validated principles.

In stating the purpose of education is to transmit accumulated knowledge and experiences in social living, King departs somewhat from the personalistic position that knowledge is knowledge only as it is mediated by human experience. This position, necessitated by personalism's emphasis upon personality, is admitted by many personalists to be unrealistic and impractical.

King's View on Reality

Something should remind us once more that the great things in this universe are the things we never see . . . in a real sense everything that we are is a shadow cast by that which we do not see.²⁹

These statements show that King thought that ultimate reality consists in something other than the visible material world.

In a critique on Communism, King drew a sharp contrast between the basic affirmations of Communism and Christianity to show why a Christian could not be a Communist.

²⁹Martin Luther King, Jr., Measure of a Man (Philadelphia/Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1968), p. 18.

This treatment provides insights into his view of reality. King subscribed to the basic Christian view of ultimate reality. At the center of the Christian faith is the affirmation that there is a God in the universe who is the ground and essence of all reality. This being is one of infinite love and boundless power. The creator, sustainer and conserver of values. Christianity posits a "theistic idealism." It affirms that at the heart of reality there is a heart; a loving Father who works for the salvation of his children. Reality cannot be explained by matter in motion or by the push and pull of economic forces.

Man cannot save himself for he is not the measure of all things and humanity is not God. Bound by the chains of his own finiteness, man needs a savior.³⁰

The acceptance of these affirmations reflect King's commitment to revealed theology, but they also show his subscription to personalistic metaphysics. This is especially evident when it is realized that there is no sharp line of demarcation between personalistic metaphysics and the philosophy of religion.

The six principles of personalistic metaphysics--individuality, unity, activity, volitional causality, phenomenality of matter and personality--are also clearly discernable in many of King's statements. (1) God, as the ground and essence of all reality is individual and concrete rather than

³⁰King, "How Should a Christian View Communism?" in Strength to Love, p. 115.

general and abstract. (2) That God is the ground and essence also shows that all things are related to Him and yet He is separate from his own creation. (3) That God is Creator implies activity. (4) The object of the creative act shows volitional causality. (5) That reality could not be explained by matter in motion testifies to the phenomenality of matter. (6) The personal traits assigned to God by King, i.e., infinite love and boundless power shows the personality of God. King regarded the doctrine that attempts to explain reality in terms of matter in motion as "man centered foolishness."³¹

That knowledge should not be limited to the phenomenal realm, that reality is given, we do not create it, and that our knowledge of reality need not be limited by our perceptual and logical faculties are three conclusions drawn from a review of personalistic epistemology. These basic ideas are essential to an understanding of reality as seen in personalism. It is important to note that each of these affirmations are included in King's statements cited above.

King's Value System

T. H. Green's axiom that value is in, of, and for a person, accurately describes King's value system. Personalism provided King with a metaphysical basis for the dignity of and worth of all human personality. This dignity attributed to all human personality was the basis of his persistent

³¹Ibid., p. 66.

effort to develop an environment where all people could interact in a spirit of fairness, justice and love.

In King's view justice meant that our legal codes must square with the higher divine law. Legal codes must also be spiritually and physically uplifting rather than degrading to human personality. In the famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" he goes into an extensive treatment of the questions raised by fellow clergymen and spells out the difference between just and unjust codes, and explains how he could counsel obedience to one while disobeying the other.³²

This same sense of justice was applied to people of other nations, which was one of the reasons he seriously questioned some of the country's foreign policies and ultimately opposed our involvement in the Vietnam War. At the very base of the Civil Rights struggle was a basic conflict between values--justice and injustice. It was because of this outlook that King could talk about winning over the person in whom the opposing position was represented and at the same time confidently affirm that the unjust position would be overcome.

King's elaboration of the idea of love showed that this love applied would result in the development of the "beloved community."³³ This community would transcend the

³²Martin Luther King, Jr., Why We Can't Wait (New York: Signet Books, 1964), p. 82.

³³The Christian Century, February 6, 1957, p. 166.

accidents of race, religion and nationality and involve the ultimate brotherhood of people under the Fatherhood of God. For King, no local, state or national act (be that act an official declaration of war) could make members of the Vietnamese army any less his brothers and sisters.

The personalistic affirmation that values are part and parcel of reality, that the things we value are realities which have existence themselves and are rooted in the very structure of the cosmos was fundamental for King.³⁴ There could be no peace without justice and where justice prevailed peace would follow. Thus, his continuing call for justice is made understandable.

In his intellectual pilgrimage to non-violence, King recalled how childhood experiences caused him to come seriously close to resenting all White people. These same experiences stimulated the quest for a means of addressing racial injustice that resulted in him becoming America's foremost champion of nonviolent resistance. King makes an important distinction between passive resistance and nonviolent resistance by pointing out that nonviolent resistance is passive only in the sense that the resistance is not with violent means. But nonviolent resistance is active spiritually and in a way that seeks to redress the aggrieved while not seeking retaliation against the offender. This it seeks to do

³⁴Butler, Four Philosophies and Their Practice in Education and Religion, p. 207.

by application of the principle of love. He described this force as active, seeking to preserve and create community. Individuals who respond to hate with hate intensify the cleavage of broken community. The result is a further depersonalization because creation is so designed that personality can only be fulfilled in the context of community.

King's View of Human Nature

In answering the question, what is man?, King rejected both materialistic and humanistic explanations as wholly inadequate. Man is not a cosmic accident whose life can be explained by matter in motion, nor is he the center of all reality, noble in faculty, infinite in reason; the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals.³⁵

King thought of man as a biological being with a physical body. In this view, man is more than a mere physical being although he is physical. Man is a living organism, a being of spirit as opposed to simply a "collection of atoms." Man is less than God.

We don't think of God as a being with a body, God is a being of pure spirit, lifted above the categories of time and space; but man, being less than God, is in time. He is in nature, and he can never disown his kinship with animate nature.³⁶

King did not subscribe to the view that the body was the principle of evil or that the body was the "prison house

³⁵King, Measure of a Man, p. 18.

³⁶King, "What is Man?" in Strength to Love, p. 108.

of the soul." He identified the power to will as the potential source of evil in man. King did not accept the notion of heredity total depravity, an idea about the basic nature of human kind that has far reaching educational implications. "As a being of spirit, man has rational capacity; man has a mind; man can reason."³⁷ This rational capacity distinguishes man from the lower forms of animal life. Man has the ability to think and then to act on that thought.

An abiding expression of man's higher spiritual nature is his freedom. Man is man because he is free to operate within the framework of his destiny. He is free to deliberate, to make decisions, and to choose between alternatives. He is distinguished from animals by his freedom to do evil or to do good and to walk the high road of beauty or tread the low road of ugly degeneracy.³⁸

Unlike other forms of animal life, man has something within him that helps to confirm the truth in Plato's statement that personality is like a charioteer with two headstrong horses, each wanting to go in different directions.

King's view involved man as "potential." The realization of this potential would make education an expected and a natural part of development.

God has given each normal person a capacity to achieve some end. True, some are endowed with more talent than others. But God has left none of us talentless. Potential

³⁷King, Measure of a Man, p. 24.

³⁸King, "What is Man?" in Strength to Love, p. 110.

powers of creativity are within us and we have the duty to work assiduously to discover these powers.³⁹

Included in King's view of man was a recognition of the social aspect of selfhood.

"I" cannot reach fulfillment without "thou."
The self cannot be self without other
selves . . . we cannot truly be persons
unless we interact with other persons.⁴⁰

The educational implications of this position are obvious.

King's Social Thought

Speaking of the social philosophy of personalism

Brightman observes:

Personalism is essentially interpersonal, and therefore social. Its universe is a society of persons and other selves. Among personalists there are two main tendencies. One is toward the organic view of society. The tendency of the other group is to test social systems by their treatment of individual persons. Thus, political democracy is emphasized, existing systems of ownership and distribution are criticized in so far as they fail to respect personality and specific applications of personalism is made to the problems of labor and management, war and peace and the like.⁴¹

Listed among the names of those personalists who comprised the democratic and reformist tendency is that of E. S. Brightman, one of the philosophers responsible for King's choice of Boston University for his doctoral studies.

³⁹Ibid., p. 85.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 88.

⁴¹Brightman, "Personalism" in A History of Philosophical Systems, p. 350.

King later acknowledged Brightman's impact when he said that Brightman and DeWolf greatly "stimulated" his thinking.

While King pursued graduate studies he was also actively searching for a method to fight "social evil." Personalism, like Communism, questioned the prevailing system; unlike Communism, it criticized existing systems of ownership and distribution only in so far as they fail to respect personality. This position was more acceptable to him therefore, he accepted personalism as his philosophical base.

King did not seek to overthrow the capitalistic system. He wanted to reform it and make it more responsive to the needs of those who suffered from abject poverty in the midst of plenty. Another objective was to cause those in power to recognize that much of the affluence enjoyed by the few was gained and maintained by the needless depersonalization of the many.

After reviewing the Montgomery Bus Boycott in Stride Toward Freedom, King devotes a section to the question, where do we go from here? In this chapter, institutions are not only measured by their impact upon the individual, these institutions are called upon to expedite the implementation of the Supreme Court's desegregation decision and the social legislation enacted by Congress.

First, there is need for strong and aggressive leadership from the Federal government. The same level of concern

about the protection of the citizenship rights of all people on the part of the executive and legislative branches as was seen in the Federal courts would have accelerated the transition from a segregated to an integrated society.⁴² Next, he challenged the northern and southern White liberals to make their voices heard. He then addresses labor unions:

Labor unions can play a tremendous role in making economic justice a reality for the Negro. Trade unions are engaged in a struggle to advance the economic welfare of those American citizens whose wages are their livelihood. Since the American Negro is virtually nonexistent as the owner and manager of mass production industry, he must depend upon the payment of wages for his economic survival.⁴³

In King's treatment of the Church as a social institution with responsibility in the area of human dignity and human rights, his personalistic philosophy clearly influenced his thought. Walter Rauschenbusch and his "social gospel" provided the foundation for much of what was said.

It has always been the responsibility of the Church to broaden horizons, challenge the status quo, and break the mores when necessary. The task of conquering segregation is an inescapable must confronting the Church.⁴⁴

Any religion that professes concern regarding the souls of men and fails to be concerned about social conditions that

⁴²King, Address at Syracuse University.

⁴³King, Stride Toward Freedom, p. 179.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 182.

cripple the soul, is a do-nothing religion in need of new blood.⁴⁵ These statements indicate a level of social concern that the fundamentalism of King's background would not produce.

It was not enough to challenge the government and point out weaknesses in its various branches, the philosophy upon which the governments rests was also in need of review.

In the face of the Communist challenge we must examine honestly the weaknesses of traditional capitalism. In all fairness, we must admit that capitalism has often left a gulf between superfluous wealth and abject poverty; has created conditions permitting necessities to be taken from the many to give luxuries to the few; and has encouraged small hearted men to become cold and consciousness so that like Dives before Lazarus, they are unmoved by suffering, poverty stricken humanity.⁴⁶

It was in keeping with the personalistic position that King evaluated America and her institutions according to the impact for good or ill that they had upon individual persons. Based on what he found he felt compelled to declare:

It is time that we stopped our blithe lip service to the guarantees of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. These fine sentiments are embodied in the Declaration of Independence, but that document was always a declaration of intent rather than of reality. There were slaves when it was written; slaves when it was adopted, and to this day, Black Americans do not have life, liberty nor the privilege of pursuing

⁴⁵King, Stride Toward Freedom, p. 73.

⁴⁶King, "How Should a Christian View Communism?" in Strength to Love, p. 120.

happiness. Millions of poor White Americans are in economic bondage that is scarcely less oppressive.⁴⁷

Summary

Personal idealism affirms that the key to the nature of reality and the solution of the ultimate problems of reality is found in personality. There are several systems that are thought of as personal idealism. By applying the four elements of personality--individuality, self-consciousness, will or free activity and dignity--to each of these systems aberrant forms are eliminated.

Typical theistic personalism and traditional theism agree in three important areas and yet they also differ in some respects. Both affirm the metaphysical absoluteness of God as the causal ground of the world. Yet personalism is idealistic while theism tends to be realistic in their respective views of nature. The "soul" or "self" or "I" is an indispensable reality for personalism. Soul may be thought of as substantialistic or activistic. Personalism subscribes to the activistic view of the soul in a libertarian as opposed to a deterministic view of man.

Theistic personalism affirms the phenomenality of matter in the occasionalistic view. Nature has no independent force resident in itself. Nature is the orderly and continuous intervention of God. The two major problems of

⁴⁷Martin Luther King, Jr., "A Testament of Hope", Playboy Magazine (Chicago: HMH Publishing Co., Inc., 1969), p. 3.

epistemology--the validity of knowledge and the objectivity of value--are addressed by four fundamental principles in personalism; the duality of thought and thing, the creative activity of thought, the trustworthiness of reason and the primacy of practical reason. These four principles constitute a distinctive body of doctrine through which personalism takes a mediating position on the two fundamental problems of epistemology.

Three conclusions reached in the study of epistemology have a direct bearing upon metaphysics. (1) Knowledge should not be limited to the phenomenal realm, (2) reality is "given" to us and (3) our knowledge of reality is not to be confined to the limits set by the perceptual and logical faculties.

There are six principles considered fundamental to personalistic metaphysics. These are individuality, unity, activity, volitional causality, the phenomenality of matter and personality. Personalistic axiology, as is the case with epistemology and metaphysics, centers around personality. The values of human life are what they are largely because there are individual persons to possess and enjoy them.

King's view on epistemology as seen in an article he wrote on education reveals his subscription to personalism. King's view on reality shows his acceptance of personalistic philosophy but also that he was deeply committed to the

theistic explanation of ultimate reality. It is at the point of the application of values that King parts with traditional theism and theistic personalism and insists upon immediate measures that would alter prevailing conditions.

The following chart summarizes the philosophical systems and their educational views to which King had been exposed. The outcome of this exposure as these systems are synthesized and made into the system that was peculiar to King is then shown.

PHILOSOPHIC CONCEPTS

EDUCATIONAL VIEWS

	ONTOLOGY	EPISTEMOLOGY	AXIOLOGY			THE LEARNER	THE TEACHER	THE CURRICULUM	THE METHOD	SOCIAL POLICY
			ETHICS	AESTHETICS						
PERSONAL IDEALISM	A World of Mind	Truth as Idea	The Imitation of the Absolute Self	The Reflection of the Ideal	ESSENTIALISM	Learner as Microcosmic Mind	Teacher as Paradigmatic Self	Subject Matter of Symbol and Idea (Literature, History, Etc.)	Absorbing Ideas	The "Trailing Edge": Conserve the Heritage
EXPERIMENTALISM	A World of Experience	Truth as What Works	The Public Test	The Public Taste	PROGRESSIVISM	Learner as Experiencing Organism	Teacher as Research Project Director	Subject Matter of Social Experience (Social Studies, Projects, Problems, Etc.)	Problem Solving	The "Trailing Edge": Transmit Settled Knowledge
RECONSTRUCTIONISM	A World of Experience	Truth as the Utopian Content of "Group Mind" Regarding Goals and Means of Achieving Them	Social Self-Realization	Social Activist	RECONSTRUCTIONISM	Learner as Experiencing Organism	Social Activist--Utopian Oriented	Child Centered Curriculum Current Events Social Problems	Learning Real-Life Projects Action Projects	The "Utopian Future": Teach to Reconstruct the Social Order
KING'S PHILOSOPHY	A World of Mind	Truth as Idea	The Imitation of Absolute Self	The Brotherhood of Man Under The Fatherhood of God	KING--IDEALISM: RECONSTRUCTIONISM	Person of Dignity and Worth--Yet Deficient in Social Interaction Skills	Teacher as Expert Who Guides, Directs, Corrects	3 R's History, Science, English, Vocational Training	Lecture Discussions Real-Life Projects Action Projects	Producing the "Beloved Community"

SOURCE: Van Cleave Morris, Philosophy and the American School (Boston: Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1961), p. 466.

CHAPTER IV

THE IMPLICATIONS OF KING'S PHILOSOPHY FOR EDUCATION

Introduction

In order to determine what kind of education one would need to bring about the "good life" of a particular philosophical system, the underlying teachings of that system on reality, knowledge and values must be clarified. This task was accomplished in Chapter III by giving an overview of personalism's positions on epistemology, ontology and axiology and then presenting King's thoughts on these divisions of philosophy.

This chapter is an attempt to formulate an educational system based on King's philosophy and to elaborate his philosophy into its educational consequences. Various approaches to structuring educational systems exist. This chapter will follow the design by Broudy mentioned in Chapter I. The kind of curriculum, method and school organization that would seem necessary to implement King's philosophy will then be deduced. The outline given by Hilda Taba in her book

Curriculum Development Theory and Practice¹ will be used for the development of the curriculum.

Diagnosis of Need

Before a detailed course of study can be developed, the educational needs must first be determined. This step involves looking at things as they exist: an analysis and evaluation of the existing system, how it is influenced and by whom. The results of this step can then be used to help determine new needs and goals, the reasons for their need and what should have priority in implementation.

That dominant groups in any society determine and influence the needs of the rest of the people cannot be denied. That the educational institution is one of the means used by the dominant groups to achieve and maintain social and political control is also undeniable. Martin Carnoy and Henry M. Levin make the following observation:

Without question, the schools are a major socializing influence in preparing youth for the realities of the workplace. What must be emphasized in this context is the fact that all individuals are not socialized for the same work positions. Since work organizations are characterized by hierarchical roles with respect to such matters as individual responsibility, authority, pay, and prestige, then the corresponding output of the schools must also contribute to the differentiation of such roles. . . . The system of class socialization reflected in the schools and other institutions of

¹Hilda Taba, Curriculum Development Theory and Practice (New York, Chicago, San Francisco and Atlanta: Harcot, Brace & Jaranovich, Inc., 1962).

our society tend to reproduce the social division of labor according to the class origin of youth. On the average, a student whose father is working class will have less money spent on his education and will undertake fewer years of schooling than one whose father is in a higher status occupation. Since educational attainments are a principal determinant of social and occupational mobility and attainment, the lower class child finds that his relative modest schooling limits him to lower class jobs. This reality is a function of the many overlapping socialization influences that reinforce the class structure, but the schools represent a prime supporting ingredient.²

Among the manifest functions of education listed by Horton and Hunt are: the preparation of people for occupational roles, preserving culture by passing it on from one generation to the next and encouraging democratic participation by teaching verbal skills and developing the persons' ability to think rationally and independently.³ Taken at face value, the functions mentioned by Horton and Hunt appear harmless and are in fact to be expected. It is appropriate that society develop an institution to prepare people to fill peculiar occupational roles. But when the preparation gets to be a means of systematic exclusion for a significant minority of the citizens in a democratic society, corrective action is needed.

²Martin Carnoy and Henry M. Levin, The Limits of Educational Reform (New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1976), pp. 229-230.

³Paul B. Horton and Chester L. Hunt, Sociology (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976).

When the acknowledged democratic culture that is preserved is a system of values and meanings that sanction the deliberate exploitation of the powerless, there is cause for concern. To encourage democratic participation by teaching the necessary survival skills is a commendable undertaking. But when the persons so equipped are trained for the purpose of perpetuating the political manipulation of the uninitiated, a reassessment is in order.

King saw the existing inferior educational opportunity afforded Blacks as serving the economic and psychological interests of the White majority. What was accomplished in the south through de jure segregation was achieved in the north through a diabolical system of de facto segregation.

It has always been patently clear why the power structure in the south fashioned Jim Crow laws and set up substandard schools to keep Negroes in poverty and ignorance. They needed our menial labor. They wanted our bodies to develop and our minds to stagnate. They created myths about our intellectual capacity. They caricatured us as child-like brutes--happy in our ignorance. All this had and still has a design. That the south would resist the Supreme Court directives and utilize every device to slow the pace of desegregation, and avoid the establishment of quality education is thus obviously part of this design.⁴

Of the situation in the north King asked, "Must I conclude that the north, like the south, wants us to go on uneducated menials, the common laborer, the domestic worker, the expendables, a source of cheap labor?"

⁴King, Address at Syracuse University, p. 7.

The de facto segregation of the north resulted from a combination of causes, all of which were influenced by the dominant White society, including segregated urban housing patterns, increasing Black populations in the central cities, lack of job opportunity, and the outward movement of White students to suburbs and private schools. This contrived set of conditions resulted in a de facto segregation that stamped the minds of innocent Black children with the badge of inferiority. King felt that many Black and poor children who attended ghetto and rural schools in order to be functional members of society left these institutions as functional illiterates unprepared for anything other than menial, unskilled jobs.

A comparison of the academic performance of Harlem students in reading and arithmetic with other children in New York City and the rest of the nation showed that by eighth grade Harlem students were two and one half years behind New York City levels, and three years behind the national level as a whole.⁵

The depressing economic condition of Blacks was one direct outcome of being exposed to inferior educational opportunity.

Poverty in America tends to be concentrated among disadvantaged groups. Negroes in America are unemployed longest, have lower earnings when they are employed, have less

⁵Taba, Curriculum Development Theory and Practice,
p. 5.

education, and on the average, benefit less financially from the education they do attain. The average Negro with four years of college education can expect to earn less in a lifetime than the White eighth grade dropout.⁶

The "vicious circle" of Gunnar Myrdal's An American Dilemma also operates in American education: provide Blacks and other persons in extreme poverty with an inferior educational opportunity, then use the fact of their inferior preparation as grounds for refusing them equal employment opportunity. Because of inferior employment opportunity, the educational victims seldom secure equal opportunities. And so the circle goes. Thus, King felt that the insistence on educational certificates and credentials for skilled and semiskilled jobs was keeping Blacks out of both private business and government employment.⁷ In King's view, training could be the road to financially rewarding employment, but training could also be a way of avoiding the issue of underemployment. By listing vacant positions together with the qualifications needed to fill them, the responsibility is placed on the shoulders of the unemployed (the individuals least able to carry it), to acquire the necessary skills prior to employment. He felt that employers should be encouraged to reevaluate their job structures and be subsidized in their use of those employees that had to learn while on

⁶King, Address at Syracuse University.

⁷Taba, Curriculum Development Theory and Practice, p. 12.

the job.⁸

Another outcome of an educational system designed to deprive minority-group students was seen in the leadership crisis encountered by the Civil Rights Movement. To the charge that the Movement did not present the government with concrete programs, King replied:

None of us can pretend to know all the answers. It is enormously difficult for any oppressed people even to arrive at an awareness of their latent strengths. They are not only buffeted by defects, but they have been schooled assiduously to believe in their lack of capacity. People struggling from the depths of society have not been equipped with the science of social change.⁹

Nineteenth century agrarian educational techniques cannot provide the skills needed in a twentieth century urban setting. This was King's evaluation of American education as a whole. The system was especially crippling in the case of Black segregated schools.

We must work to end the educational stagnation that we face as a result of inadequate segregated schools, but be mindful that as Dr. James Conant has said, the whole Public School System is using nineteenth century educational methods in conditions of twentieth century urbanization, and that quality education must be enlarged for all children.¹⁰

King saw the unrealized capacities of many of our youth as an indictment not only of our educational system

p. 229. ⁸King, Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?,

⁹Ibid., p. 138.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 183.

but also of our society's lack of concern for justice and its proclivity for wasting human resources.¹¹ He decried the refusal of the educational system to serve as the route of social mobility. Educators, he said, shift the balance to culturally impoverished Black families and hold them responsible for leading Black children out of poverty. King called this a social pathology.

Whatever pathology may exist in Negro families is far exceeded by this social pathology in the school system that refuses to accept a responsibility that no one else can bear and then scapegoats Negro families for failing to do the job.¹²

There were other voices that shared the concerns expressed by King. Jonathan Kozol's Death At An Early Age chronicled the deliberate, systematic abuse meted out to Black and poor children in a ghetto school in Boston.¹³ The cry for Black Power was in part a response to the disappointed hopes in the area of education. The rise of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad's Black Muslims and schools for their young was an indictment not only of White America's insensitivities toward Black but also of their deliberate misuse of education to perpetuate a Black mentality that made continued exploitation possible. King understood and sympathized with the call for Black Power because he

¹¹Ibid., p. 228.

¹²Ibid., p. 193.

¹³Jonathan Kozol, Death at an Early Age (Boston: Bantom Books, 1967).

recognized the call as an outcry of frustration and disappointed hope. He rejected the negative implications of the cry because it was nihilistic and born out of the idea that the Negro could not win.¹⁴ Both Black Power and Black Separatism as advocated by the Muslims were negations of the fundamental intention of a "beloved community" for all humankind. Therefore, while King understood the cause of both movements and admitted that each had positive aspects, they were unacceptable as his response to the conditions of America.

In reviewing the conditions that precipitated the public demonstrations of the 60's King discussed education. His thinking on education was summarized in the following words:

The Negro had been deeply disappointed over the slow pace of school desegregation. In 1954 the highest court in the land had handed down a decree calling for the desegregation of schools with all deliberate speed.¹⁵

This edict from the Supreme Court had been heeded with all deliberate delay. At the beginning of 1963, nine years after the historical Brown decision, approximately nine percent of southern Negro students were attending integrated schools. If that pace were maintained, it would be the year 2054 before integration in southern schools would be a reality.

¹⁴King, Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?, p. 44.

¹⁵King, Address at Syracuse University.

The Supreme Court decision revealed an awareness that attempts would be made to evade its intent. The phrase "all deliberate speed" did not mean that another century should be allowed to unfold before Black children were released from the narrow pigeonhole of the segregated schools; rather it meant that, giving some courtesy and consideration to the need for softening old attitudes and outdated customs, democracy must press ahead, out of the past of ignorance and intolerance, and into the present of educational opportunity and moral freedom.¹⁶

King felt that educational reform was imperative. Both from the standpoint of its segregated organization and in its majority-serving content. But even more important to a man committed to the realization of "beloved community", education aimed at academic efficiency must strive to produce good morals. Indeed, education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society.¹⁷ The conditions prevailing in America created a unique educational task for the schools. The artificial other-imposed sense of inferiority internalized by Blacks had to be corrected. At the same time the artificial self-imposed sense of superiority felt by Whites was equally in need of correction. The task is made more formidable by the fact that King's "community"

¹⁶King, Why We Can't Wait, pp. 18-19.

¹⁷Bennett, What Manner of Man, p. 23.

required that injustice be corrected without being punitive toward those who had previously benefited by the injustice.

Establishing Goals

Goals and objectives are based on the needs of the society, the needs of the individual person, the psychological development of the child, and the underlying educational philosophy. Goals from these areas are interconnected.

When goals are stated as general aims they provide the orientation that every educational program has to have in order to set its emphasis. Specific decisions about curriculum require that broad aims be stated in terms of knowledge, skills, techniques, and attitudes that the student should acquire. These more specific goals are the objectives of the educational process. Objectives are stated as school-wide outcomes or as general objectives or as specific behaviors to be attained during the course of study, as behavioral objectives.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was a religious leader and an activist for social justice. He was neither a philosopher nor an educator in the general meanings of these terms. Therefore, we should expect his statements of educational objectives to be less concrete and pedagogical. His general objectives reflect the needs of individuals and the society in order that there exist the situation posited in his philosophy.

Formulation of objectives for education according to King's philosophy required asking and answering certain questions about our national character. Why should there exist a vast island of poverty in the midst of an ocean of plenty? Why has America assumed the role of God's military agent on earth? Why does policing the whole world take precedence over putting our own house in order? These and similar questions forces one to recognize the need for a radical restructuring of the architecture of American society. Old presuppositions must be re-examined. America must release herself from many things held sacred for centuries. A new value system must replace the evils of racism, poverty and militarism. "Our economy must become more person-centered than property- and profit-centered. Our government must depend more on its moral power than its military power."¹⁸ King's overall view of society as well as his aspirations for the future are reflected in these general questions and statements. What are some specific behavioral outcomes that would move us in the direction of these objectives?

While society would benefit indirectly, giving Black citizens an earning capacity comparable to that of Whites and a sense of dignity and self-respect had first priority. Historically, education had been used in America to make a break between the occupation of the parents and that of the children. When called upon to serve this function for Black

¹⁸Ibid., p. 157.

children the schools claimed inability based upon a pathology in the Black families. King's response was that this scapegoating represented a social pathology in the school system far greater than anything found in the Black family. He insisted that the job of the school was to teach so well that family background was no longer an issue.¹⁹ He insisted that schools serve as the route of social mobility for Blacks as it had for other racial groups.²⁰ Another objective of education should be the closing of the gap between the educational levels of Black and White children. The rapid improvement of the school performance of Black and other poor children was another immediate goal.

According to King, the psychological consequences of legally sanctioned and of de facto segregation were the same.

A de facto badge of inferiority is no less ugly, is no less degrading, is no less destructive of the mental health when it is branded on the tender skin of millions of Negro children in the North without the official sanction of the law.²¹

King wanted an education that:

. . . gives one not only powers of concentration, but worthy objectives upon which to concentrate. An education that transmitted not only the accumulated knowledge

¹⁹Ibid., p. 226.

²⁰Ibid., p. 225.

²¹King, Address at Syracuse University.

of the race, but also the accumulated experience of social living.²²

By comparing the objectives gleaned from King's statements with those of essentialism, perennialism, progressiveism and reconstructionism, he must be classified as a reconstructionist.

Many of the preliminary designs of reconstructionism are almost identical to King's proposals. Under economy reconstructionism seeks on employment and minimum income: (1) full employment for all citizens, in accordance with their abilities and interests, and under working conditions determined through their own organizations. King also called for full employment and a guaranteed minimum income.

The primary task is with those who are physically able to work. Useful employment must be found in private and public domains. Semi-skilled and unskilled jobs must be found during the transition period while a vast upgrading educational training program is instituted.²³

(2) Guarantee income for all families sufficient to meet expertly determined standards of adequate nourishment, shelter, dress, medical care, education and recreation. King said:

The heart of my proposal is the declaration by law that three thousand dollars is the annual minimum subsistence floor of every family in the nation. All families earning less than the subsistence floor would be required by this law to receive in direct payments the gap between a family's actual annual income

²²Bennett, What Manner of Man, p. 23.

²³King, Address at Syracuse University.

and the subsistence floor. In addition, there must be a full program of free quality education and training plus broad health services, so that the limited family income would not be expended for these essential needs.²⁴

Under education reconstructionism posits: (1) abundant support by Federal taxation is supplemented by local and state taxation--each level governed by the principle of proportional capacity to pay. King's educational proposal stated:

I go beyond apprentice, on-the-job, or other such temporary training programs. For the youths and adults of all ages, the emphasis must be on intensive and quality vocational, professional or academic training. As we did for our GI's the training must be without any payment for tuition, books or supplies. This must be augmented during training by weekly allowances of varying amounts. The measure of such allowances would be that amount which when added to the earnings of the family unit would equal the subsistence floor income.²⁵

(2) Curricula, teaching, guidance, and administration are geared to transformative purposes of the economy of abundance, political system, scientific order, and aesthetic pattern. A humane order which: (1) provides complete security and meaningful experience to aged citizens and to the helpless or retarded of all ages; (2) guarantees full participation in every phase of cultural life by members of all minority groups; and (3) a world order dedicated to agreement, by due process. Among the great and small nations that national sovereignty must now be subordinated

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

to enforceable international authority.²⁶

All these designs and other objectives parallel King's proposals in their emphasis upon those conditions that would facilitate the realization of his "beloved community" or the reconstructionist's utopia. Based on this similarity it is fair to state that King's educational objectives are decidedly more reconstructionist than essentialist.

Selection and Organization of Subjects

The selection and organization of subject matter or content of the curriculum involve such criteria as its validity and significance, the making of proper distinctions between the various levels of content and decisions about the level of development at which to introduce it. Broudy discusses the subject matter curriculum, the problem centered curriculum and after pointing out the inherent weaknesses of each, he then settles on what he calls the general education curriculum.²⁷ The content of Broudy's curriculum is designed to cultivate the skills and habits required to function effectively as a citizen. With Broudy, as with others, organization of subject matter concerns primarily the question of when to introduce material designed to increase the level of student proficiency. Certain basic skills should be gained at the elementary level with the difficulty of subject matter

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Broudy, Building a Psychology of Education, p. 292.

being increased at the secondary level and specialization to come at the college, professional or at trade school levels.

A look at the educational outcomes desired by King suggests that certain basic processes of learning should exist as well as certain content. Both process and content were important to King. That schools did not know how to teach Blacks nor what to teach them suggested to him the need for appropriate subject matter and methodology. For example, King singled out the ineffectiveness in teaching reading skills as an indictment of educational foundations and government for not spending funds effectively to find out what different kinds of reading experiences are needed by youth with various learning styles at various points in their lives.²⁸ Teaching reading, one of the three basic survival skills is imperative; hence, failure to do so is an indictment against our schools. The cultivation of survival skills is accomplished through exposure to certain kinds of educational materials. Thus, the need for selection and organization of school content so as to accomplish certain outcomes was obvious to King.

In his "Bill of Rights for the Disadvantaged," King called for schooling to establish the missing skills needed to qualify the disadvantaged for employment at remunerative levels above the lowest rung in the economic ladder. The acquisition of occupational skills implies a specialization

²⁸King, Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?, p. 226.

beyond the general educational level of Broudy. In the case of persons unemployed or underemployed because of the lack of skills, King advocated educational programs that would provide immediate relief:

I go beyond apprentice, on-the-job, or other such temporary training programs. For youths and adults of all ages, the emphasis must be on intensive and quality vocational, professional or academic training.²⁹

In order that youths and adults would be able to absorb this intensive and quality training, they must first master reading, writing and arithmetic. Furthermore, the subject matter designed to develop these skills must be so arranged that those persons with educational and culturally deficient backgrounds could grasp them.

King looked upon the early failures of Project Headstart as "failures to insulate children against poor teaching and poor schools."³⁰ While he did not leave us with any formulated educational approach to substitute for the existing system, the goals he advocated show a vivid awareness of shortcomings in our educational system. He also believed that if the content of the curriculum was to correct existing educational inequities, it must be arranged in terms of the existing conditions of those to be taught. In King's educational scheme, the selection and arrangement of a school's subject matter would be the responsibility of teachers and

²⁹King, Address at Syracuse University.

³⁰King, Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?, p. 226.

administrators who must possess a missionary zeal undergirded by academic competence and skills in involving parents.³¹

This, then, is an essentialist approach to education.

Of the essentialist curriculum Brameld says:

It is a miniature of the world that teachers, administrators and their supporters wish young people to regard as the real, true, and valuable world. A rich sequential, and systematic curriculum based on the irreducible body of knowledge, skills and attitudes common to a democratic culture.³²

The basic affirmation of essentialism is that established beliefs and institutions of our modern heritage are not only real, but true; and not only true, but good. However, the essentialist commitment to existing institutions and beliefs was less applicable to King's appraisal of the educational needs of disadvantaged students. Such students need something in addition to traditional curricula. It is true that King sought change within the existing social and political systems. However, this change would result in an order that would be radically different from that which initially existed. Yet, nothing King said indicates a disposition to have students participate in the selection and arrangement of subject matter. In this respect, he follows the essentialist pattern.

³¹Ibid., p. 227.

³²Theodore Brameld, Patterns of Educational Philosophy (New York: Harper & Row, 1950), p. 223.

Selection and Organization of Methodology

The task of selecting and organizing learning experiences involves one's thinking about such matters as strategies for change formation of attitudes, and sensitivity to the affects of these changes as well as applying certain principles of learning. Broudy says:

To justify method, one has to show that a procedure is designed to achieve goals efficiently. It is generally admitted that when we understand why we proceed as we do, the results will be under better control and amenable to greater improvement than when we are ignorant of the reasons for the steps we take.³³

As can be seen in his statement about schools not knowing how to teach nor frequently what to teach as well as in the courses of training given to participants in Civil Rights demonstrations, King was aware of the need to organize learning experiences.

The role of the teacher is of utmost importance and King suggested help for teachers in the form of teacher aides, pre-service and in-service training, and improved school-community relations. His organization of methodology is further elaborated in this statement:

We have been trying to organize schools. Operation Headstart has shown that a little work before school cannot insulate children against the impact of poor schools and poor teaching. Programs that throw a little money into school counseling or remedial reading instructions cannot prepare youth

³³Broudy, Building a Philosophy of Education, p. 336.

for the educational needs of today.³⁴

In this statement King is recalling his own educational background when he cites the inefficiency of the "little work" done by Operation Headstart. His commitment to personal idealism as a basic philosophical position caused him to place the student in the center of the educational process. Concept attainment is an individual function with emphasis on the ever-developing student rather than a static body of truth. When properly done, teacher arrangement of student experiences facilitate concept formation that seems to come naturally.

Finally, in his call for intensive and quality vocational, professional and/or academic training, King supported the notion of education dealing with specialized bodies of material for the benefit of students.

Evaluation of the Curriculum

Educational questions for King were: Is the quality of learning such that the ends of education are being achieved? Is there consistency between the aims and the objectives and what is actually achieved by students? Who is to make the judgments? While raised in a forceful manner, these questions were not treated directly by King.

In evaluation two dimensions must be considered: evaluation for the school and evaluation for life. Through

³⁴King, Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?, p. 226.

the use of tests, the teacher evaluates both student performance and the quality of the learning experience. Even when administering tests the importance of quality, committed teachers is highlighted. Except in the case of standardized tests, there is the problem of subjectivity on the part of the teachers. It would also seem that King's call for the involvement of the parents in the educational process is a call for a continuing evaluation of school by the parents. Whether the average parent would have the ability to recognize given educational outcomes as the result of specific instructional techniques may be questioned, but parents can relate traits and actions of their children in the non-school setting and provide important feedback to teachers.

The preparation for life involving the transfer of communicated concepts into lifestyles would, according to King, be under the close scrutiny of Federal agencies, a natural outcome of the massive Federal investment that he called for. He decried the apparent lack of commitment of Federal agencies in the implementation of educational acts and judicial decisions. King believed that the chances of equal treatment for Blacks without the involvement of the Federal government was practically nill. Indeed, it had been the refusal of local governments to administer justice that had created the need for Federal intervention.

In King's dialogues, it appeared that the standard by which education as a whole is to be evaluated is the complete

integration of America's minorities into the mainstream of economic opportunity and their ability to realize the "good life."

Organization of an Educational System

The kind of school organization that King's philosophy would seem to require will now be briefly discussed.

Broudy lists three major problems encountered in school organization:

(1) The consecutive and cumulative nature of learning. What one can be taught depends upon what one has already learned. (2) The individuality of each pupil thereby making a kind of individual experience desirable and necessary. (3) The organization of the school is impinged by the willingness of citizens to use their economic resources for education.³⁵

In his "Bill of Rights for the Disadvantaged" King does not reveal a systematic plan for elementary and secondary schools. Rather, he speaks to the need for "expansion and intensification of Headstart programs for special or remedial instruction of our younger children who are culturally lagging and retarded." This special or remedial instruction for pre-school children was accepted by King as a means of minimizing or preventing the cumulative educational deficits characterizing Black children. Furthermore, when he discussed "intensive and quality vocational, professional and academic training", there is evidence that King wanted education organized

³⁵Broudy, Building a Philosophy of Education, p. 356.

so as to allow each student to maximally achieve his or her potential. That King's school would consider the problem of individuality is seen in his call for special teacher assistants to reduce class size and more direct training and aid in teaching youngsters from low income families. To make his point he frequently quoted President Lyndon B. Johnson:

We are not going to stop until every child in this great and beautiful land of ours can have all the education of the highest quality which his or her ambition demands and his or her mind can absorb. . . I applaud this lofty objective and commend it to you as worthy of fulfillment with all deliberate speed.³⁶

For elementary and secondary schools, King proposed the adoption of the educational park concept of Max Wolff. However, finance, the availability of teaching specialists, and adequate school facilities were considerations that dimmed the adoption of this approach. Consequently, King looked upon pairing of schools, busing pupils, and free choice as suitable alternatives to altering the segregated neighborhood school setup. A major objection to the neighborhood school approach was that it left administrative decisions in the hands of local authorities. In reality, most of the ideas reflected in King's statements about education seemed to reflect his own progressive educational background and association with other civil rights leaders that his commitment to the implications of personalism. Even so, it is abundantly

³⁶King, Address at Syracuse University.

clear that King not only recognized the need for better organization in the school system but offered proposals for such changes.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Martin Luther King, Jr., like most men who give themselves to specific areas of social concern, was forced to concentrate upon the day-to-day issues of the quest for social justice. His thrust was more practical than theoretical because that was the demand of the time. He looked upon education as one of the many fronts upon which social justice could be advanced and his educational proposals reflect this utilitarian view.

The objectives to be realized through education, according to King's philosophy are such as will align him with the reconstructionists. He called for education that would prepare each individual to participate fully in the vocation of his choice according to his ability. To do less, King thought, was to engage in a tragic waste of one of the nation's most precious resources--the brain power of its youth. He further insisted that the abundant resources of the nation places such idealistic outcomes easily within reach. In order to succeed the overriding need was a reordering of

national priorities. Though King was reconstructionist in his educational objectives, there is little in his statements to suggest that he was contemplating a utopia that would come into full fruition with some future generation, nor is there anything of a vendetta against any particular approach. His preoccupation with the usefulness of any approach placed him in the camp of progressivism. His reliance upon the structure with which he was familiar identifies him with essentialists. The feature in King's educational thought that makes it peculiar to him is that emphasis is heavily on the side of cultural transformation. This he seeks as an immediate this-worldly outcome whereas traditional essentialism is more committed to perpetuating existing institutions with a willingness to give a place of importance to science and other evolving disciplines. Perhaps to an even greater degree than would be permitted orthodox essentialists, King was eclectic. His educational proposals vary widely to include those that might be expected from persons from almost all philosophical positions. His call for education plus character was a reflection of his basic religious and thus essentialistic tendencies. Education that equips all to command a just return in the labor market is a progressive goal. A complete restructuring of the value system seems utopian, which also grows out of the root philosophy of pragmatism. King was deeply convinced that his recommendations were not only practical and possible, but that

implementation was necessary if America was to avoid internal social decay. Therefore, he called upon men of good will the nation over to work for a peaceful transition from a society marred by poverty, racism and militarism to one that is person-centered and willing to use its vast resources to eliminate human suffering. It would seem fair to conclude that though King desired a radical revolution of values, his educational system would incorporate only such changes as the desired results would make necessary.

King was an eloquent and persuasive speaker who possessed a quality of honesty and deep sincerity that inspired trust in those who heard him. Much can be said about the man and his efforts on behalf of those whose cause he championed.

His childhood experiences collaborated to produce a man with an insatiable desire to address social injustice in America. King was raised in relatively comfortable circumstances, yet he was not so separated from those with less adequate provisions that he was unaware of their day-to-day needs. The insensitivity to the needs of the deprived encountered among the middle class soon caused King to lose sympathy with middle class values. Many of those who were fortunate enough to obtain an education thought of it as an aid to the further manipulation and exploitation of the less initiated. In response to this tendency, his speech on the purpose of education called for education plus character as the final goal of the educational process.

King's undergraduate training at Morehouse where "no one was afraid of Whites" allowed him to pursue his college work without being preoccupied with concerns about conforming to the stereotyped role of the Black student. The combination of a childhood of positive environmental conditions together with this undergraduate exposure cultivated in King a fertile field for personalistic philosophy. Finding in personalism "metaphysical basis for the dignity and worth of all human personality" strengthened King is his commitment to the goal of ending the depersonalization inflicted upon the poor by an affluent minority. The fact that King's efforts encompassed the deprived without respect to race shows his commitment to the idea of the dignity and worth of all human personality.

Personalism evaluates all institutions in accordance with the effect they have upon the individual. When America's institutions were evaluated by King in accordance with this personalistic standard, many weaknesses were revealed. Restricted access to public and public-supported facilities, systematic denial of the franchise and economic deprivation all based on race and previous conditions of servitude were all too common. King's criticism of and nonviolent resistance to these injustices was viewed by many as criticism of the country itself and hence he was severely criticized. In spite of the severity of the criticism, King never allowed this to distract him from his efforts to promote social justice.

The goal of creating the "beloved community" if seriously attempted by the school system would result in fundamental changes to present approaches. Encouraging a spirit of cooperation as opposed to the present competitive attitude would be a basic need.

The failure of present approaches to eliminate many of the inequities that continue to depersonalize a significant minority in this country is justification for careful consideration of alternative approaches. Among those new approaches deserving close consideration should be those educational structures that King's philosophy demands.

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