

**Russell Kirk; Thomas Sowell: Deconstruction of Parental Authority**

Since our nation's founding, its Anglo-Saxon, Judeo-Christian, and Western-European heritage has struggled to maintain a culture based on absolute principles of right and wrong by incorporating them into our codes of civil and criminal law. About 80 years ago, outside forces began to influence this Zeitgeist. Over the last three decades the national conscience has suffered almost a complete inversion.

True education is based on a system of didactics where an informed instructor conveys facts inherent to a given subject to uninformed students who learn the information and thus become knowledgeable themselves.

A true classical education was possible in this country up until about 1930. Russell Kirk writes of his youth in his book *The Sword of Imagination*, chapter 2: "When Public Schools Taught Disciplines." Two definitions are necessary before we quote Dr. Kirk.

**Instrumentalism****Websters Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, s.v. "instrumentalism":**

*a doctrine that ideas are instruments of action and that their usefulness determines their truth.*

**Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th ed., s.v. "instrumentalism":**

*a philosophy advanced by John Dewey that holds that what is most important in an idea is its value as an instrument of action and that the truth of an idea lies in its usefulness. (The end justifies the means.)*

Ideas are conceived as instruments for transforming the uneasiness arising from facing a problem into the satisfaction of solving it. (Win/win; loose/loose)

**Progressivism****Websters Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, s.v. "progressivism":**

*an educational theory marked by emphasis on the individual child, informality of classroom procedure, and encouragement of self-expression. One believing in moderate political change and especially social improvement by governmental action.*

**Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th ed., s.v. "progressive education":**

*movement that took form in both Europe and the United States during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as a reaction to the alleged narrowness and formalism of traditional education. One of its main objectives, according to its proponents, was to educate the "whole child"--that is, to attend to his physical and emotional as well as his intellectual growth. The school was to be a sort of laboratory in which the child was to take an active part in his education--learning through doing. The theory was that a child learns best by actually performing tasks associated with learning.*

*Creative and manual arts gained importance in the curriculum, and children were encouraged toward experimentation and independent thinking. The classroom, in the view of progressivism's greatest theorist, the U.S. philosopher John Dewey, was to be a democracy in microcosm.*

*The sources of the progressive education movement lay partly in European pedagogical reforms from the 17<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, ultimately stemming mostly from the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Émile [ay-Meal], a treatise on education in novel form that has been called the charter of childhood.*

**Kirk, Russell. The Sword of Imagination. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995, pp. 26-27:**

*Until 1927 or 1928 John Dewey's Instrumentalism or Progressivism in pedagogy did not reach so far as the public schools of Plymouth.*

*What was taught at Plymouth's schools in the Twenties? Why, the essentials, by teachers who knew their disciplines. It was printed in Russell's sixth-grade reader, "The foundation of the book must be the acknowledged masterpieces of American and British authors."*

*The literary culture imparted by the common school would begin to weaken a few years later; the false humanism of John Dewey, with Dewey's contempt of the literature of the past, would riddle the curriculum within the schools. In 1929 and for some years thereafter, nobody would have thought of suggesting that Starkweather School offered an "elitist" program of literary studies. Kirk's schoolmates came from families of limited and uncertain means.*

*When Russell entered junior high school, in the middle of the town, he was introduced to a curriculum with only one weak link, the course in civics--a Deweyite innovation. Six years of literature; three years of history--ancient, modern, American; a year of physics and one of chemistry; also, a year of algebra and one of geometry; two years of Latin; a year of speech.*

*As concessions to Utilitarianism, a term of wood-shop and a term of first aid; four years of physical training; a term of typewriting; a term of business law, well taught by the superintendent of schools: those courses occupied six years of Russell's life. He was very active on the high school debate squad and on the school newspaper.*

*In this curriculum, which nobody challenged, there occurred no teaching of religion, except as religious beliefs were examined incidentally in the study of history or humane letters; nor were there ever prayers in school. Yet Christian morals were taken for granted. Nearly all the teachers belonged to one denomination or another--Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran, and Baptist chiefly; their assumptions about ultimate questions were derived from Christian doctrine; but dogmatic instruction was left entirely to the several Sunday schools of the churches.*

*By the time he entered junior high school, he could write well, and on serious subjects. How he acquired this skill he did not then know; but it was probably because of his critical study, from an early age, of how Nathaniel Hawthorne (The Scarlet Letter, The House of Seven Gables), James Fenimore Cooper (The Spy, The Last of the Mohicans), Sir Walter Scott (Rob Roy, Ivanhoe), Mark Twain (The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and of Huckleberry Finn) Charles Dickens (Oliver Twist, David Copperfield) and other great novelists went about their business, how they formed their sentences, how they contrived to give flesh to people.*

All this has changed and dramatically so since 1929 and has reached the point of total inversion by the mid-1990s. This is illustrated by:

**Sowell, Thomas. "Classroom Brainwashing." Chapter 3 in Inside American Education: The Decline, The Deception, The Dogmas. New York: The Free Press, 1993, pp. 34-69 passim:**

Brainwashing Methods ( p. 36)

Stress and De-sensitization\* (pp.36-41)

## **Desensitize**

**Websters Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, s.v. “desensitize”:**

*To make emotionally insensitive or callous. Specif.: to extinguish an emotional response (as fear, anxiety, or guilt) to stimuli that formerly induced it.*

Isolation and Cross-Examination (pp. 41-43) Stripping Away Defenses (pp. 43-46) Brainwashing Agendas (p. 47)