

modern education

this, the student oppresses herself by being forced into seeing the professor as a tool, or object to be 'used' for information-gathering or enlightenment purposes. The student may believe she is getting the better of the power figure, but nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, she is creating an oppressive environment for herself *in advance*, thus leaving no room for real dialogue or understanding — much less liberation. Treating an authority figure as an object is tantamount to worshipping a clay idol. The system of authority is still in place, and the possibility for fully authentic contact is blocked.

"Or, the student will turn the professor into a *living* idol, seeing him as a god, who has a direct line to the Truth of the Universe. As is proper to any religious fervour, an eroticization of this power quickly ensues. The professor takes on the role of the omnipotent, viril father-like figure. (The teacher need not be male for this to happen). This image is reinforced by the teacher, who demands to be pleased by the student.

"Since in most courses, grades tend to be based on an entirely subjective set of standards, the insinuation is made from the start that a good grade will be awarded to the student who best displays the characteristics most likeable to the professor. For many, if not most, professors, these characteristics are: submissiveness and the ability to regurgitate the ideas with which the teacher agrees. This requires that the student become attentive to all the quirks, whims and personal opinions of the professor. (For most students this ability becomes so well practised as to become second nature after a very short time). There are, however, some professors who like students to be aggressive, argumentative or just downright difficult to deal with. In this case, the student is requested to play 'hard to get,' and takes on the role of a coquette.

"In this way, although the 'rebel' may seem to be overcoming the oppression of the power relationship, he or she is actually feeding directly into it. Many teachers find that the best way to maintain their position in the classroom is to have a few 'hired hecklers,' who serve to reinforce the image of the professor as a holy, larger than life, power figure. The prof is then made into a 'victim' of irreverence by the 'hecklers,' and is also given an opportunity to show off his or her magnificent arguing skills. In this vein, the students who are not appointed to the 'rebel' role can only further sympathize with the poor misunderstood idol who stands at the blackboard. They may even go so far as to be appalled at the lack of respect that their classmate is demonstrating.

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Sunshine D.

"In private, however, the professor reveres the rebel. The rebel is the one who knows his or her weaknesses, who plays on his or her insecurities, and therefore seems to possess a visionary quality. In truth, the rebel has done nothing more than catch on to the more subtle clues put out by the teacher. Trial and error proves that many professors seem to be aroused by the possibility of insurrection, and are only able to get interested in students who attempt to pose a threat to authority.

"The simple hatred or envy that a worker might feel for his boss becomes, for the student, a morass of conflicting emotions, behaviours and responses. The student is required to live a life of fearful submissiveness — running through a maze of roles and poses in an effort to please the figures of authority that he is constantly presented with.

Success requires that the student become sensitive to every facet of the professor's personality — and an absurd contortionist act results. Loss of individuality is an almost unavoidable consequence of this kind of life. The student who emerges from this experience appearing unscathed may well be the one who has best assimilated the power dynamic into his or her personality.

"The life that the student must create for him or herself after college will be affected by the enforcement of idol-worship which occurs in the academic setting. Whether he or she ends up on the giving or receiving end of this, the result will be an oppressive one. It is imperative, then, that we begin to restructure the environment of student life during the time that we are students. Once the patterns have been set, the authority figures are effectively incapable of making this change — *even if* they are sincerely interested in doing so.

"This is because they occupy the very position which needs to be done away with. If teachers attempt to 'liberate' students, then nothing will have changed, in the same way that 'playing the rebel' is not a revolutionary fact but merely a continuance of the role-playing that underlies idol-worship.

"If the goal of student liberation is a radical change in the ways that knowledge and/or understanding is transmitted and developed, then the responsibility for stopping the hero-worship and obedience to authority is largely on the shoulders of the students. Breaking the cycle that contorts and stumps the growth of the individual is an endeavour which could well begin with a student uprising.

"But this act must not be confused with either the tokenist gesture of becoming the 'class agitator' or the fraudulent role reversal which takes the form of the 'upward mobility' model. Neither of these approaches does any real damage to the power structure itself. By attacking only the individuals within the roles, rather than the roles themselves, these methods continue the oppressive cycle which the student/professor relationship exemplifies."

So, for example, staging a demonstration calling for Arthurs' resignation would only reinforce the authority of the administration. Arthurs' neck is on the line because he is a token spokesperson. As in "higher" political circles, real power does not reside with individuals, who are "expendable," but with the system itself, which constantly strives to extend and entrench its gestalt of control.

I would like to close with a few words from Abbie Hoffman, the radical activist who died last year. Although the official story is that he killed himself, World Watchers International reports that the "lack of a suicide note, delays in autopsy conclusion and the involvement of Buck's county coroner Roscoe who covered up the murder of Jessica Savitch in 1983, are reasons to ask whether this 'suicide,' and the more recent murder of Huey Newton, are attempts to finally kill the troublesome 'Sixties' . . .

"Abbie was actively involved in many campus and community struggles, and had little reason to feel depressed. He wrote to friends just before his death that it was a 'great time to be alive.' He told students at Vanderbilt University, 'I regret nothing.' And he knew enough of drugs to realize that an alcohol and phenobarbital overdose is a rotten way to go. The coroner first told members that there was 'nothing in the stomach,' but later claimed a high alcohol level in the blood and the 'residue' of 150 pills were present. These items show up in simple fluid autopsies, they don't take five days to discover. Almost all prescription phenopharbs have an emetic added, so that large doses will be automatically vomited. The autopsy report also reported a trickle of blood under the nose, without explanation. Other questions remain about his death."

In all likelihood Hoffman was "suicided," a common method of political assassination. Everyone should be aware that in the Weimar Republic, in the years preceding the rise of the Third Reich, there were 400 unsolved deaths of progressive people, and it was this "purgation" that allowed the fascism to rise. The deaths were not solved largely because the police did not *want* to solve them, or were not paid to. A similar pattern

can be seen in modern America, starting with the murder of John F. Kennedy. Not to draw too many parallels, it's worth noting that Sasakawa was, or is, an advocate of political assassination.

These are Hoffman's "Plans for the Destruction of the Universities," from his late-'60s book *Revolution For the Hell Of It*:

"Last fall I spoke at Cornell and announced, 'The food here is free!' and 20 of us walked into the cafeteria, loaded our trays with hamburgers, Cokes and pies and walked out without paying. We sat in the dining hall laughing and slapping each other on the back stuffing our faces with Digger shit. I told them of epoxy glue and what a great invention it was. [I think he means for gluing up locks. — TD] And at another school we asked them why they were there and they said just to get a diploma and so we passed out mimeographed sheets that said 'This is a diploma,' and asked the question again.

"... how is it that we have allowed professors to have the ultimate authority over how a class is run?"

Sunshine D.

"We appeared at Brooklyn College and announced, 'The classroom environment is free,' unscrewed desk tops and transformed them into guns, passed out incense and art, wrote Black Board on the door, switched off the lights and continued in darkness, announcing that the security guard was one of us, freeing him through the destruction of his identity, and in general doing whatever spontaneously came to mind. Our message is always: Do what you want. Take chances. Extend your boundaries. Break the rules. Protest anything you can get away with. Don't get paranoid. Don't be uptight. We are a gang of theatrical cheerleaders, yelling Go! Go! Go! We serve as symbols of liberation. That does not mean that at times we do not get caught. Everybody's been arrested or stomped on or censored or shot at or fired from a job or kicked out of school or all that and more. 'We've all been snuffed,' as Ed Sanders says. It is not the snuffing but the notion that we can get away with taking chances that keeps us going . . . The Movement grows through success, not through frustration. The ability to withstand frustration is what keeps us alive.

"Our brothers and sisters are in the prisons of the universities. It is our duty to rescue them. Free men draw a line in Harvard yard and dare President Pusey to 'cross over the line.' Students burst into the dean's office and when he asks them what they want they all hold a finger in the air. At San Francisco State, Black Panthers and even White Panthers wait on the rooftop ready to shoot if the administration calls the police onto campus. Make war on bells in school. Bring alarm clocks to school and have them ring on the half-hour instead of the hour. You can buy a small Japanese tape recorder and a few speakers from a junkyard for about twenty-five dollars. Some careful camouflaging and you can suddenly turn the school into a huge discotheque.

"Columbia was a truly liberating experience for many of us. Five buildings and five days forced people beyond the mere academic exercises of building a radical movement and into the more relevant experience of building a radical community. White radicals must begin the development of radical communities near universities and supported by sympathetic students. The experience of being in a radical movement lasts until the degree is handed over. The experience of living in and constructing a radical community is of a much more durable quality."