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ORIGINALITY AND CONFORMITY

ON THE POSSIBILITY OF REVOLUTION WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF PROPRIETY

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Ordinarily we think of originality and conformity as "deadly enemies" of one another. We assume that to be original requires non-conformity, and that in conforming one forswears originality. Then we take sides, some bemoaning the prevalence of conformity and the rarity of originality, others defending conformity as the necessary glue of social cohesion and arguing that originality has no special intrinsic merit. This essay, by contrast, will search to see whether originality and conformity may not, actually, inform one another—indeed require one another—whether, that is, "revolution within the boundaries of propriety" may be less ridiculous than it initially sounds and turn out instead, upon examination, to be the only genuinely revolutionary movement and the only truly conservative form.

First, though, we must struggle toward clarity about the terms "originality" and "conformity." The prevalent view, for which I will adduce considerable evidence in the following pages, holds that conformity is a central social phenomenon and originality more peripheral. After examining the quality of evidence and definition that supports this view, I will develop an alternative view according to which originality is a central social phenomenon and conformity more peripheral, though nonetheless necessary. This view will open toward the possibility of a society which encourages revolution within the boundaries of propriety.

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Conformity

There will be those who, like Freud[1], view conformity as a central phenomenon in social cohesion, whether we like it or not. In this conception, originality is necessarily a form of social deviance and therefore necessarily a peripheral social phenomenon, however laudable and socially useful any given example of originality may ultimately become.[2] At the same time, originators must suffer the neuroses of deviance as well as the daimon of creativity.

Over the past four decades some of the most original and convincing experimenting and theorizing in social psychology have demonstrated how many aspects of social interaction reinforce conformity. Peer pressure,[3] obedience to authority,[4] the desire to maintain face,[5] and organizational norms which favor rational task accomplishment and avoidance of dissonance[6]—all function in such a way as to encourage conformity.

Indeed, according to a common definition of "conformity" and "norms," all social norms are *ipso facto* conformity producing. Zajonc[7] holds that conformity occurs "when the behavior of an individual is under the control of a group norm," where *norm* refers to any "uniformity of behavior among the members of a given group that is not the result of a physical or biological uniformity among them."

But conformity may be even more pervasive than outward behavioral conformity to social norms. It may pervade our very thinking. Whorf[8] argues that we cannot think a thought for which we

[1]Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (New York: Norton, 1962).

[2]Erik Erikson, *Wayward Puritans* (New York: Wiley, 1966).

[3]S. Asch, *Social Psychology* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1959). See also M. Sherif, "A Study of Some Social Factors in Perception," *Archives of Psychology, 27*, 187, 1935.

[4]S. Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).

[5]Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1959).

[6]C. Argyris, "The Incompleteness of Social-psychological Theory," *American Psychologist*, 24:10, 1969, pp. 893-908.

[7]R. Zajonc, "Conformity," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. D. Sills (New York: Macmillan and Free Press, 1968), pp. 253-260.

[8]B. Whorf, *Language, Thought and Reality* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1956).

do not have the language. If this is true, our thinking conforms to the limited categories of our particular language. Kohlberg[9] has amassed a carefully considered array of evidence which suggests that our thinking tends to conform still more narrowly to a small subset of the possible categories within a given language. By analyzing how persons justify their responses to moral dilemmas presented to them (that is, by analyzing not the content of their responses but rather their logical structure), Kohlberg has over the years differentiated six different structures of moral judgment that persons may use. A given person's reasoning reliably conforms to but one of the six structures, except for times of transition between stages.

Further consideration of Kohlberg's research can show us how conceptual conformity and behavioral conformity interrelate. The six structures of moral judgment can be ordered in a sequence of increasing logical integration and differentiation.[10] He defines these stages as: (1) the punishment-and-obedience orientation where the physical consequences of an action, not its human meaning, make it good or bad; (2) the instrumental-relativist orientation, where there is a concept of fairness but of a purely physical "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" kind; (3) the interpersonal orientation, where meeting the expectations of immediate groups such as one's family is regarded as good in itself; (4) the "law and order" orientation, where conformity to existing social authorities and rules is regarded as good in itself; (5) the social contract-legalistic orientation, where one questions whether existing rules embody an original contract (e.g. the Constitution) and seeks to act in such a way as to create, clarify, and fulfill such contracts; (6) the universal-ethical-principle orientation, where one acts according to self-chosen ethical principles examined for their logical comprehensiveness, universality, and consistency. A person reasoning at a "higher stage" of moral judgment can follow "lower stage" reasoning but the person reasoning at a "lower stage" cannot follow the reasoning of stages more than one above his own.

[9]L. Kohlberg, "Stage and Sequence: the Cognitive-developmental Approach to Socialization," in *Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research*, ed. D. Goslin (New York: Rand McNally, 1969).

[10]L. Kohlberg, "The Claim to Moral Adequacy of a Highest Stage of Moral Judgment," *The Journal of Philosophy*, 1973, *70*, 18, pp. 630-646.

Kohlberg calls the two highest stages (5 and 6) "postconventional" by which he means that moral reasoning at these stages goes beyond conformity to what is conventionally conceived to be good or bad and questions whether the existing social conventions accord with principles of individual rights and obligations. Such thinking will conform to certain principles and may still conform to the limits of one's language as well, but it does open the possibility of thinking in a non-conventional way and of behaving in an original, non-conforming way in a given situation.

Despite this potential for originality, Kohlberg's empirical research provides an index of and an explanation for the actual predominance of conformity as a social process. He finds that the vast majority of persons he studies do *not* reason in post-conventional terms. Reasoning in conventional terms (Stages 3 and 4) actively reinforces whatever other social forces may also contribute to conformity.

Thought may contribute to behavioral conformity in still another sense as well. That is, it may contribute to behavioral conformity not only because of its own conformity to a given language and to a given structure of reasoning, and not only because most people reason in a way which directly reinforces behavioral conformity, but also in the still more fundamental sense that thinking itself (whether in one language or four) understands the "new" by comparison to what one has known before and in connection with one's previously-set action goals. Thus, the "new" is brought into conformity with the old. Such is the position of Bergson:[11]

> A new idea may be clear because it presents to us, simply arranged in a new order, elementary ideas which we already possessed. Our intelligence, finding only the old in the new, finds itself on familiar ground; it is at ease; it "understands." Such is the clarity we desire, are looking for, and for which we are always most grateful when somebody presents it to us . . . The intellect is in the line of truth so long as it attaches itself, in its penchant for regularity and stability, to what is stable and regular in the real, that is to say, materiality . . . in normal psychological life, the mind (makes) a constant effort . . . to limit its horizon, to turn away from what it has a material interest in not seeing . . . Our knowledge, far from being made up of a gradual association of simple elements, is the

[11]H. Bergson, *A Study in Metaphysics: The Creative Mind* (Totawa, N.J.: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1970), p. 35, p. 95, and p. 137.

> effect of a sudden dissociation: from the immensely vast field of our virtual knowledge, we have selected, in order to make it into actual knowledge, everything which concerns our action upon things; we have neglected the rest.

Bergson, like Kohlberg, holds out the possibility that we can get beyond ordinary associative and analytic forms of thought, with their inherent conformity to the old and their "sudden dissociation" from the new. Indeed, the book from which the above quotations are taken is subtitled *The Creative Mind.* In it Bergson seeks to suggest how intuition, in contrast to analytic thought, can appreciate novelty and can thereby inspire originality. I shall return to this theme later in the paper.

At present, I am trying to emphasize the degree to which our thought itself generates behavioral conformity. Our ordinary moment-to-moment assumption that the way-we-are-seeing-and-thinking-about-things-is-reality itself in fact encases us unawares within a limited way of structuring or describing reality. Bergson's argument is that philosophers, for all their sophistication, have only served to reinforce this assumption by focusing on the purported truth of their particular analyses of reality rather than on the process whereby one exercises the attention to experience directly, and thus cease to be totally encased within, one's way of structuring reality at a given moment. A number of philosophers of science have recently argued along the same lines.[12] For example:

> Leibnizian and Lockean inquiring systems make it appear that their representations of reality are synonymous with reality. Singerian inquirers, on the other hand, recognize that all descriptions are only representations and that to a large extent their reality only comes about if each inquirer can convince enough people (decision makers) to regard the description as real. . . . Thus, none of the models of science are to be taken as true or real in the literal sense.[13]

Following this view, we would say that science itself tends to encour-

[12]See C. Churchman, *The Design of Inquiring Systems* (New York: Basic Books, 1971); I. Mitroff, *The Subjective Side of Science* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1974); and E. Singer, *Modern Thinkers and Present Problems* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1923).

[13]I. Mitroff, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

age conformity (to its findings and theories) so long as it does not make explicit that it rests on certain underlying assumptions about the nature of reality, which can be said to constitute a model or metaphor or perspective, and so long as it does not encourage the testing of these assumptions.

This essay begins by providing definitions and data for the view that conformity is a central phenomenon in social cohesion, suppressing originality and making it a peripheral and occasional phenomenon. Even though the discussion introduces two categories whereby something original might enter social life (namely "postconventional reasoning" and "intuitive attention"), the originators of these categories themselves argue that persons rarely experience these qualities, thus reinforcing the thesis about the ubiquity of conformity. The use of forms of the word *original* at critical points in the article (i.e., *originators* in the previous sentence and *original . . . experimenting . . . in social psychology* in the fourth paragraph of the article) may seem to undermine this argument, but it need not, for significant new scientific theories, inventions, artistic creations, or political structures are certainly relatively rare human events. Moreover, of these four categories of original creation only the development of new scientific theories can really be attributed to an organized educational process, and Kuhn[14] has argued that scientific education in general mitigates against significant originality, favoring unexamined conformity to an existing paradigm of reality and methodology. Again, upon examination, the thesis about the ubiquity of conformity and the rarity of originality seems to hold true.

The very fact that one can conceive and write about conformity indicates that one can stand outside it, but again this stance may be quite rare. Moreover, it is one thing to sit home and write or read about conformity in general and quite another, much more difficult thing, to be aware of one's own conformity when in action (e.g. to be aware of how one's reading right now is conforming or original).

The argument in favor of the ubiquity of conformity is not quite complete though, because the definitions of conformity and

[14]T. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

originality are not yet clear. The original definition of conformity by Zajonc refers only to uniformities of behavior whereas our argument immediately leaped to uniformities of thought. In this realm we encountered not only different uniformities (structures of reasoning) but different *kinds* of uniformities. That is, whereas conventional reasoning mimics existing social norms, postconventional reasoning conforms to certain principles which may result in action which does not conform to existing social norms. Although it does not seem forced to say "postconventional reasoning *conforms* to certain principles," it also does not seem as though such conformity is the same as the conformity involved in conventional thinking and behavior.

A further confusion is that even conventional reasoning may not in fact mimic or conform to empirically existing social norms. Uniformities of behavior in a society may be at variance with its conventionally espoused norms. For example, openness and shared control are often espoused norms of participants in meetings in America, yet upon examining their own behavior afterwards they themselves will acknowledge that it was closed and manipulative.[15]

Even the original definition, which avoids all these complexities by referring only to uniformities of behavior, is not without its obscurities. For one thing, we usually think of norms as referring to rather complicated forms of *complementary* behaviors rather than simply to uniform behaviors. For example, there is no single phrase or gesture which fully characterizes openness or closedness. Rather, these terms refer to whole sets of phrases, gestures, and tones which, though phenotypically different from one another, contain structural or genotypic similarities. We can try to resolve this problem by widening the sense of "uniform" to include complementary behaviors, arguing that complementary behaviors are also uniform in that they are subparts of uniform *patterns* of behavior. But now we are wandering into trouble; for any behavior, no matter how phenotypically unique, can be explained as part of some larger pattern of conformity. And if this pattern initially seems unique, then it can be subsumed under some inferred pattern of patterns, and so forth until, *à la* Hegel, one envisions the pattern of everything. The pattern of everything

[15]C. Argyris, *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1974).

obviously isn't a uniform pattern because there is nothing else for it to be uniform with, to conform to. (Or perhaps one should say instead that the pattern of everything is *the* uniform pattern, the uni-form, compared to which all other forms are mere reflections!)

In any event, what becomes clear as we try to anchor the concept of norms somewhere between the chaotic multiplicity of "units of behavior" (however they might be determined) and the singular "pattern of everything" (however that might be determined) is that to name a norm is not merely to describe an external, empirically verifiable regularity but rather also to make an act of judgment which sets boundaries upon the realities one (and perhaps others) will henceforth observe.

The definition of conformity with which we began leaves this act of judgment shrouded in obscurity. The danger here is that we will come to believe that norms control behavior, forgetting that acts of judgment determine norms. Indeed, the second confusing quality in Zajonc's definition of conformity is that it not only leaves unattended the act of judgment in formulating a norm but also actively encourages our forgetfulness of our acts of judgment. It advances the notion that a group norm *controls* an individual's behavior when that behavior conforms to the norm. Since a norm *is defined as* the uniformity of behavior (as inferred by someone, e.g. the social scientist), it seems like word magic to say at the same time that a norm *controls* the uniformity of behavior. But then, what *does* control the uniformity?

In the case of someone who reasons in a postconventional manner, it seems clear that the person behaving uniformly controls his or her own behavior. Such a person does *not* take for granted that existing uniformities are good uniformities, but may decide on a given occasion, after inquiry, that it is most just to behave in accordance with an existing uniformity. Outwardly this person will simply be seen to conform to the norm, but this conformity is clearly *not controlled by* the norm.

Indeed, even someone who reasons in conventional terms *decides* to conform, so it is not clear that such a person is controlled by the norm either. But here the matter of control is trickier because the conventional reasoner believes that conforming is the only way to be good and because he or she believes that the social environment deter-

mines what conforming behavior is. Thus, the conventional reasoner may feel controlled by the environment, not realizing that his or her way of reasoning leads to this feeling and not realizing that he or she is making acts of judgment about what the norms to be obeyed are.

Let us pursue this matter of the locus of social control a bit further with a hypothetical example. We can imagine a situation in which the members of a society are observed to conform to a command whenever the person issuing the command holds a gun. Let us imagine further that members of this society are found to hold the belief that "power comes from the barrel of a gun." And finally, let us imagine that a closer study shows that the members of this society tend to reason in conventional terms.

Now, where is the locus of control in this society? Its members may report that external stimuli (guns) are the sources of control. The sociologist may conclude that the invisible norm "power comes from the barrel of a gun" is the source of control. The philosopher (e.g. Epictetus, the Stoic) may conclude that the individual's judgment, based on conventional reasoning, to obey the norm that one should obey the command-cum-gun is the source of control.

If we were to agree with the philosopher, our whole view of the relation of originality and conformity would be turned upside down. For if each act of conformity actually results from individual choice, whether or not the person is aware of having such a choice, then the implication is that the individual could just as well choose to act originally on each occasion of conformity if only he or she were aware of choosing. What if the members of a society believed what is obviously true upon reflection, namely that each new moment represents a new concatenation of forces and elements which not only permits but actually requires choice and originality? Would not members of such a society seek constantly to increase their awareness of their choosing and of whatever is original, and would they not seek to reason in a way which did not take for granted that existing uniformities ought to be perpetuated?

These reflections hold implications for the writing and reading of this article. Past configurations and patterns of response may provide some guidance to the reality of the present moment (e.g. writing and reading are familiar processes to the author and the reader

at this moment, as are most if not all of the individual words on this page). But there is also something original about the reality of the present moment. What would be the action of seeking awareness of the original as well as the familiar in this moment? At the very least, words have never before been sequenced quite as they are here, nor has the reader ever before approached a piece of writing with the fund of life experience he or she brings to this article. These two qualities of originality may turn out to be relatively trivial for some readers who may feel that they've seen all this before—that the originality is so marginal as to be irrelevant (a way I confess I often feel when reading journal articles)—or who may feel preoccupied by other matters. For other readers, however, the arrangement of this article may interact with this morning's mood, or last night's events, or recent reflections to strike the reader as a meaningful original insight. In any event, before one renders a final judgment on the originality of this experience one would wish to develop a flexible attention, capable of pausing or skipping and of focusing inwardly or outwardly in search of inspiration. Otherwise, one's judgment that it was not original might simply reflect one's inability to appreciate the original.

The belief that each new moment represents a new concatenation of forces and elements cannot very well be rendered as a norm since it does not lead in the direction of uniform behavior. But it can lead in the direction of continual experimentation with one's behavior and one's attention in order adequately to "see" and express what is original about a given situation. Would there be any describable regularities in a situation where everyone continually experimented? There is no reason to think not. Indeed, these regularities might well be called "norms" and behavior which conformed to them might well be called "conformity." But in speaking of norms one would recognize that one was actively constructing a version of reality, not merely describing it; one would recognize that one was omitting what was original about behavior and one would recognize that conformity was voluntary and not controlled by the norms.

Originality

Let us try to imagine further what the world would look like if we reversed the metaphor of originality and conformity and took

the attitude that originality is the central social phenomenon and conformity more peripheral.

One aspect of this new point of view that immediately seems appropriate is the notion of conformity as peripheral. After all, the form to which behaviors conform is a boundary—is the periphery—within which behavior is free to vary without violating uniformity. But this suggests a surprising perspective on originality: if originality is central, is it to be found *within* the boundaries of propriety rather than outside the boundaries? Wittgenstein seems to suggest as much when he draws our attention to the fact that no game is "everywhere circumscribed by rules."[16] For example, he says, there are no rules for how high one throws the ball in tennis, or how hard.

Since I am attempting to conform to the metaphor of center and periphery in this article, I would change Wittgenstein's observation to "no game is everywhere *inscribed* with rules." Does not the whole interest and excitement in games lie in the possibility of doing something original *within* the rules? Is is not precisely the combination of absolute originality and absolute conformity that makes Willie Mays' over-the-shoulder catch in the 1951 World Series or Shakespeare's sonnets so memorable?

From this point of view, the greater the skill of the gameplayer in conforming to the rules of the game, the greater the leeway he or she has to act originally. For under such conditions the player need not be distracted by the rules and will not have his or her efforts suddenly entangled in and frustrated by the rules. This principle is all the more obvious in the games with nature which we call crafts. Stonemasonry, potting, leather work, and carpentry all require a deep intimacy with the limits of the material before its possibilities can be realized in an original way. Thus, the notion of originality as a central and continuing process in social life does not require the negation of the earlier evidence about the pervasiveness of conformity. Conformity and originality can complement rather than contradict one another.

So far, though, there is something fundamentally incomplete about this perspective on originality. We have defined a space within

[16]L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1953), p. 33.

which originality may occur, but we have not defined originality. Moreover, we have defined originality as occurring within conventions, "within the boundaries of propriety," but surely political, artistic, and scientific originality consists partly in changing conventions, especially when existing conventions are unjust or untrue. To define originality as occurring solely within conventions would seem to be incredibly conservative and would seem to condone institutionalized injustices.

Let us see if we can offer a definition of originality which remains within the perspective which has begun to take shape in the past pages and which at the same time responds to the concerns just now advanced. One would want to acknowledge at the outset that such a definition will not be easy to come by. For to be original is to formulate or to do something for the first time. Thus, it would be a contradiction in terms to expect to be able fully to formulate what originality is in advance of its discrete occurrences. One has to laugh at a scholar who concludes wistfully after a review of the literature concerning a related concept—"creativity."

> Despite all our effort it does not seem possible to offer a simple substantive definition of creativity that would win consensus.[17]

The "creative" or the "original" is precisely that upon which there can be no consensus. It is just coming into existence. If after argument about the value of something original a consensus develops about what it is, what it means, what it is good for, then persons no longer approach it as something original but rather as something which has gained a social locus, a locus which brings people together, a con-vention. In other words, to take the extreme case, something regarded by consensus as original is transformed by that very consensus into something conventional.

Although "creative" and "original" are treated as synonymous just above, we can distinguish them upon closer examination. Another review of the literature on creativity[18] defines something as

[17]G. Welsh, "Perspectives in the Study of Creativity," *The Journal of Creative Behavior*, 1973, *7*, 4, pp. 231-246; see especially p. 231.

[18]D. McKinnon, "Creativity: Psychological Aspects," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. D. Sills (New York: Macmillan and Free Press, 1968), pp. 434-442.

creative when it is (a) original, (b) adaptive, and (c) aesthetically pleasing, and when it (d) creates new conditions for human existence. This definition places the creative somewhere between the "purely" original and the "purely" conventional.

Now, as already stated, we do not need to assume an absolute contradiction between the original and the conventional. To make the original conventional via recognition of its creativity need not *destroy* what was original. Shakespeare's originality and unduplicability has become so widely recognized that few high school students escape some exposure to his poetry or plays. This exposure does not *destroy* his originality. At the same time, however, this exposure in no way guarantees that the persons exposed actually "catch" any of the originality or develop symptoms of their own originality. Indeed, a high school student may swallow whole or rebel against the conventions about Shakespeare and thus never appreciate his originality. In short, the conventional may obscure the original. The difficult task of a teacher of "classics" is to encourage his students to swim upstream against the current of convention back toward the original.

The argument of the past few paragraphs, that it will be difficult to define "originality" works against itself in a certain sense since it helps to define what we mean by "originality." That is, the argument that originality always eludes circumscription by remaining *within* the boundaries defined serves to circumscribe originality more tightly.

Some readers may feel that the foregoing argument against a full definition of originality commits the logical fallacy of confusing the *class* of original things with any *member* of that class. In untangling the alleged confusion, one might argue that while one cannot predefine any *given original thing*, the same objection does not hold for the *class of original things*. For example, one could say that all things formulated or done for the first time belong to the class of original things, thus defining originality (in general) without pre-defining (the specific qualities of) any given original thing. (And this is in fact just what we did in an implicit way a few paragraphs above.)

Upon reflection we see that *all* definitions refer to *classes* of things and not to particulars. We *apply* definitions to particular things to judge whether or not they belong to the class in question: "Is this

particular thing a tree or a bush?" In the particular case of the original, however, we encounter a curious dilemma in distinguishing the particular from the class. What is formulated or done for the first time is precisely that which belongs to no previously formulated class of things. To put this another way, to define the class of original things with great care is to develop a convention about what is original, and while this convention will not necessarily destroy the original, it may obscure it. In this case, then, a clear definition may not clarify the matter in question.

It seems a bit soon, though, to worry about a too-clear definition of "original" since to define it as "what is formulated or done for the first time" seems, if anything, ingeniously vague. On the one hand, there is a sense in which everything ever done qualifies as original under this definition since even cliches are uttered each time in new psycho-socio-historical circumstances and may, therefore, have a unique effect. On the other hand, there is a sense in which virtually nothing ever done qualifies as original, no matter how original it may seem to the actors at the time, because someone somewhere at some time is sure to have gone through pretty much the same thing. The essential rhythms and patterns of human interaction recur over and over again. Only the rare poet or politician expresses what is original about a mood or an age.

By making explicit the vagueness and possible self-contradiction in the definition of originality so far offered, the previous paragraph prepares the way for a more original definition (or perhaps better, exhibition) of originality. In so doing, the previous paragraph exemplifies the process of originality—the process of making the implicit explicit, bearing the vicissitudes, contradictions, and changes that accompany explication—the process of metaphor (*meta*: from Greek *change; phor* from Greek *bear*)—changing bearings, bearing changes. But let us continue the explication along the original line.

According to our working definition of originality, we cannot decide whether virtually everything or virtually nothing is original. What difference in point of view results in these two opposite interpretations of the given definition? In the interpretation that virtually everything is original, the point of view which judges what is original is *hypothetical* and *external to the actor*. That is, we are assuming some

observer could find something original about any event even if the actors involved did not view it as original. In the interpretation that virtually nothing is original, the point of view which both produces and judges what is original is *embodied in an actor.* That is, the rare poet or politician struggles to discover the original in his or her own experience with others in the world. What is similar in both interpretations is the requirement of a quality of consciousness which appreciates all of the "lawful" continuities and "eternal" patterns operating in a given situation, as well as what is unique about that situation.

Since the interpretation that virtually everything is original is hypothetical, it is literally non-sense. A hypothetical judgment is not a social phenomenon at all. An actual judgment expressed by a given person is a social phenomenon. By way of illustration, let us say that one person does something which he does not think of as original, and then another person writes an article claiming that the first person has done something original. Since the claim is in effect an hypothesis and since the second person is external to the first, it may seem that we have here an example of a *hypothetical* judgment of originality *external to the actor.* In fact, however, we have here two acts by two persons, either one of which may or may not be original. Indeed, if the second person's judgment of the first person's act is to be accurate, then the judgment itself must be original. For, to judge originality requires a consciousness which comprehends both the lawfulness and the uniqueness of a situation. Such a consciousness would appreciate both the lawfulness and uniqueness of its own embodiments (otherwise it would be a false consciousness and its judgments would be distorted). Such a consciousness would therefore tend to produce original, self-critical acts of judgment, not merely conventional self-forgetful judgments about another's originality. Moreover, such a consciousness would know what was original from the inside out—that is, by virtue of its own experience of the process of originality—not merely from the outside in—that is, by asking whether the purportedly original fall within the appropriate definitional boundaries. Finally, such a consciousness would recognize the necessity for consciousness in acts of originality—that is, the necessity for self-criticalness—for awareness by the original of itself as original. Hence, the consciousness that accurately judges what is original is never hypo-

thetical but rather embodied in an enactor of original deeds. Virtually nothing is original because the consciousness which embraces both the lawful and the unique in given situations is rare in our society.

Our definition of originality has gained greater explicitness through the elimination of the "hypothetical, external" point of view about originality. Now we can define as original that which is *formulated or done for the first time by an actor whose consciousness appreciates both the lawful and the unique in the particular situation at hand.* We can still further explicate this definition by noting that at present it implicitly assumes that what the originator does congruently reflects his or her consciousness of the situation. Thus, we may add to the above definition: *and whose action congruently incorporates a facet of the lawful and the unique, as well as a facet of the translation from implicit, pre-conceptual intuition through thought, feeling, and bodily center of gravity into word, tone, and movement.*

This more fully explicated definition of originality itself introduces several new terms which require further explication—namely, "congruent," "facet," and "intuition." Indeed, the process of explication can be unending since each new explication carries its own implications.

When one recognizes that the unique and original is not superimposed upon a situation (from nowhere?), but rather derives from what is already there implicitly; and when one begins to learn how to "swim" against the outward "flow" of consciousness "back" toward its source in order to experience directly the implicit, not only in oneself but in the whole physical, political, cosmic situation; and when, from this new vantage point, one begins to observe the translation of the implicit through thought, feeling, and center of gravity into action, to witness incongruences in translation, and to experiment toward greater congruency; when, in short, one begins to seek to move between the implicit and the explicit in one's moment-to-moment awareness—one recognizes first how strange and unfamiliar a movement this is; how what one ordinarily calls one's consciousness is really no more than one's thought and rarely includes qualities of awareness which receive an impression of one's thought as one thinks it, or of the sensation of one's own embodiedness, or of the undefined apprehension of the outside world.

Once one has attempted, over a period of a few months, this "inversion" of consciousness[19] whereby one transcends self-absorbed thought, one begins to experience how rarely one even remembers to attempt the inversion and how often, when one does make such an attempt, one succeeds only in *thinking* about making such an inversion (and that only briefly because an outward preoccupation or another association swallows all one's attention again). After a few months of such experiences, it is easy enough to deduce that most of one's translations from intuition to expression must be distorted and incongruous due to one's restricted consciousness and one's habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. But this definition is itself, of course, merely a thought.

I myself required approximately three years of effort, with support and guidance, before I began actually to experience incongruities as they occurred, and an additional seven years before my normal awareness came to include a direct, more or less continuous, inner sensation of bodily presence. Obviously, it is difficult to communicate with any comprehensiveness what such awareness of incongruities and of inner sensation tastes like, especially since knowing intellectually what incongruities are does not by any means necessarily lead one to observe them in oneself existentially. Nevertheless, a few simple examples may help: (1) I smile pleasantly but feel an inner tension and revulsion; (2) I hear myself advising someone, "Whatever you do, don't take anyone's advice;" (3) I catch myself telling my subordinates, who appear reluctant to experiment, "I insist that we make decisions by consensus in this unit, no matter how difficult it is"; (4) having difficulty rousing myself from bed in the morning, I find myself fantasizing courageous and energetic endeavors. When one does experience simultaneously both sides of such incongruities rather than remaining absorbed in just one side of the experience, one often follows such an observation by a series of thoughts about it, usually self-critical. In doing so, one has lapsed from trans-cognitive consciousness back into self-absorbed thought. One may think out a solution to the incongruity, but such a solution, being the product of a

[19]H. Cadmer, "The Inverted World," *The Review of Metaphysics*, 1975, *28*, pp. 401-422.

less inclusive state of consciousness, is not likely to be original, nor is it likely to be valid, nor is it likely to be practiced.

Given some sense of the scale of the effort involved in seeking to commute between the implicit and the explicit and some practice in doing so, it becomes clear that the implicit so expands in explication that one can never succeed in making explicit more than certain facets of the implicit. An idea conceived in a flash may take years to explicate into a book and then only partially.

Persons preoccupied with keeping certain secrets about their lives hidden from others (in order not to be found unworthy or in order to appear mysterious) are out of touch with the inexhaustible mystery at the center of life, whose recognition and translation alone ennobles mankind. This secret has no simple name: it gushes multiple meanings, the more so as one actively seeks its origin:

ORGYNATION

The secret is—
The hidden (L.) is—
To discriminate (L. earlier)—
(in order?)
To sift (L. root)

Although one can succeed in distancing oneself from the sacred secret of the implicit by talking about it, one cannot succeed in revealing it to another who listens (or reads) passively, no matter how much one tells about it. The implicit is revealed only by one's own active effort of inversion (supported and clarified in meditative conversation)—one's own active effort to contact transcognitive consciousness. What is the quality of this effort and this consciousness, the reader may be asking himself or herself now. (What is the quality of this asking?)

Close to the Bone

You want to come close to the bone, hmm?
Good will is required, you know, not gross
And an eye for the repulsive, not just the impulsive:

You've got to see mis-takes—
Back and forth, back and forth,
Not glued to one moment, transported on time.

Auto-eroticism's the only way to begin
In this decadent time, and this, yes, this,
All the above and all the below,
Comes as our period-end-peace.

To give names to the apprehension of the implicit risks falsely concretizing it, but the name commonly given it—*intuition*—can serve us too. Bergson describes intuition as the process by which we apprehend the novel or original in a situation. He writes:

> Analysis operates on immobility while intuition is located in mobility, or, what amounts to the same thing, in duration.
>
> . . . [Contrary to the assumption] that all knowledge must necessarily start from rigidly defined concepts in order to grasp by their means the flowing reality . . . our mind . . . can be installed in the mobile reality . . . But to do that, it must do itself violence, reverse the direction of the operation by which it ordinarily thinks, continually upsetting its categories. Or rather, recasting them. In so doing, it will arrive at fluid concepts, capable of following reality in all its windings and of adopting the very movement of the inner life of things . . . To philosophize means to reverse the normal direction of the workings of thought.
>
> . . . Outside oneself, the effort to learn is natural, one makes it with increasing facility; one applies rules. Within, attention must remain tense and progress becomes more and more painful; it is as though one were going against the natural bent.[20]

The foregoing pages are intended to provide some explication of the work required to produce original action which "congruently incorporates a facet of the lawful and the unique, as well as a facet of the translation from implicit, pre-conceptual intuition through thought, feeling, and bodily center of gravity into word, tone, and movement." Of course, in the context of a scholarly article, "thought" and "word" are the facets upon which I have concentrated in translating my intuitions, and in a definitional mood at that. But the definition of originality now relies at heart on the foregoing poems and on the outline of my personal experiences with inversion because originality is best appreciated from the inside out. Since poetry is more of an inside out medium than social science, it may be most appropriate to conclude the definition-exhibition of originality with a poem about how to sensationalize consciousness:

[20]H. Bergson, *op. cit.*, p. 41, p. 79, p. 180, and p. 190.

LEARNING AMERICA'S BUSINESS: ADVERTISEMENT
ADVERTEASEMENT
ADVERTISEMENT

(contra Kierkegaard: "But one thing I can do: I can compel him to take notice.")

Declining
To advertise—
to spread whatever's new and inert—(to fertilize?)

To (ad-vert)-ise—
to (turn-to)-ise, to: "pay attention!"—eyes
I.e., to command (attention), to order (i.e. organize) (attention)—
to co-man-date, to mutually entrust—
to give into one another's hands
(without question)
the going medium of exchange at the going rate.
In short, to pay out without realing back,
to go fishing (without a net),
too bad.

******

The good news spreads itself
Let's relax and organ-I's.

******

Inclining
To relax (or might we better re-treat now)
to come soft in the back again (stretch time again)

Or, (to go back again)
to (L.) re-lax-at-us (yes, folks, it's also flowing back toward us)
to become open again to the interplay,
I.e., to attend (to the business at hand)
perhaps to shake (hands too),
to tremble and to moan,
to wail, to scream, to plead,
to wonder at the firmament—
(how our hands,
ground entering and overturning
when head standing and heart stopping,
reaffirm Its fullness)—
to rehearse funereal
verses,
to wake.

To wake to our actual process of creating and recreating our worlds . . . The inversion involved in inclining to relax, and Bergson's image of the continual upsetting and recasting of categories involved in waking, carry us beyond the mere definition of originality to the question raised a number of pages ago about whether the definition of originality as occurring *within* conventionality is conservative. What about the case where the existing conventions are unjust or untrue?

"Revolution within the Boundaries of Propriety"

Bergson's words and the brief allusion to the gradual revolution over ten years within the author's own experiencing already begin to suggest one part of the answer to this question: conventions can be changed from within. Indeed, I will argue in the following pages that the most radical revolutions come from within. For to battle conventions from the "outside" is to battle conventions with other conventions or with physical force, i.e. with blunt instruments. To transform conventions from within, via the search for direct intuitive contact with the original and for congruent translation into expression, would be a more subtle, more inclusive, more discriminating, more inverting, and more novel activity and thus a more just and genuinely revolutionary activity. Truly revolutionary slogans would be so fluid and ironic that no one could shout them fervently or make a "program" of them without arousing laughter—so fluid and ironic that they would deter any mass following and remind each instead of his or her own particular work and play. Let us take as our slogan, then, "revolution within the boundaries of propriety."

As all language is metaphoric, whether or not it is recognized as such, it is worth remembering here again that the "inside-outside" dimension we are using is not external or spatial. The distinction between opposites such as inside-outside is social in the sense that it is definitional, hence conventional. But I have already argued that definitional, conventional knowledge is knowledge of boundaries. Thus, to know something physically is to know it from the outside, while to know something conventionally is to know it at the boundary. To know something from the inside is to know it intuitively. Whatever this may mean in a positive sense, it means that intuitive knowledge is

not bound by conventions. It passes through all boundaries of convention. To advocate revolution from within the boundaries of propriety is thus hardly to advocate conventional thinking and behavior. Instead, it is to advocate a revolution which recognizes from the "inside" the importance of convention to the very possibility of communication and sociability.

The recent history of philosophy can serve as an example of revolution from within and of the subtlety of what "within" means. Looking back now over the past century and a half, we can see a number of revolts within philosophy against Hegel's thought. We might name Marx, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Husserl, and Heidegger as the foremost proponents of a return from abstract generalizations to the material, to the personal, to the sensuous, to the particular, to the actual working of intuitive consciousness, to an existential openness to mystery, or we might name these men as proponents of philosophy as a lifetime task for each human being rather than as an academic task for certain professionals. Their own philosophical positions, which they argued against Hegel in their writings and which in turn now form part of our philosophical tradition, led the first four of these men to choose lives different from that of the conventional professional academic, so that in their own time they appeared as non-conformists in various ways. Was theirs a revolution from within or without? The lines seem blurred. What kind of revolution is possible when the lines become so blurred? How can one tell who's on which side (in or out, left or right?)

A closer examination of Wittgenstein's life and work can aid us here, not so much to clarify the confusion as to encourage us in it—perhaps we might say, to clarify the necessity for, and the revolutionary potential of, the confusion. Wittgenstein's most famous work *(Tractatus Logico Philosophicus)* was written as a doctoral thesis under Russell at Oxford, with an introduction by Russell when it was published.[21]

His argument (if it is fair to summarize his aphoristic style as argument) was that the nature of language is such that clear and mean-

[21]See A. Janik and S. Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973).

ingful propositions can be framed only about empirical matters, not about the metaphysical and ethical issues with which philosophers through the ages (including Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche) had grappled.[22] His attack against Hegelian metaphysical generalizations could, thus, be said to be more radical even than the attacks of Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche. Rather than arguing against the generalizations directly (and thereby to a certain degree validating them), Wittgenstein denied them the very ground in which they flourished—language itself—the medium which previous philosophical speculation had taken for granted.

His work, obviously produced "within" the established conventions of education and publication in philosophy, was quickly greeted as revolutionarily original and led to the founding of a new school of philosophy—logical positivism. Wittgenstein himself, however, regarded his own conclusions as both finishing and leading away from the professional practice of philosophy, so he became an elementary school teacher and an architect. Moreover, he regarded Russell's introduction to, and the logical positivists' appropriation of, his work as involving serious misunderstandings and misrepresentations. Whereas they interpreted him as holding that ethical and aesthetic issues were not worthy of discussion because not possible to discuss rationally, because not reducible to unambiguous propositions, he in fact regarded such issues as the ones *most* worthy of solitary and mutual contemplation for those very reasons. He would not meet with his purported followers and, on the one occasion when he was prevailed upon, insisted on reading Tagore's poetry to them.

Gradually, Wittgenstein became famous despite himself for a position he did not hold. In the meantime, his thought was itself undergoing a revolution from within. Thirty years later he had returned to writing and teaching philosophy, producing a new book *(Philosophicins)* with very different arguments from his first book. Although he still concentrated on the medium of language itself, his later thought was as though permeated by a continuous consciousness that he himself was using language in a very particular

[22]See H. Pitkin, *Wittgenstein and Justice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

and original way as he wrote, in order to obtain certain effects. That is, he experienced and attempted to exemplify how language is not merely a passive, representative medium but rather an active, prescriptive medium that takes part in and gains meaning from the particular contexts in which it is used. The aphoristic style was even more pronounced and less sequential, congruent with his insistence that he was not arguing a simple, general point. In this way, he carried his critique of generalization still further, against his own previous view that it was possible to make valid generalizations about empirical scientific matters.

Now he saw that scientific work was itself one particular context within which given words could mean different things than they might in other contexts. Because the same words are used differently (not just in the sense of representing different things but also in the sense of affecting the action differently), in different contexts, there can be no valid, general definitions of them. Indeed, the danger of empirical social science, as of metaphysics before it, is that it claims to discover generally valid truths and thus distracts individuals from awareness of, appreciation of, and responsibility for the actual judgments they make about and the actual effects they have on the social contexts in which they participate whenever they speak (or remain silent). It is precisely such forgetfulness with which we charged the definitions of "norms" and "conformity" offered at the outset of this paper.

Wittgenstein now described the contexts within which one speaks or writes as language-games within which specific words and sentences gained their meaning, as "moves" do in a game, by their relation to the "rules" of the "game."

The metaphor of "moves" and "rules" is useful because it reminds one of the active, judgmental qualities of language—the way in which language creates reality as well as represents it—but this metaphor has shortcomings as well. One shortcoming is that it may mislead us into thinking of social contexts as operating according to shared, explicit, unambiguous rules, which would make it fairly easy for us to distinguish conformity from non-conformity. But social life is far more ambiguous than pre-defined games. Laws are shared and explicit, though hardly unambiguous, as judicial systems testify.

Norms are assumed to be shared, although how generally is in question if they are implicit rather than explicit. Since norms are usually implicit, they are also likely to be ambiguous. Thus, unlike the moves in a game, social actions do not necessarily have clearly defined meanings even within specific contexts. (Of course, one or more of the persons involved may try to reduce the ambiguity by playing rigidly pre-defined "games," as, for example, Berne's *Games People Play*.[23] Moreover, the definition of the context itself is by no means necessarily shared, explicit and unambiguous, so even if the whole range of potentially applicable norms were unambiguous it might nevertheless be ambiguous which norms were in fact applicable.

Indeed, Wittgenstein shows that the most general concepts, such as those we might choose to distinguish among contexts, are those least susceptible to a single, unambiguous definition. For example, he demonstrates that we cannot give a single, unambiguous definition to the word "game," covering all the different kinds of games we play, because there is in fact nothing in common among all of them.

> "But if the concept 'game' is uncircumscribed like that, you don't really know what you mean by a 'game.' "—When I give the description: "The ground was quite covered with plants"—do you want to say I don't know what I am talking about until I can give a definition of a plant?[24]

Instead, Wittgenstein characterizes different games (and different language "games" as well) as bearing "family resemblances" to one another. Thus, unlike a given game, a given situation in social life is doubly ambiguous: the rules may well be unclear, incomplete, or self-contradictory, and the very name of the game may be in question. But even this characterization does not do justice to the ambiguity of language and social life. Language and social life may, at their best, be *positively* ambiguous—"many-meaninged"[25]—just as the poems presented above can be read at once in sexual, political, and alchemical terms.

[23]E. Berne, *Games People Play* (New York: Grove Press, 1964).

[24]L. Wittgenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

[25]F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. W. Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 335.

Here, then, lies immense potential for revolution from within toward a more just society. The "System" is not so all-embracing and all-controlling as it appears. Creative action can often make ambiguities and alternatives evident and develop new and more just rules *without even needing to oppose existing boundaries.* Opposition to existing boundaries, when it *is* useful, can be carried on in the attractive spirit of clarifying alternatives rather than in the repulsive spirit of unilaterally destroying the existing "way." But conventional thinking cannot appreciate the vast potential for revolution from within because it "sees" only boundaries. Hence, the appearance of the "System" as all-embracing and all-controlling.

Revolution from within does not depend on apparent ambiguities of situations, but rather on the inevitability that the situation contains implications to which any given explicit definition, however clear, does not do full justice. Thus, even when the context seems clear and the norms firmly established, perspicacious action can change the whole definition of the situation. I will cite two examples to support my point, one institutional and one more personal. Both examples are among the *least* felicitous I can imagine for making my point—and indeed the examples also suggest limits to the validity of my point—but, if they are at all convincing, their very infelicity will emphasize the relative openness of most situations to creative redefinition.

I offer as my institutional example the prisoner-of-war or concentration camp, certainly one of the most extreme examples of an institution in which those in power bend every effort to completely pre-structure the situation, both definitionally and physically, so as to make it impossible for a revolution from within to occur. Yet even here there is enough freedom within the boundaries of propriety for the prisoners to invent alternative realities. These alternative realities may consist of ethical structures developed by individuals, such as those practiced by Bettelheim, Bonhoeffer, and Frankl in Nazi concentration camps, which give different weights and meanings to events than the captors intend.[26] Or they may consist of plans and activities

[26]See. B. Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1960); D. Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York: Macmillan, 1965); and V. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963).

developed in secret among a number of prisoners which lead to actual escape from the camp.[27]

The prisoner-of-war setting emphasizes the risk, excitement, and esprit-de-corps that accompanies the sense of developing a shared, initially hidden, new definition of reality and deciding upon the appropriate timing for explicating it. Such risk and excitement always accompanies the search for more appropriate definitions of reality because there is always initially an element of hiddenness about the search, even if it is hidden only within the intimacy of a family's living room, and there is always an issue about the appropriate timing for sharing new realities more widely. (The widespread penchant for leading or at least reading about double lives—whether in terms of business crime, of marital infidelity, or of international espionage—may be a diminished and distorted reflection of an aspiration to participate in hidden conceptions, in nurturing the implicit, and in communicating back and forth between implication and explication.)

As a more personal and microscopic example of redefining an apparently pre-defined and coercive situation, I offer the story of a woman friend describing how she was held up at gun point in a deserted New York church by a thin, strung-out man who snatched her purse and ran. The purse held all the money she had. A person who believed passively that "power comes from the barrel of a gun" would have assumed the event was completed and thanked her stars that she had not been hurt, or rushed to the police. But this woman immediately called out in a commanding tone, "Just a minute! Are you a junkie?" As he hesitated and said "Yes," apparently still in control of the situation since he now held both gun and purse, she continued with genuine sympathy but lying, "I was a junkie too, and I guess it was pure luck that they got me to a hospital and I was able to get off it before it killed me." By this time, she was his confrere and in temporary emotional control as well. He was rooted to his spot, trembling. She continued without a pause, acknowledging his control of the situation but in fact controlling him: "Look, take the money, but leave me the purse because it's a complete pain to replace all the cards. And would you leave me a couple of dollars carfare? You

[27]P. Brickhill, *Great Escape* (New York: Norton, 1950).

should really get yourself to a hospital right away. Don't wait till tomorrow: do it right now while you're being reasonable. Here, give me the purse and I'll give you the money." He handed her the purse; she handed him some of the money; and she wondered afterwards whether she might not have saved it all and gotten him to a hospital as well if she had been a bit more self-confident and thus risked even more inventiveness.

We can note that the woman's concern was for the whole situation, for the junkie as well as for herself, that her redefinition of the situation derived from an appreciation of his inner reality, and that it was, potentially, to the benefit of both parties. Although her initiative was behaviorally as unilateral as the junkie's, its structure (mutual concern) and its effect (sharing the money) were less exploitative and thereby opened toward the possibility of shared control of the definition of the situation.

Another notable aspect of this situation is the risk the woman took. All attempts to explicate the implicit involve the risk of incongruity and failure, but the danger becomes most palpable when the initial definition of the situation is unilateral and exploitative. For her initiative to succeed, her tone, her demeanor, and her timing—all had to be impeccably precise and integrated. She had to be at once perfectly controlled and perfectly sincere, utterly self-possessed in her purpose and at the same time fully attuned to the implications of each tone and gesture of the man. We can note that the woman's risks were subtle, experimental, and progressive. That is, the junkie could simply not have heeded her initial call without much additional danger to her. The fact that he stopped indicated a certain ambiguity in his sense of purpose, which made the second comment worth risking. Then the fact that he "stood for" her second comment suggested an even stronger susceptibility to her control, which made her reaching for her purse far less risky than it would originally have been.

Unlike original contributions in philosophy, science, or the arts which can germinate in privacy and favorable circumstances, which can undergo many revisions before they are made public, which need not be immediately accepted once they are made public in order ultimately to succeed, and which do not require originality and precision of the originators in their everyday behavior, original social

action requires instantaneous communication between the implicit and the explicit in unfavorable as well as favorable circumstances, experimentation and revision *in vivo*, and a fluidity of behavior based on an integration of the intuitive, the conventional, and the somatic that makes for "perfect" timing. Thus, original social action in politics or everyday life is a far more demanding art than any particular discipline or profession.

But, if Wittgenstein is right, all disciplines and professions are merely particular contexts for the practice of particular types of original social action. Writing philosophy in solitude is itself a certain form of social action. Perhaps Wittgenstein's own early and unintended social influence, through (mis)interpretations of the *Tractatus*, impressed this truth upon him more strongly than on most philosophers.

The course of Wittgenstein's life exemplifies the personal changes of direction that gradual existential clarification and restructuring involves, while the content of his later thought battles against false clarity in order to clarify the scale of the unknown and, thereby, the scale of our potential freedom of action and originality.

Philosophy which recognizes itself as a form of social action—as a sub-part of one's life-as-a-whole-with-others—is, presumably, "truer" than philosophy which does not. In this respect, Socrates' practice of philosophy in the street on particular public occasions, rather than in a study and through publications, remains a paradigm one wonders why other philosophers do not emulate.

If one takes seriously the notion that one's life-as-a-whole-with-others is the most inclusive arena for striving and relaxing toward the experience and enactment of originality and conformity, then, whatever one's vocation, one will wish to learn how to arrange to study one's life-as-a-whole-with-others. This study requires the recognition and cultivation in oneself of the sort of intuitive consciousness alluded to earlier which receives direct impressions of the structure-of-oneself-in-situations. This study can be encouraged or obscured by one's interpersonal relations, by organizational processes, and by the overall missions of different social situations. Thus, so soon as one begins to wish to study one's life-as-a-whole-with-others, one finds oneself engaged in the modest, but by no means easy, social action of

arranging one's life with others so that this inner study can flourish (without having such study take undue outer importance in one's life until it begins to yield something original to explicate).

I have described what sorts of interpersonal behavior and organizational structure encourage this inner study in earlier publications, based on a series of widening social experiments *in vivo* which I am undertaking with others.[28] I will end this article by suggesting how different social institutions can be understood to encourage this study.

The effect of the argument of the past pages is to invert our ordinary way of social life. Whereas most sociological and political analyses describe society as pyramidal, with the power to define realities concentrated in relatively few hands at the top, the foregoing analysis suggests, if anything, an upside-down pyramid of which the point at the bottom represents a specific situation conceived in one way, while the broad spectrum at the top represents the multiple meanings and possibilities implicit in the situation. Whereas conventional sociological and political analyses focus on how power is distributed and manipulated given existing definitions of reality, the foregoing analysis focuses more on how new power is generated by the creative action of redefining situations. Obviously, a given person or a given society can refuse to experiment beyond current definitions of reality, but such a person or society will die slowly from within until caught by surprise by emergences which, through lack of attention, have become violent emergencies.

The Social Field of Play Between Originality and Conformity

The question arises from the foregoing analysis how social institutions can serve at once to introduce the new and to clarify, amplify, and protect existing conventions. That is, society as a whole can be conceived as a process whereby the original is discovered, explicated creatively, translated into conventions, and those conventions maintained and protected against uncreative forms of deviance.

[28]See W. R. Torbert, *Learning from Experience: Toward Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972); *Organizing the Unknown: A Politics of Higher Education* (Cambridge: Harvard Graduate School of Education, 1975); and *Creating a Community of Inquiry: Conflict, Collaboration, Transformation* (London: Wiley, 1976).

Such a society would institutionalize a continual revolution within the boundaries of propriety. According to this conception, education is the institution through which the original is discovered; government, scholarship, and the creative arts are the institutions through which the structural implications of the original are explicated; religions and political movements serve to celebrate the original principles and thus to reopen the question of whether and how one's daily life with others realizes these principles; farming, industry, team sports, and the performing arts recreate the original again and again, expressing the abundance with which originality endows the visible world when it is congruently explicated. Taken together, all of the foregoing institutions can be thought of as the creative institutions of a society. The remaining institutions can be thought of as the maintaining institutions of a society: hospitals, banks, and stores sustain the society through various forms of exchange; police, courts, and law firms maintain and interpret the boundaries of legitimate behavior for the society; prisons and asylums restrain those individuals judged unwilling or incapable of behaving within the boundaries of propriety and legitimacy; the military destroys, and protects the boundaries of the society against destruction by, enemies of the society.

The table on the following page indicates other aspects of this conception of social institutions. As one progresses down the table of institutions from the military to education, it becomes harder and harder to see in an external way what the institution does—its function becomes less and less visualizable. Indeed, the creative institutions rightly create the new categories through which we come to see, so their work is necessarily relatively invisible from the point of view of existing social categories at a particular time. Of course, though, it is also part of the work of the creative institutions to make the new categories accessible to the existing society—to make the invisible and implicit visible and explicit.

A society may develop a problem invisible to itself—the decay of its ability to see the invisible. It is difficult to see the early stages of decadence in a society because what first decays is its renewing appreciation and translation of the invisible—its creative institutions. Nor do these institutions disappear. They decay from within—they remain in name but not in primordial function. Such is the quality

ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCES AMONG INSTITUTIONS*

	INSTITUTION	PARADIGM ROLE-RELATION	QUALITY OF AUTHORITY RE-PRESENT-ED	DEGREE OF MUTUALITY	EFFECT ON TRUST	LOCUS OF EVENTS
MAINTAINING INSTITUTIONS	*military*	soldier-enemy	expression of authority as destructive	actor-receptor distinct alien	distrust generated (unless "enemy" inanimate)	EXTERNAL (UNILATERAL OPERATIONS)
	prisons asylums	staff-inmate	expression of authority as restraining	actor-receptor distinct except shared culture	distrust constant	
	police courts law firms	judge-accused	expression of authority as boundary maintaining	inter-actors with different social statuses	distrust perhaps diminishing	EXTERNAL RECIPROCATION
	hospitals banks stores	doctor-patient	expression of authority as sustaining	inter-actors with different roles	neutral bet. persons trust in profession	
CREATIVE INSTITUTIONS	*industry R + D team sports performing arts*	manager-co-workers director-co-players	expression of authority as creative	inter-actors with shared reward structure	trust increased by individual competence	
	religion "movements"	chorus (core-us)	celebration of authority	co-in-spirit-eds (co-spirit-ors)	trust increased by mutual action	EXTERNAL COMPLEMENTARITY BECAUSE INTERNAL MUTUALITY
	government science creative arts	co-"authors"	integration of authority	con-version-aries (co-vision-aries)	trust increased as mutuality of intentions emerges	
	education	inquiry	impression of authority	the alien welcomed as familiar	trust generated anew	EXTERNAL DIGESTED AS INTERNAL HIS-STORY BECOMES MY-STORY**

*Of course, any actual organization may or may not approach its ideal type as portrayed here.

**I am indebted to Judy Putzel for this information.

of our schools today, according to social critics who analyze them as factories[29] or as banks[30] or as prisons.[31]

Just as each individual and each society as a whole potentially recapitulate the whole range from awareness of the implicit through defense of the explicit, so also each institution recapitulates these different functions within itself and thus exhibits to a certain degree all the different qualities of authority and the different effects on trust described by the table. Thus, although the primary function of the military is visibly to destroy enemies designated by a government (and these "enemies" could just as well be substandard social conditions as human beings), there must be an invisible sense of shared spirit within the military itself if it is to perform its destructive function effectively. When enlisted men "frag" (lob hand grenades into the tents of) officers who order them into battle, as reportedly occurred increasingly among U.S. troops in Vietnam, the military tends to become less effective at destroying its designated enemies. Indeed, mass refusal of U.S. troops to obey battle orders was reported more and more frequently toward the end of America's involvement in the Vietnam War.

The table suggests that insofar as authority is used to define the boundaries of a society—to define who is "in" and who is "out" and protect the "in's" from the "out's"—it operates unilaterally and by force (and threat of force) on the "out's." Trust is not likely to increase between the "in's" and the "out's" unless the "out's" in fact accept the justice of the boundaries, because the "in's" are treating the "out's" as though they *cannot* be trusted (which may, of course, though it is difficult for us today to conceive of such righteousness, be perfectly correct).

The courts provide an environment, strictly limited by preconceived canons of behavior, where it is possible to diminish the distrust caused by whatever rupture in relations provoked the "case" in the first place, because of both parties' acceptance of the authority of the courts. Such acceptance reestablishes both parties' allegiance to

[29]S. Bowles and H. Gintis, *Nightmares and Visions: Capitalism and Education in the U.S.* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975).

[30]P. Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970).

[31]I. Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).

a mutual broader framework, but does not necessarily increase the parties' personal trust in one another.

Generating Trust and Authority

The institutions further down the table are intended to provide environments in which participants' mutual trust, beginning at neutral, can be increased in a positive way. The "middle" institutions, such as banks and sports, function pre-eminently to sustain the current social structure. Within these institutions trust tends to increase when both parties act in ways pre-defined as competent by the current social structure which both parties generally accept as authoritative for the purposes at hand. Nor will the trust between two parties decrease when one of them acts incompetently, if both accept the judgment of incompetence as valid and if the one labeled incompetent strives to change his behavior or else changes his role. If a manager tells one of his sluggers to stop pulling the ball so much because those foul-ball homeruns don't count, the slugger will not ordinarily argue back that that shouldn't matter because he's hitting the ball farther than anyone else. He will tend to accept the rules of the game as defining competence in an authoritative way. Of course, as discussed earlier, there are many cases in which the current "rules of the game" are less clearly defined or less established as authoritative. Disagreements in such cases can result in original, mutually beneficial solutions which increase trust, or else they can reduce trust to the point where a strike occurs and the matter is referred back to the courts, which deal with such low-trust occasions.

So far the relationship among an institution's function, the quality of authority it represents, and its effects on participants' trust is fairly obvious. But the relationship becomes more difficult to visualize for the three categories of creative institutions at the bottom of the table. I have already stated one reason why this should be so—their functions are less visible. A successful team wins games; a successful industry is able to sell its products; but what is the sign of a successful religion? Number of claimed conversions is not a very convincing statistic of success alone because we know that a real conversion is supposed to be an internal process of some kind and we know that illusory conversions can occur through group pressures. The

"products" of successful religion, successful government, and successful education are only visible in indirect ways.

Another reason why the relationship among function, authority, and trust for these three institutions is difficult to visualize is that their functions are precisely to define the form which authority and trust will take in a given society. They create the structures (e.g. the laws, moral codes, theories) which become authorities for their own and other institutions' operations and which determine new standards of trustworthy behavior. But where do they get the authority to create structures of authority? Or, on what basis do persons within these institutions trust one another while developing new structures which will provide new standards for trustworthy behavior? It should be clear that there is no easy or obvious or general answer to these questions. Each of these three institutions tends to refer to an abstract "spirit" for validation of their efforts—the spirit of God, the spirit of the people (the common good), or the spirit of inquiry. That is, they will claim that a given ritual or law or research method congruently reflects, represents, and furthers the implicit spirit of God or the common good or the spirit of inquiry. But how are we to know whether a given way of structuring this invisible quality—equally invisible whether we call it "reality" or the "unknown" or "the implicit"—really is valid? The standards we usually use for making such a decision are themselves merely the expression of a structure of which we could raise the same question.

How, taking into account the known, are we to face the unknown in each new moment? This question goes to the essence of what education—and especially higher education—is about if it is for real. This question, and the potentially complementary relationship between originality and conventionality described earlier, reconcile three aims of education usually thought to be in tension with one another—namely, education as a means of transmitting existing culture, education as a means of transforming culture, and education as a means of personal growth. Those who accept existing categories as defining all of reality and who believe that education consists merely in inculcating these categories have not yet begun their own higher education and are certainly not competent to educate anyone else. They do not experience how each way of structuring reality has many

borders on the unknown—how each line of answers they can offer ends finally in a question. They cannot, therefore, be trusted to tell when it has become important to their own or others' survival and well-being to formulate some aspect of the previously-unknown, such as a student's own implicit world. They assume, usually without realizing that they do so, that anything that occurs can be explained by what is already known and by the way of knowing it that they happen to have adopted.

The reference to trust two sentences above can bring us back to the question of what trust really is. We tend to trust someone when he or she behaves in a way defined as competent by some current structure, but *only to the degree* that we believe that his or her performance and that structure ultimately help to improve our own lives. A more direct way of expressing how people increase their mutual trust is that one trusts another more as one verifies that the other acts in ways that in fact improve one's life. For another to act regularly in a way which increases my trust would require him to be able to appreciate both of our ways of structuring reality, to be alert to the unknown, and to confront my way of structuring reality if he felt it was becoming dysfunctional. It is quite conceivable that I might at first feel attacked by such a confrontation. The true friend would be willing to risk the friendship for my sake. If I verified later that such an event had occurred, I would feel a very deep trust for that friend. This analysis shows that trust, like authority, derives ultimately from an ability to face the as-yet-unformulated-unknown and translate it into structures and practices that better represent it and improve our lives together.

This answer serves to revivify the question, raised again and again throughout this essay, how to face the unknown? As answers define the known world, so, inversely, living questions illuminate the unknown.