The Metropolitan Experience in American Education

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Forum

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The editors of the History of Education Quarterly *are pleased to present this forum on Lawrence A. Cremin's* American Education: The Metropolitan Experience, 1876–1980.[1] *Beginning in the 1960s, Cremin began to chart a new and distinctive approach to the study of America's educational past. This final volume on "the metropolitan experience" therefore completes a trilogy over two decades in the making. We hope that this forum offers our readers an opportunity to reflect upon Cremin's contributions. We are very grateful to Robert L. Church of Michigan State University, Michael B. Katz of the University of Pennsylvania, Harold Silver of Oxford, England, and, of course, Professor Cremin himself for graciously participating in this lively exchange of ideas.*

Robert L. Church

After a quarter of a century of wrestling with the problem of evaluating the role of education in American history, Lawrence Cremin has come to distrust organized, government-supported, mass schooling almost as much as do the revisionist historians with whom he has been disagreeing over that twenty-five-year span. One is forced, I believe, to this conclusion by a reading of the third and final volume in Professor Cremin's massive trilogy, *American Education.* (This volume is subtitled *The Metropolitan Experience, 1876–1980* in contrast with the earlier *National Experience* and *Colonial Experience* volumes.) The reader notes first that this lengthy study of the last century gives no more weight to organized schooling than did his studies of the earlier periods. Cremin continues to describe educational configurations—patterns that include family, religion, schools, workplaces, cultural and helping institutions, and popular culture—in the same manner and with essentially the same relative emphases among the components as in the earlier works. There is almost no accommo-

[1] Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience, 1876–1980* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988).

dation for the massive relative growth of organized schooling and its domination of the time, if not the attention, of those coming of age in the United States.

Take the "Lives" section—where, as in the other volumes, he limns brief educational biographies of people from the geographic areas he has singled out for special attention (greater New York City in *The Metropolitan Experience*). Cremin does not intend these biographies to be representative. Indeed, he emphasizes their variety almost as if to defy other historians to try and make generalizations about educational history. In *The National Experience* he wrote that the biographees' "experience illustrates both the extraordinary variegation of nineteenth-century American education and the striking range of human character that always issues, to greater or lesser extent, from any particular set of educational arrangements, whatever the time or the place in human history" (p. 451). In the current volume, "the metropolitan American was also infinitely variegated, the result of the diverse modes of education that marked a metropolis like New York. And, to the end of understanding that variegation and diversity, it is worth considering the education of a number of New Yorkers" (p. 606). Despite such insistence on variety, one is tempted to see what generalizations can be drawn from Cremin's choice of biographical subjects, especially in light of his statement in the sentence following the one just quoted: these biographies "are presented," he writes, "not as representative, but as archetypical, as indicating, perhaps in starker and more intense forms, the dynamics of the education other Americans had been and would be experiencing during the twentieth century" (p. 606). Of the eight subjects, four finished high school; one of these finished college (and graduate school); and another finished normal school. Three did not reach or did not finish high school. The eighth, a woman who received a third grade education in China, did not come to the United States until she was twenty-two. Unlike the increasingly typical experience of Americans as this century has progressed, the American-born subjects' careers were not materially impeded by their not getting to and/or finishing high school. Al Smith became governor of New York; Dutch Schultz, a successful leader of the underworld; and Jacob Lawrence, a prominent black painter. Furthermore, except for the philosopher Morris Raphael Cohen, who received a Harvard Ph.D., and his wife Mary, who received a teacher's license from the city normal school (not yet Hunter College), none of Cremin's subjects needed a formal credential from an organized educational institution to begin his/her career.

Cremin is not, therefore, seeking to explicate the educational dynamics that most Americans would experience in an era when formal, government-supported educational institutions gained hegemony. Rather,

he focuses on resistance to organized education as archetypical. He seeks to celebrate individualistic defiance of organized attempts to mold people through education. In discussing Jacob Lawrence, Cremin writes: "Put in educational terms, Lawrence had been taught but he had escaped any particular imprint of his teachers; he had studied but had come to his own interpretations; and he had surely learned and made what he had learned decisively his own. The product was an art that was fresh, original, and unique" (p. 637). In a very real sense, *The Metropolitan Experience* is about "escaping" from teaching. It is a study that identifies learning as the individual's defiance of society's attempts to teach.

Professor Cremin appears more apprehensive about society's attempts to teach than he has been in his earlier studies. He begins, and ends, the concluding chapter of this life work with this question from John Dewey's *Democracy and Education*: " 'Is it possible for an educational system to be conducted by a national state and yet the full social ends of the educative process not be restricted, constrained, and corrupted?' " (p. 644). Cremin apparently thinks not. In this final chapter he laments that in the twentieth century a third characteristic, "politicalization," has joined "popularization" and "multitudinousness"—which had developed in the nineteenth century—as distinguishing features of the American system of education. He defines this politicalization as "the increasingly direct harnessing of education to social ends."

Nineteenth-century educators, such as Horace Mann, believed "that universal schooling would advance the cause of republicanism" if it taught "boys and girls the common values of a Christian-republican society at the same time that it equipped them to continue their education on their own." Although many of us would interpret such an agenda as the "harnessing of education to social ends," Professor Cremin does not. Mann and his contemporaries "had stopped short of narrowly politicizing the school curriculum and indeed had preached the avoidance of controversy where possible." Mann wanted to teach the "common elements" of Christianity and republicanism, not the "precepts" of particular denominations or parties (p. 650). In contrast, educators in the twentieth century, according to Cremin, explicitly sought to use schools for social ends. Cremin establishes the point by citing Dewey's famous call, in *The School and Society*, for schools both to teach children to understand the interdependent character of modern society and to saturate them with a spirit of service in order to create a society that would be "worthy, lovely, and harmonious." Cremin finds Dewey's purpose different from Mann's because ultimately Dewey had a distinct, partisan view of the good society—a "democratic socialist society." Cremin is quick to acknowledge that Dewey's brand of reform did not prevail but argues that Dewey's habit of assigning social purpose to schools encouraged all kinds of

interest groups, but usually conservative ones, to use schools to inculcate their orthodoxies. The National Association of Manufacturers pressed the schools to teach the virtues of capitalism; farmers, the importance of drinking milk; fundamentalists, the pitfalls of evolutionary theory; and militant college students, the evils of their own government's involvement in Vietnam (pp. 650–53).

This is not the arena in which to argue whether the efforts of the NAM were more political than were, say, those of the organizations that established lyceums and mechanics' institutes a century earlier. *The Metropolitan Experience* would have been more engaging and stimulating had Cremin chosen to introduce the idea that politicalization was a uniquely twentieth-century characteristic of education before the last 35 pages of this 700-page book. Overall, *The Metropolitan Experience* gives the reader very little sense of change over time—what happens in the 1950s may happen on an increased scale but otherwise is presented as not fundamentally very different from what happened in 1890 or even in 1830. Growing politicalization, if indeed that was what took place, would have been a useful organizing principle for the volume.

In large part, Cremin's apparent distrust of organized schooling grows out of what he perceives as its growing politicalization or didacticism. In using the latter term, Cremin is following on Robert McClintock's contention that during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the western world shifted from, in Cremin's words, "paradigms of study to paradigms of instruction, whether for social, religious, or political purposes" (p. 651). Increasingly, formal schooling (and to a lesser but growing extent museums and other less formal educative agencies) has been seeking to deliver an agenda, to teach not how to learn but what to learn. It is these tendencies that engender Cremin's distrust. He describes Mann as wanting both to teach children republican virtues and to teach them to continue their education on their own. It is this latter aim that exempts Mann and his generation from the charge of "politicalization" or didacticism. Learning on one's own, self-education, self-study are the most highly valued activities in Cremin's lexicon.

But these are activities of individual self-assertion in defiance of organized schooling. He would like the eight experiences described in "Lives" to be archetypical because these individuals overcame or sidestepped didacticism and the politicalization that Cremin feels accompanies it—they escaped from teaching. In order to take charge of their own learning, they selected from the configuration of educative institutions available to them those agencies most germane to their experience. They were not students; they were people who studied. And only that kind of individualistic, self-directed learning can overcome the debilitating aspects of politicized schooling.

In his bibliographical essay Cremin comments on the historiography of progressivism in education that has developed since the publication of *The Transformation of the School* in 1961. He has reviewed "with interest" the various studies asserting the gap between progressive rhetoric and actual practice, the class-based purposes of progressivism, and the progressive attempts to establish social control appropriate to an industrialized, urbanized society. He simultaneously acknowledges those arguments and dismisses their importance by writing: "In general the recent work has made me ever more aware of the political issues and conflicts among individuals and groups who thought of themselves as progressive and who were thought of by at least some others as progressive. In addition, I have become increasingly aware of the mediating power of individual agency as people have participated in educational institutions designed for them by others" (p. 710). He depends on the individualism of learners to prevail against educators' use of teaching for social ends.

But *The Metropolitan Experience* suggests that those who believe that social health depends on such an escape from teaching have much cause for concern. Formal schooling is taking more and more of people's time; the demand for educational credentials spreads ever wider. The mass media, and especially network television, are increasingly ubiquitous. Cremin is quick to acknowledge that Americans need to develop some set of common values, common language, and common commitments. And he believes that both television, for all its superficiality and evanescence, and elementary schooling contribute greatly to the development of these commonalities. But he is most concerned—like so many other liberal social philosophers, not the least being Dewey himself—with whether it will be possible to preserve opportunities for individuality to flourish within that general consensus. And he hopes that the complexities of metropolitanism (he sometimes substitutes the word cosmopolitanism) provide a viable solution. Complexity, in educational terms, requires learners from widely differing backgrounds to interact with large numbers of educative agencies each with its own didactic purpose. In this Madisonian vision, complexity dissipates the ability of single groups or institutions to make their political ends dominant.

Complexity occurs in this century most readily in large urban areas, especially ("archetypically," according to Cremin) in metropolitan New York. In New York there are relatively isolated communities as different from each other as "Chicago and Milwaukee," but each contributes to the diversity of background so crucial to the metropolitan experience. New York contains immigrants and the children of immigrants from all over the world and citizens of every possible ethnic background and religious persuasion. Because metropolitan New York is large enough to

provide audiences for the most specialized of cultural institutions and events, its citizens have an almost infinite variety of educative experiences from which to learn. Beyond the formal system of schools, colleges, and proprietary institutions, New York had by the 1930s "more than a dozen art museums, a score of historical museums, five science museums, and a half-dozen botanical gardens and zoological institutes. There was a collection of libraries that included the New York Public Library, with its main reference department and its three-score local circulation branches and subbranches, and a fascinating sprinkling of independent libraries. . . . And then there was the congeries of concert halls, theaters, and art galleries, where artists, patrons, and critics joined to perform, display, discuss, and anoint, and, in the process, to set standards and styles" (p. 584).

All this variety of resources increased the likelihood that people would have the room to develop individuality. Complexity would disrupt the efforts of those who would use education for prescribed social ends. Cremin is struck by how many commentaries on metropolitanism depict

> education as an all-powerful force that worked some sort of uniform influence upon millions of minds and personalities—Lippmann's metaphor in *Public Opinion* of the stereotypical "picture in our heads," put there by an all-powerful press, was perhaps the prototypical example. Yet, when one stopped theorizing about how human beings in some kind of imagined, faceless "mass" might respond to an increasingly standardized education and started to inquire into how individual human beings actually did respond to that education, the reality was quite otherwise. Individuals in the metropolis came to the education proffered them with their own temperaments, histories, and purposes, and different individuals interacted with given configurations of education in various ways and with various outcomes (p. 523).

And the more metropolitan and therefore more complex the configurations with which individuals could interact, the more various the outcomes would be.

How effective a bulwark is metropolitan New York against standardization and politicalization? Is it, as he suggests, "an archetypical metropolis with archetypical configurations of education, illustrative, . . . though in larger and more intense versions, of what other American metropolises had been and would be experiencing during the twentieth century" (p. 575)? Those of us who live elsewhere might wish that our communities approached New York in establishing a rich and diverse cultural life; our experience generally suggests quite otherwise. To suggest that resistance to standardization and the didactic imposition of orthodoxies depends on the rest of the country's becoming more like Cremin's somewhat idealized version of metropolitan New York is, I believe, to suggest that there is no effective resistance. Indeed, it appears that Cremin

himself is not entirely confident that even New York's metropolitanism can protect us. He ends the volume with a consideration of Margaret Mead's idea about the development of a "worldwide shared culture." He implies that even metropolitan New York is not large enough and diverse enough to prevent standardization. We must seek a worldwide metropolitanism instead. He is attracted not to the commonality implied in the term "shared culture" but rather to Mead's care in protecting diversity. The universal language of the common culture would always be a second language " 'in order to protect and assure the diversity of thought which accompanies the use of different mother tongues' and to avoid imposing 'a too common stamp.' " Diversity is key. "The surest guarantee that change would be the occasion for human growth rather than human ossification, she argued, was the inclusion of diverse people at every stage in the development of every significant activity. Their lives, their experience, and their continuing response—even their resistance—would suffuse any visions of the future with vitality and realism" (pp. 683–84). Behind the lyricism of this call for a worldwide cultural mosaic which paints a community containing the Lower East Side and Harlem and Brownsville and the New York Public Library across the face of the globe is Cremin's relentless quest for a never-ending, never-exhausted source of diversity that will resist the standardization sought by purveyors of formal schooling (and centrally mediated culture).

Cremin appears to be searching for an automatic source of diversity, a kind of natural spring constantly replenishing the supply of people of diverse backgrounds and ideas. New York City, with its constantly renewing streams of immigrants, is one such spring; a worldwide confederation of national cultures might be another. But of course, there are other, less natural and more political, ways of increasing diversity of background in the education system. What appears to be the natural phenomenon in this century is for like to go to school or to college or to the museum with like, for people to *avoid* the challenges of diversity as much as possible. One reason organized education has become politicized is because it has become necessary to resist those natural tendencies and to seek diversity in education through political action. The major increase in diversity within formal schooling during this century has come about, not naturally through cosmopolitanization but quite deliberately in the efforts to desegregate and integrate the American educational system, with the aim of extending access to full participation in our culture to racial minorities. And yet *The Metropolitan Experience* devotes remarkably little space to either descriptions or evaluations of this series of initiatives. Despite the volume's focus on New York City, Ocean Hill-Brownsville and the controversies it represented that tore (and tear) the city apart are scarcely mentioned. This omission, this avoidance of this

profoundly troubling issue of determining education's appropriate social and political role in enforcing social and racial diversity results in part, surely, from Cremin's dislike of politicalization. The desegregation and integration movements have of course been the most clearly politicized of all the educational initiatives; they sought to use education for social ends with a vengeance.

But this omission also exemplifies Cremin's more general passivity toward education. He sees education (really learning) occurring rather randomly. It occurs when the particular desires and experiences of an individual come into fruitful contact with some aspect of an educational configuration. And it just won't do to force the issue. "The Brownsville Jew and the Harlem black could come of age in an immense, cosmopolitan city within fairly confined configurations of household, synagogue or church, school, and peer group, never visiting a museum or a botanical garden or an institution of higher learning or a midtown department store. In other words, people could receive a profoundly limited education amid abundant opportunities" (p. 588). End of discussion. If fruitful interaction does not occur, it does not occur. Organized intervention is not in order. The patterns by which individuals come into contact with the configurations are too complex to be predicted, much less regulated. State-run institutions of formal schooling—especially if politicized into adopting explicit goals of maximizing the Harlem black's or Brownsville Jew's chances of gaining more than a profoundly limited education—are especially to be distrusted because they try to regulate that interaction.

Thus, the most comprehensive history of American education ever attempted leaves us with this laissez-faire prescription: despite almost two centuries of immense political effort to extend educational opportunity to all, it is best to understand that successful learning cannot be enhanced or extended to a wider group through political action and, furthermore, it is dangerous to try.

Michael B. Katz

The first book on the history of American education that I read was *The Transformation of the School* by Lawrence Cremin, which Theodore Sizer assigned in a graduate seminar in the fall of 1961. Looking back, I find it hard to believe that none of us in the seminar knew anything about the history of American education, even though for the past four years many of us had studied American history and literature (which we were about to go teach) at good schools. *Transformation* was a dual revelation:

it taught us a lot about the origins of the enterprise in which we had engaged, and it proved that education was a respectable topic for historians. The book was exciting. Its links between progressivism in education and politics joined schooling to the wider context with which we were familiar. Its interpretation of progressivism fit well with the historiography in which we had been schooled. And its literary grace made it a pleasure to read.

This introduction to the history of education is one of my intellectual debts to Lawrence Cremin. My major pedagogical debt (undoubtedly one shared by many readers of this journal) is to his superb "Classics in Education" series, for which I silently have thanked him every time I have taught the history of American education. I begin with these remarks to remind readers who have entered the field in more recent years of Cremin's early and critical role in moving the history of American education into the mainstream of modern scholarship.

Throughout more than two and a half decades I have followed his work with respect, although not always in agreement. Two aspects of it have puzzled me especially. One is the disjunction between its expanding scope and relatively static methodology. Its hallmarks (to which I shall return) have remained unmistakable, even though they constrain the fulfillment of its intellectual ambition. The second puzzle is Cremin's place in the politics of the field. Although he did not join the historians on the political left, Cremin is not a conservative or neoconservative, either. The politics of his work, which have remained (I suspect by design) elusive, emerge most clearly in *The Metropolitan Experience* (especially in part 4). For want of a better phrase, as I shall explain shortly, they may be thought of as a politics of urban liberalism.

The Metropolitan Experience is not a conventional history. From its first chapter it jars the reader because its organization is so idiosyncratic. Although each of the book's four sections starts its story at a later point in time, each chapter begins in the past and ends fairly near the present. The result could be diagrammed as a series of parallel lines, each shorter than the last, but with the same end point. The effect is to force readers to reconsider both their definition of education and the major themes in its modern development. *The Metropolitan Experience* jars the reader as well by its unconventional juxtaposition of events from different time periods. Its discussion of the civil rights movement, for instance, concludes chapter 5, "Progressive School Movements," which begins, oddly to this reader, with Reconstruction.

With its unconventional arrangement of material, its zig-zag structure, its repeated linking of past and present, *The Metropolitan Experience* seems to me Cremin's most personal book. As much as a history, it is a meditation on the meaning of American education. For this reason,

and because this is a symposium for informed readers and not a review, I will not attempt to summarize the book or offer a balanced evaluation. Rather, what follows are brief reflections on three of the more subtle and complicated issues it raises for us as historians of education: its definition of education; its scaffolding and method; and its relation to the politics of educational history. Each of these issues raises a central question: what are the costs and benefits of an expansive definition of education? What are the permissible boundaries of subjectivity in historical interpretation? Is there still a viable liberal politics of education?

In *The Metropolitan Experience*, as in the first two volumes of his trilogy, Cremin defines "education broadly, as the deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, and sensibilities, as well as any learning that results from that effort, direct or indirect, intended or unintended" (p. x). At first, this expansive definition appears liberating. It frees education from schools and directs attention to the manifold forces that shape intellect and character. It moves educational historiography 180 degrees from the narrow, a-contextual, school-bound mode that defined most writing in the field before the 1960s. In Cremin's later work, its great utility has been its insistence that historians attend to the educative role of the mass media.

Nonetheless, as a working definition, its lack of boundaries sets historians an unbounded, impossible task. For education becomes nearly synonymous with culture and society. Almost anything—from religious revivals to schools, from newspapers to families—can be redefined as education. How is the historian to choose among them? What priorities and principles of selection apply? Cremin's work points to the limits of an inclusive answer. Despite its 684 pages of text, *The Metropolitan Experience* treats important topics, such as kindergartens, high schools, or teachers' unions, with sometimes startling brevity. Density of detail is a hallmark of Cremin's style and a testimony to his scholarship. But comprehensiveness too often precludes depth, and long lists of examples substitute for analysis.

Indeed, *The Metropolitan Experience* is narrative rather than analytic history. As in his earlier work, the core of Cremin's approach consists of intellectual biographies linked together around major themes. Cremin's work does not unravel puzzles or explicitly address questions in the manner of contemporary social history. Rather, it weaves many disparate elements into a complicated story with four or five major strands.

The book's "key" concept is "metropolitanization: the United States became a nation of cities at the same time that it became an exporter of culture and civilization. And education, in a bewildering variety of forms and institutions, was profoundly involved in both phenomena" (p. 2). Education also became more political. For metropolitanism in both its

meanings—the spread of urban forms and values inside America and the export of "culture and civilization to the world"—moved "education to the core of the American experience. . . . Precisely for this reason, education became more political, as groups with conflicting ideas of the public interest sought to have their views prevail" (pp. 9, 12). The explosive growth of educational agencies (broadly defined), a third theme, links *The Metropolitan Experience* with the two preceding volumes in Cremin's trilogy. "Popularization and multitudinousness, in tandem," he writes, "remained distinguishing features of American education during the twentieth century" (p. 644). For Cremin, these features mean that the history of American education is a story of expanding opportunity, choice, and freedom.

As Cremin tells it, it also is more a story of consensus than conflict. Although Cremin describes many controversies throughout the twentieth century, he subsumes them under a broad consensus about the role of education. "Like the ancient Greeks, who searched through dialogue for a truth that would never be fully or finally discovered," he writes, "twentieth-century Americans searched through education for a self-definition that would never be fully or finally determined" (p. 14). Conflicts do not reflect irreconcilable antagonisms rooted in structures of inequality. Rather, they are disagreements among a people engaged in constructing their own distinctive "*paideia*". Although often an object of conflict, education is also the vehicle for its transcendence.

Cremin conveys an impression of underlying consensus by avoiding or skimming over major controversies. He takes no explicit position on the issues that have occasioned vigorous, even at times, rancorous debate among contemporary historians of education. An evenhanded, noncontentious quality pervades *The Metropolitan Experience*. No uninformed reader would guess that the field has occasioned so much internal conflict. The result, however, is omissions, or an imbalance, that, on occasion, distorts the story. The book includes, for instance, only the most cursory mention of teachers' unions or the controversies over busing and student radicalism in the 1960s.

Cremin's method strengthens some of his themes and constrains others. His concentration on the quantitative and qualitative expansion of educational agencies over time supports his thesis about the continuous diffusion of educational opportunity—and the consequent increase in the possibility of personal choice—throughout American history. By contrast, his reliance on personal biography constrains his central theme of metropolitanism, for he offers no systematic exposition of urbanization, changes in social structure and demography, or institutional evolution. As a consequence, *The Metropolitan Experience* does not show how educational development interacted with local economic, political, and

social structures. The reader is left with no sense of how education actually developed in any one place, or how and why configurations, to use a favorite term of Cremin's, assumed the shape they did. One learns much more about the concrete interactions between educational development and metropolitan history from either Paul Peterson's recent book, *The Politics of School Reform* or Ira Katznelson's and Margaret Weir's brilliant *Schooling for All.* Cremin's avoidance of analytic social history, moreover, leads him repeatedly to unsupported causal arguments, especially about the role of individuals and ideas. For instance, writing of Margaret Mead, he claims, "she quite literally changed the ways in which people conceived of education itself" (p. 211). The absence of systematic social and economic history is even more troubling in the long chapter on New York City. Nowhere does it mention the flight of industry from the city, the consequent transformation of its economic base, or the fiscal crisis that devastated its services.

New York, instead, exemplifies, more than any other city, the expansion of educative agencies and the rich variety of educational opportunity confronting America's urbanites in the late twentieth century. New York City's "educational functions," writes Cremin, "were among the most powerful forces of teaching and learning to manifest themselves in the history of mankind" (p. 604). Cremin's paean to the educational abundance of America's cities reflects his commitment to what I have called urban liberalism. He clearly loves cities, and New York City most of all. He celebrates their social pluralism, institutional variety, educational opportunity, and tolerance of diversity. They are engines of liberation, quintessential settings for the extension of freedom.

Cremin is right about cities, in one way. But the dropout rate in city high schools, including New York's, is staggeringly high, and educational achievement in urban schools remains, by and large, disastrously low. In 1984, 29 percent of all children below age eighteen in America's cities lived below the poverty line; in New York City, the proportion was about 40 percent; and across the country, more than four of every ten black children are poor. (The standard of poverty here is the government's official poverty line, which, too low to begin with, is not corrected for regional variations in the cost of living.) Surely, these facts and their implications deserve as much emphasis as the variety of educative agencies. This is why I think *The Metropolitan Experience* raises serious questions about the limits of subjectivity in historical analysis.

The narrow, hysterical evaluations of American education fashionable among conservatives appal Cremin. He has uncharacteristically little patience with the work of Allan Bloom, E. D. Hirsch, Jr., or, by obvious association, although he does not mention it directly, Chester Finn and Diane Ravitch. His criteria are both broader and more complex. He

claims to want to "reinvigorate the debate over education, and broaden it from what I think has been the very narrow agenda of the last five or six years."[1] "In the end," he writes, "the question was whether the processes of public education available to Americans were sufficiently edifying to meet the demands of a metropolitan civilization" (p. 671). Cremin, I think, is more worried about culture than schooling. The effects of mass culture, particularly as purveyed by television, disturb him. Television supplies Americans "with a steady flow of common teaching," writes Cremin in one of his book's most heuristic passages, marked by "superficiality and evanescence." It teaches "the substance and values of a consumer culture, a hedonistic culture, and a spectator culture" to a public that has "not yet learned or been taught a critical literacy" (p. 674).

As he attacks conservative educational critics and the mind-numbing impact of commercial television, Cremin, for me, is on the side of the angels. His vision of education is generous, humane, and democratic. I think of him as one of the last great educational liberals, more sympathetic to John Dewey than to anyone writing about education today. That is why *The Metropolitan Experience* challenges readers to think about the viability of a liberal politics of education.

Cremin's remains an attractive vision. But I remain unconverted, much less sanguine about the future of America's cities or its education. Think of metropolitan America as an arena filled by the conflict between irreconcilable groups. Think of its income distribution becoming bipolar; its real wages declining; its urban infrastructure decaying; its streets full of violence and drugs; its opportunities shrinking; its children impoverished; its people worried and angry. Will reason, tolerance, and compassion fix its schools, or anything else?

Harold Silver

After a long dialogue with the third volume of Lawrence Cremin's history of American education—as with the previous two volumes, but more acutely in this case—I have concluded that it is more about the future than the past. All historical and most other scholarship is in a sense about the future, implying, if not saying: "past ways of perceiving reality are not my way. This is how I believe reality should be viewed. I commend my view to the future, until you can find a better way." Perhaps more

[1] Lawrence Cremin, quote in *Carnegie Quarterly* 33 (Spring 1988):10.

than any other historian in the field, Cremin commends a unified methodology and substance. He seems to argue unrelentingly that he has not only a procedure for future historians, but also a correlated view of how education should be pictured. It is, by massive implication, history in the service of policy. The method, the definition, and the target all point to an escape from education identified with the institutions of schooling. Despite his gestures toward the educational system, Cremin is in reality the ultimate de-schooler. Education equates culture, if not society itself. It would be difficult, from Cremin's starting points, to know where, if anywhere, education stops. It would also be difficult, after following the strategies of his descriptions and analyses, to hold on to any important role for educational systems or institutions or ideas as we have known them. In this volume the collapse of "education" into "the educative society" is almost total. That, in fact, is the underlying future orientation: society and all its institutions, not just its residual schools and colleges, must commit themselves to the educational enterprise.

There is, of course, a history. In Cremin's 1976 *Traditions of American Education*, the third lecture—used as the introduction to the present volume—addressed "the fundamental fact of complexity." The "configurations" of education that he propounded from the outset are themselves already part of history. In his introduction to the final section of the new book he explains the basic trajectory he is trying to trace, from the island communities of the nineteenth century to the "closely integrated metropolitan communities of the twentieth," where people are defined more by race, class, ethnicity, religion, and occupation than by where they live, and where government rules and policies impinge more on their lives. In this new complexity the total picture of the educative process has to be re-presented, within the overall pattern of analysis Cremin has been pursuing since the 1960s. It is no surprise that the book is as much concerned with modernism and fundamentalism in the church, or farming, mechanization, and apprenticeship, as with elementary or high schools. In terms of "coverage"—which has to be one of the criteria of critical comment—the book ranges as widely and as effectively as Cremin's own definitions—and now our expectations—would require. Coverage, however, is of little consequence without consideration also of balance or emphasis, and of interpretation.

It is important, in discussing the question of balance, to have clearly in mind what Cremin aims to achieve. He wishes to present, as far as possible, a picture of the most important aspects of the collective, communal, educational experience of the nation. His target is the mass experience, and if that is in the church rather than the land-grant university, in a newspaper or in front of a radio or television rather than in a junior college, then that is where the emphasis has to lie. After returning time

and again to the media, he concludes that school and television, from the 1960s, were the "great common educative experiences of the American people." Whereas for Allan Bloom the loss of the Bible as the basis of a collective culture meant the gradual and dispiriting loss of a communal vision, for Cremin there exists within the social complexity the constant strands and further possibility of a coherent culture. What he is constantly seeking, therefore, somewhere between the grand designs of policy and day-to-day experience, is an "educational culture"—its origins, transmutations, and audiences. Although the school and the college are there in the search, the balance is constantly shifting toward existing or newly dominant "common educative experiences," starting with the church, the moral life of the nation, the impact of the city, and ending with the mass media. One of the difficulties with the book is that while widely pursuing these experiences, Cremin does not remind the reader enough of the underlying purpose. "Great common educative experiences of the American people" could well have been a suitable subtitle for the book and might have appeared as a slogan at intervals in the book to reinforce the historical message.

We would all, of course, have written the book differently, within different definitions and frameworks, and with a different sense of balance. The question is, does it work within Cremin's own criteria? The question can be divided into two—the first to do with content, the second to do with structure. Firstly, in terms of content, how does one judge some of the following? Charles W. Eliot and the university receive serious attention, the normal schools have a couple of paragraphs, and community and junior colleges have only trivial references. Newspapers have repeated coverage, while school curricula have no real priority. Teachers are present only when they organize, and teacher education gets a couple of pages. Some journalists get more. Walter Lippmann is given a heroic role; his 1922 book *Public Opinion* is hailed as a "classic of educational theory," while James B. Conant, for example, gets a couple of throwaway lines. The New Deal receives serious attention; the wide range of educational programs that emerged at the beginning of Johnson's War on Poverty have only slight and scattered references. What happens inside classrooms receives scant interest: how school students learn is not a focus, and how teachers teach is present only as an abstract of Larry Cuban's work on continuity and change in teaching. There is no student radicalism or testing, there is little on anti-Catholicism or anti-Semitism in the school or college systems. No one is disabled, disadvantaged, or handicapped (Public Law 94-142 seems not to have happened). The difficulty in making judgments about such features of the book is that by Cremin's own criteria, one would expect some of these to reflect "great common educative experiences." There is another difficulty, and that is

that in establishing "configurations" of institutions and experiences, the *educational configuration*, as school people—students, teachers, administrators, parents, policymakers—might view it, seems to be consistently diminished by comparison with, for example, church or press. This configuration would seem to reach out from the school and university in all the kinds of directions suggested above, directions which Cremin is reluctant to take. In seeking a new balance, therefore, Cremin produces a massive overbalance away from institutions that are central to the collective educational experience of the nation—such as community colleges, state colleges, land-grant universities, continuing education programs, *and schools.*

In terms, secondly, of structure, Cremin has made a concerted and explicit effort to replace a chapter arrangement structured in time segments with one in which he traces important threads discretely across all, or a major part, of the time span he is covering. All structures have their problems, and the problem with this one is establishing connections and a sense of priorities across the themes. Take the War on Poverty. The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 is thematically separated from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Higher Education Act, both of 1965. All three were part of the same vision of a federally supported reordering of educational priorities to bring the disadvantaged into "mainstream" society, and all three were part of the busiest period of educational legislation, debate, and experimentation up to that point in the century. None, not even the Head Start component of the Economic Opportunity Act, receives serious discussion. What the structure does, however, is place the EOA fifty pages *after* the mention of the 1965 acts, and after the 1964 Civil Rights Act, without which none of these acts would have been possible. ESEA receives one sentence. But Cremin also mentions a study of compensatory education conducted by the National Institute of Education in the early 1970s, without mentioning that it was a study of Title I *of ESEA.* It all becomes very confusing, and frequently unserious.

To move from these two questions about coverage and balance to one of interpretation is not easy. What *is* Cremin saying about the public school? In a history essentially of the processes of change which affect the way people think (he might have made more use of the concept of "opinion" in this respect), the following questions arise: what influenced the way people have thought about school, and about college, and about teachers, and about radical students, and about federal legislation . . . ? The breadth and pace of the argument in the book make it difficult to answer such questions. They make it difficult, therefore, to perceive Cremin's interpretations except in quantitative terms (if Lippmann gets x times more coverage than Conant, and if fundamentalist religion gets y times

more coverage than teacher education, then . . .). Cremin quarrels gently at one point in the book with the ways in which some historians pass judgment: if they do pass judgment, it should at least be of "this world." His own judgments and interpretations are not concealed; they are simply part of the texture of the world he attempts to delineate.

One interesting clue to the way Cremin pictures that world and his own intentions is to be found in the vocabulary. Two of the most used adjectives throughout the book are "extraordinary" and "remarkable," with somewhat lesser use of synonyms and similar epithets—such as "prodigious" and "incalculable." People, books, events, developments, almost anything is eligible for treatment as extraordinary or remarkable, and the adjectives may even appear more than once on the same page. The cumulative impact is slightly Wagnerian. There is a sense of heroic forces, not necessarily contending, indeed striving toward some common end. The language sometimes gives a larger-than-life and even mystical edge to an otherwise hard-edged effort at portrayal.

The final impression the book seems to leave, therefore, is one of confusions of balance and interpretation that have to be situated within the total, explicit effort of the book to represent some of the "great common educative experiences of the American people" (itself a conception that could easily have mystical overtones). It is a fascinating exercise precisely because, despite its enormous coverage, it is alive with tantalizing questions of the meaning and implications of the concept for the history of education as it has existed, and as Cremin clearly wishes it to be reformulated. The questions left behind after dialogue with the book (which seems a more accurate description than reading of the book) include not only how Cremin sees the future of historical scholarship, but—to re-emphasize a point—how he sees the future of "education" itself. The book can be seen, therefore, as a comprehensive yet paradoxically partial and re-balanced or unbalanced history of education, or some other kind of history; or as an antidote to obscurantist or dogmatic views of education and culture, and the groundwork for future action to redefine and implement a more fully educative society.

Lawrence A. Cremin

I am grateful to the editors of the *Quarterly* for their kindness in arranging a symposium on the final volume of *American Education*, and to Robert L. Church, Michael B. Katz, and Harold Silver for their willingness to participate. It occurs to me that I might best organize my response in

three parts: first, a few remarks on what I undertook in the trilogy, and particularly in the third volume; second, some comments on each of the reviews; and, finally, one or two observations on present-day writing in American educational history.

* * * * *

I discussed the structure, methods, and theoretical assumptions of *American Education* in some detail in the note on problematics and sources I appended to *Traditions of American Education.* As I indicated there, I crafted a definition for the trilogy that was intended to be more embracing than the traditional identification of education with schooling and yet less expansive and open-ended than Bernard Bailyn's "the transmission of culture across the generations." Also, I determined to give as much attention to the intellectual history of education as to the social history of education, believing that whenever people set out to educate, they usually have in mind, explicitly or otherwise, some conception of the kind of individual and the kind of society they would like to see result from that education. With respect to the intellectual history, I deliberately eschewed a recital of "great ideas" about teaching and learning and decided instead to exposit the works of men and women who had thought seriously about education and its place in society and who had exercised a demonstrable influence on their contemporaries. With respect to the social history, I sought to go beyond the traditional preoccupation with institutional organization and structure and to emphasize as well the modes and processes of education, to go beyond the description of formal legal arrangements to inquire into actual educational practices, and to lay aside long-standing assumptions about the separation of education from politics and to explore instead the inescapable ties between education and politics. Beginning from an interactionist position, I also tried to explicate the ways in which educative institutions tended to relate to one another in configurations as well as the ways in which different individuals interacted with those configurations with different results—this is what I meant by "educational biography." Finally, I tried in the conclusions to the several volumes to assess the multiple roles education had played at different times in American history, for individuals and in the society at large.

Three additional points about the trilogy as a whole bear comment. First, in an effort to depart from the lives-of-the-saints approach that had long marked the historiography of American education, I sought to people the work with individuals other than the holy succession of Franklin, Jefferson, Mann, Barnard, Harris, and Dewey. It seemed to me that in the field of Civil War history Americans were familiar with the captains

and majors as well as the colonels and generals and that there was no reason why in the field of educational history they should not be familiar with William Douglass as well as Thomas Jefferson, Lyman Beecher and Horace Bushnell as well as Horace Mann and Henry Barnard, and Joseph Mayer Rice and Jane Addams as well as William T. Harris and John Dewey. To be sure, the "saints" appear in the work, though they are criticized as well as celebrated; and indeed Barnard, for good reason, I believe, plays a lesser role than in traditional works.

Second, given the more comprehensive scope of the enterprise, the scale is different from that of more familiar works. There is more on churches and parachurch organizations than historians of education are used to, not because of idiosyncratic preferences on my part, but because those institutions educated millions of Americans of all ages, over long periods of time, with extraordinary intensity and effectiveness. Similarly, there is more on families, and periodicals, and Chautauquas, and organizations like the United States Children's Bureau, which has issued some of the most popular handbooks on child rearing ever published. One result, of course, is that schools and colleges are dealt with on a different scale, and many miss some of the familiar benchmarks of the traditional chronicle. The sense of loss is illustrated by a letter I had in response to the second volume, asking how I could write a history of American education in the nineteenth century without mentioning Mark Hopkins. Of course, all this is not because I believe schools and colleges are unimportant—far from it; it is rather because I believe we cannot understand the role of education in American society and the role of schools and colleges within that education apart from the larger framework.

Finally, I conceived the trilogy as a synthesis, as a work of reinterpretation, and was well aware that I would not be able to delve into the details of every domain I touched upon. With that in mind, I hoped the bibliographies appended to the three volumes would prove to be important resources. They were intended to indicate the locations of the collections of primary source materials I had used—and, given the scope of the work, I had needed to be selective about those collections (Jonathan Edwards, yes, David Brainerd, no; the Society for the Promotion of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, yes, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England, no; A. Bronson Alcott, yes, Elizabeth Peabody, no; the legislative records of pre–Civil War New York, yes, of pre–Civil War New Jersey, no; John Dewey, yes, Gilbert Seldes, no—the selections obviously relate to the salience of the subjects in the history)—and they were organized to point as well to the secondary sources that had guided and informed the work. My hope was that the bibliographies would make it possible for others to retrace my steps and go beyond.

Within this framework, I saw certain themes as central to the third volume, among them, the role of progressive reformism in the unprecedented expansion of the schools and colleges and in the establishment of a host of educationally oriented social service agencies; the rise of the media of popular communication as critically important institutions in the education (and miseducation) of the public; the transformation of libraries, museums, and other cultural agencies from essentially custodial institutions with ancillary educative functions into primarily educational institutions; the transformation of educational endeavors within agriculture, industry, and the military services from informal apprenticeship efforts that affected a few workers over short periods of time into well-organized programs that affected millions of workers over extensive periods of time; and the ways in which missionaries, businessmen, philanthropists, and government officials transplanted American educative institutions overseas with varying and frequently ironic outcomes. And, building upon these and other developments, I tried to explicate the myriad ways in which popularization, multitudinousness, and politicization became the leading characteristics of American education, marking some of its most fundamental achievements at the same time that they created some of its most intractable problems.

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Let me now move on to the several reviews. I very much appreciate the care with which Michael Katz has read *The Metropolitan Experience* and the significance of the questions he has asked of it. He and I have surely disagreed over the years, but with a mutual respect that I have found gratifying. Katz raises three fundamental issues with the book—its definition of education, its scaffolding and method, and its relation to the politics of educational history. With respect to my definition, he sees its greatest value in directing attention to the educative role of the mass media. But he sees problems in its "lack of boundaries." Almost anything, he maintains, can be redefined as education, and the work becomes so crowded with families, newspapers, and religious revivals that important subjects like kindergartens, high schools, and teachers' unions are treated with "sometimes startling brevity." But that indeed is the issue. Kindergartens, high schools, and teachers' unions are significant topics, familiar to historians of education and their readers; and in fact they are dealt with in the book. And yet, families, newspapers, and religious revivals may have been more important in the overall education of twentieth-century Americans. The question itself is moot, though it will never even be discussed if historians of education deal only with the schools.

With respect to the scaffolding and method, Katz finds a density of detail accompanied by an absence of analysis. I have already commented on the sources of my insistence upon detail: educational history has too often been short on detail and long on generalization, and I think we need a better basis in detail for our generalizations. As for analysis, Katz and I may have different conceptions that lead ultimately to different historical styles. I have always thought analysis best conceived as a matter of emphasis, involving the highlighting of those people, institutions, ideas, and events that were most important and hence worthy of salience in the narrative. I have tended to avoid in my writing the kind of analysis in which the historian steps away from the narrative, grabs the reader by the lapels, and explains what the data really mean, preferring to put that sort of discussion in the notes or bibliography when and if it seems necessary for buttressing an argument. As for skimming over major controversies, I would only note the attention in the sections on religion to the prolonged and bitter conflicts between the modernists and the fundamentalists and the way those conflicts affected the configurations of modernist and fundamentalist education; the attention in the sections on schooling to the sharp conflicts within the progressive movement as well as to the battles over desegregation since 1954; the attention in the sections on the media of popular communication to the conflicts over so-called media imperialism; and the attention in the sections on the federal arts programs to the battles over censorship and book burning. That said, the book is about consensus as well as conflict, since there can be no denying the significant agreements among Americans about the role of education that seem to have cut across lines of race, class, ethnicity, and political or religious affiliation.

With respect to the relation of the book to the politics of educational history, Katz locates me fairly accurately. I have "joined" neither the historians of the left nor the historians of the right, though I have learned from both; and the designation "urban liberal" fits well, though, given the variety of meanings that have been assigned to the term "liberal" over the past half-century, I would prefer "urban democrat." And, though I find myself sympathetic with many of John Dewey's writings on politics and education, I have preferred to take those writings as one starting point for my own thinking rather than as some sort of sacred canon. All that said, however, the key issues are certainly posed in Katz's concluding paragraph, with its dire picture of contemporary metropolitan life. I would not fault his list of urban ills, though they are far from the whole story. What is more, I do not believe that tolerance, compassion, and sweet reason alone can remedy those ills, unless we add political organization, voter registration, decent public education (including the education of adults), and a narrowing of the gap between rich and poor

through a genuinely progressive system of income and inheritance taxes as instrumentalities on the way to a more participatory politics.

Harold Silver begins his review with a comment about his "dialogue" with the book that I do not fully understand and then sets forth a series of dissatisfactions. It is "more about the future than the past." It is "history in the service of policy." It is "unbalanced" history, since Silver would have had much more detail about schools and universities. It is "confusing" history insofar as contemporary events are discussed in different chapters. It is in the end "mystical" history inasmuch as it really seeks to portray the "great common educative experiences of the American people"—indeed, Silver would have made that the subtitle of the book and introduced it as a slogan at intervals throughout the book so that readers might be kept on track. (I served briefly as editor of the *Cochran Field Communique* during World War II, on my way to training as a navigator, and we used "Buy war bonds" for that purpose.) Let me consider each of these dissatisfactions in turn.

For a book that is sufficiently classical in conception and format to see the search for an American *paideia* as a continuing *Leitmotif* of American education, I am intrigued by the charge that it is really about the future. A central theme of the book is that the development of a metropolitan civilization has required more of schooling than ever before—more time, more scope, more intensity, and more effectiveness; and it has also required more of child-rearing institutions, more of adult education institutions (including workplace education programs), and more of the press, radio, and television. In effect, the book is about those requirements and the ways in which individuals and institutions have responded to them over the past century. Why that makes it a book about the future rather than the past escapes me.

The book is very much in the service of policy, insofar as I believe good history should be a lamp to light the present; it is not at all in the service of policy if that implies some sort of anachronistic attempt to fit the past to the problems and categories of the present. When I began the trilogy in 1964, I had the sense that the traditional historiography of education was failing to illuminate the present. Indeed, on the very first page of the first volume, I observed: "Somehow, during a period of intense political conflict touching every phase of educational activity, the time-honored tale of the genesis, rise, and triumph of the public school has seemed flat and inadequate: it has failed to explain sufficiently how Americans have gotten where they are in education, and it has failed to stimulate fruitful debate over where they ought to go." My sense then

and my sense today is that Americans have traditionally overinvested their hopes and aspirations for social and political reform in the schools, that they have too long believed that by fixing the ninth-grade biology course they can somehow stem the tide of illegitimate births and that by fixing the freshman western civilization course they can somehow restore civility to public discourse. Neither by itself will work, given the counter-education of soap operas, the advertising industry, and modern political campaigning. If contemporary problems require that we rethink the ninth-grade biology course and the freshman western civilization course, they also require that we rethink the regulation of television and the financing of political campaigns. And, whether or not we regulate television and reform political campaigning, we certainly need to conduct our school and college programs with an awareness of what is being taught via the air waves.

As for the putative "imbalance" of the book, I would refer to the earlier comments about the familiarity of school history. Silver seems uncomfortable with a radically rethought historiography of education. If there are to be configurations of education, he writes, they should at least be written about from the perspective of the schoolpeople. Now, schooling has surely become more extensive, more intensive, and more important in the lives of Americans over the past century; but the media of popular communication may have become even more pervasive and influential, with the result that the dynamism in education may well have passed to the media. This is what Walter Lippmann was saying in the 1920s, while Edward L. Thorndike was teaching a more narrow and restrictive view of education that pertained almost entirely to schooling. That is why Lippmann is discussed at length in the book while Thorndike is discussed more briefly. There is another point to be made about "imbalance." If analysis is indeed a matter of emphasis, we do not emphasize the things that are known, accepted, and taken for granted; we emphasize what needs to be brought to awareness, taken account of, and attended to. And schoolpeople who ignore what families, churches, youth groups, and television programs are teaching (and misteaching) are ultimately condemned to ineffectiveness.

As for the "confusion" created by the discussion of contemporary events in different parts of the book, that of course calls to mind the time-honored debate among historians about the respective merits of topical and chronological approaches. Beyond that, however, it is important to note that the structure and organization of the trilogy as a whole, and of the third volume in particular, were determined entirely with respect to the substance of *educational* history. Franklin D. Roosevelt's efforts in the domain of education may well have been of a piece, but the federal arts programs and the hope they engendered of bringing

"arts to the milllions" were of a wholly different kind and character from what the Roosevelt administration did with respect to the schools (it mostly ignored them). Harry S. Truman's efforts to fight discrimination were surely of a piece, though again, what was set in motion by his executive order of 1948 abolishing racial segregation in the armed forces led to policies that were destined to make the military one of the most important educators of young black men and women in the years that followed, in contrast with the minor effects on the schools and colleges that flowed from the report of his Committee on Civil Rights. Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty was also of a piece, though in that instance the programs set in motion by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Higher Education Act may have been of a different kind and durability from those set in motion by the Economic Opportunity Act, but they were sufficiently similar in their ultimate goal of equity that I discussed their kindred character in chapter 6. However that may be, the point is that the book is not about the New Deal, the Fair Deal, or the War on Poverty—they are contextual categories; it is about the aspirations and institutions of American education in the twentieth century, and it is the development of those aspirations and institutions over time and in relation that determined the organizational categories.

As for the "great common educative experiences of the American people," that was certainly one theme of the book, but so was the "profoundly diverse educative experiences of the American people." One cannot miss the diversity created by differences between Hispanic-Catholic and Irish-Catholic configurations of education, between modernist and fundamentalist Protestant configurations, and between upper-middle-class suburban and working-class central-city configurations, all of which are discussed at length in the book. And one cannot miss the diversity reflected in the eight educational biographies that constitute the substance of chapter 13, the differences between the experiences of Alfred E. Smith, Jr., who received his most important education in the political clubhouses of lower Manhattan and the corridors of the New York State Legislature, and those of Elizabeth Dodge Huntington Clarke, who received her most important education within the confines of her family and the YWCA, or those of Hop Kun Leo Chiang, who immigrated to the United States at the age of twenty-one and had her most important education in the laundry business she established with her husband. In fact, there is no understanding American education in the twentieth century apart from this counterpoint of the common and the diverse and the shifting balances between the two over time.

What is one to make of Robert Church's review, which reflects at best a misreading of the book and at worst a perverse reading? So far as I can gather, he sees me as opposed to organized public schooling; he understands my portrayal of the American experience in education as essentially one of "escaping from teaching"; and he takes the ultimate prescription of my book to be laissez-faire, or, as he puts it in his concluding sentence, "despite almost two centuries of immense political effort to extend educational opportunity to all, it is best to understand that successful learning cannot be enhanced or extended to a wider group through political action and, furthermore, it is dangerous to try."

In developing this bizarre interpretation, Church makes a number of assertions that I should like to consider in turn. He argues, for example, that the phenomenon of greater politicization is not really taken up until the final pages of the book and suggests that it might have been an interesting theme for the book as a whole. Yet readers will find the theme introduced on pages 12 and 13, in the following paragraph:

> The movement of education to the core of the American experience, already discernible during the nineteenth century, accelerated during the twentieth. Education not only became an ever more significant American undertaking in its own right, it was increasingly *perceived* as such and assigned an appropriate public value. Precisely for this reason, education became more political, as groups with conflicting ideas of the public interest sought to have their ideas prevail. One result was that many of the great twentieth-century battles over traditionalism and modernism in religion, politics, and culture were ultimately framed as educational issues and fought out in debates over educational policy and practice. One thinks of the evolution trials of the 1920's as they affected the churches and the schools, of the debates over popular culture in the 1930's as they affected the federal arts program, and of the loyalty investigations of the 1950's as they affected, not only the colleges and universities, but the entire cultural apparatus of the nation. But these were merely the most publicized crises in a continuing tug-of-war over what should be taught by whom and how in the nation's educating institutions.

Readers will then find the theme traced throughout the book, with example following upon example, and they will find it summed up in the conclusion.

Church also contends that the eight educational biographies in chapter 13 are not representative of the educational experience of Americans during the twentieth century. He notes that only four of the eight individuals finished high school and only one finished college; and indeed he sees the eight as ultimately illustrating "defiance of society's attempt to teach." Now, it might be well to point out that for most of the period between 1876 and 1980 a majority of Americans did not finish high school and very few went on to college. As late as 1950, only 34 percent

of Americans twenty-five years of age or older had completed four years of high school and only 6 percent had completed four years of college. If anything, the eight educational biographies overweigh the role of schooling.

Beyond that, rather than illustrating "defiance," the biographies illustrate the myriad ways in which individuals encountered and took hold of educative opportunities and the diversity of experience that resulted even when they took hold of the same opportunities. Morris Raphael Cohen and Mary Ryshpan Cohen both went to college; but Mary, as a married woman, was barred from pursuing her career as a public school teacher. William Santora became fascinated with political issues in a social studies class at Dickinson High School in New Jersey, and he then went on to continue his political education by reading the *Daily Worker* and helping to organize a union at the Emerson radio and television factory. By contrast, Jacob Lawrence found his studies at New York's High School of Commerce mostly beside the point; he obtained his most influential education in a Harlem settlement called Utopia House, in the Schomburg Collection of the New York Public Library, and in the Harlem Community Art Center. To point to these phenomena is not to disparage schooling; it is merely to explore the varied roles schooling has played in the lives of twentieth-century Americans.

At another point, Church asserts that my portrayal of the complexity of education in metropolitan America is at bottom a celebration of individuality. "Complexity," he interprets, "would disrupt the efforts of those who would use education for prescribed social ends." Quite the contrary: my portrayal of the multifarious educative enterprises of the metropolis is at bottom an effort to convey a sense of the extraordinary range of curricula, formal and informal, that are proffered to the average individual and the balance between consonance and dissonance in the learning that results. My point is not to write a manual for the disruption of schoolteaching; it is rather to inform schoolteachers (and parents, clergymen, scout leaders, and others who teach) about the educative milieux in which they carry on their work. Arthur Flegenheimer (a.k.a. Dutch Schultz) went to school until he was fourteen and was no doubt lovingly instructed by his mother, Emma Flegenheimer, at home; but it was at the Bergen Social Club that he learned to burglarize apartments and loot the neighborhood retail establishments and was thereby launched upon his career as a criminal.

And then there is Church's assertion of my "distrust" of "state-run institutions of formal schooling." Here I can only reply, Nonsense! *The Metropolitan Experience* includes lengthy sections tracing the development, expansion, and improvement of public schooling during the twentieth century. It applauds Louis H. Pollak's statement that, apart from

the waging and winning of the Civil War and of the two world wars, the *Brown* decision was "probably the most important American governmental act of any kind since the Emancipation Proclamation"; it notes the "luster" of the educational vision implicit in *Brown*; and it describes the opening up and improvement of public schooling as a result of *Brown*. Similarly, it applauds the extension of public higher education, and particularly the two great post–World War II experiments in the popularization of public higher education, the three-tier system of the state of California and the open-enrollment program at the City University of New York, criticizing only the structural divisions in both programs that prevented them from becoming even more comprehensive in character. And it remarks in the conclusion the significant contributions of the schools and colleges to the extension of personal liberty, social choice, and equality of opportunity for Americans during the latter half of the twentieth century. One must add, of course, that education is not a zero-sum game. It is possible to note the remarkable development of public schools and universities and also note the rise of popular telecommunications without implying any denigration of public schooling. Indeed, one of the several purposes of *American Education* has been to enhance the effectiveness of schools and universities by making their teachers and students aware of "the other educators," especially television.

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Let me conclude with a brief response to Harold Silver's final question, namely, how does Cremin see the future of historical scholarship in education? As readers of the *Quarterly* are doubtless aware, there has been a good deal of discussion in recent years concerning "whither the history of education," and there have been various efforts to define a "mainstream" of scholarship in the field and to chart where it seems to be going. When I wrote that note on problematics and sources I appended to *Traditions of American Education* in the mid-1970s, I found myself commenting on a score of monographs that embodied fresh and imaginative approaches to the history of schools and colleges, among them, Michael B. Katz's *The Irony of Early School Reform*, Carl F. Kaestle's *The Evolution of an Urban School System*, Laurence R. Veysey's *The Emergence of the American University*, John S. Whitehead's *The Separation of College and State*, Patricia Albjerg Graham's *Community and Class in American Education*, Jonathan Messerli's *Horace Mann*, Codman Hislop's *Eliphalet Nott*, David F. Allmendinger, Jr.'s *Paupers and Scholars*, and George W. Pierson's *The Education of American Leaders*, and the list was obviously illustrative and not exhaustive. At the same time, I was also able to comment on any number of equally fresh and

imaginative works that dealt with non-school institutions of education, including John H. Calam's *Parsons and Pedagogues*, Robert F. Berkhofer's *Salvation and the Savage*, Douglas Sloan's *The Great Awakening and American Education*, Arthur A. Goren's *New York Jews and the Quest for Community*, Steven L. Schlossman's *Love and the American Delinquent*, John W. Blassingame's *The Slave Community*, John F. C. Harrison's *Quest for a New Moral World*, Kathryn Kish Sklar's *Catharine Beecher*, and Daniel Calhoun's *The Intelligence of a People*, and that list too was illustrative rather than exhaustive.

The scope and breadth of the work on schooling and on education more generally conceived were exciting, and they have remained so in the period since the mid-1970s. In my judgment, that scope and breadth will continue to mark the historiography of American education during the years ahead. Some work will surely continue to focus on the schools and colleges, but other work will deal more broadly with a wide range of educative situations and institutions. There will be a diversity of questions, approaches, paradigms, and problematics, and one can expect a lively debate around and about those questions, approaches, paradigms, and problematics. But the benefits to scholars, practitioners, policy makers, and the public will be legion, not least in the illumination of educational problems that have long been seen as intractable because they have been viewed too narrowly and in isolation from the relationships and contexts that give them meaning.

Mainstreams, by their very definition, become coercive. In fact, I believe that the richness of the historiography of the past twenty years would be diminished if any particular problematics were to be established as the only problematics. In that domain, as in others, we have no need for "one best system."