

## "THE ABIDING MYSTERY" VERSUS PUBLIC SCHOOLS ----- ELLIOTT #1791

Of the 42 applauses Pres. Reagon got during his State of the Union last evening (26Jan84), the 3rd loudest-longest was for prayer in public schools, which the public currently views as godless and therefore chaotic, subversive of morals, and in need of (1) coming, as the Pledge of Allegiance says, "under God," or (2) replacement by godly schools (which the fundamentalists are producing by the thousands). I waver between (1) and (2) but prefer (1) and believe (1) is possible if "the educational establishment" comes off its arrogant secularism and enters into authentic dialog with (a) the general community and (b) the community's other bearers of the human tradition, depositum humanum, the humanizing heritage.

1. This thinksheet's title states that something is against our public schools as they now are. Against, because left out as (1) illusional or (2) ineffable. In case (1), "the Abiding Mystery" is left out because there should be no (Freud) "future of an illusion": the atheistic premise. In case (2), "the Abiding Mystery" is left out because of one or more of these assumptions: (a) To speak of It would violate "the separation of church and state"; (b) It can't be spoken of because it is literally "ineffable," unable-to-be-spoken-of; (c) It shouldn't be spoken of because "it would produce more dust than light," more controversy than would be worthwhile (between/among staff-students-community); (d) Speaking of it is the obligation of other institutions in the community, especially churches/synagogues/temples ("It's not our job"); (e, related to c) There's no way to speak of it that would satisfy the criteria of academic integrity and public acceptability. I hold that all five of these assumptions are false.

2. "The Abiding Mystery" is in quotes because the phrase is a rabbi's who used it many times in a conversation with me a few days ago--used it as holophrase for the center of reverence, which children should be taught by all persons/institutions touching their lives. That rabbi is adamant against "prayer in the schools," but also adamant against the irreverence of the schools, their failure to engender reverence with its attendant virtues, viz., respect, dignity, responsibility, accountability. I offer his phrase as one instance of the speakability of the Ultimate in public education. Note that the adjective "Abiding" (1) prevents "Mystery" from being empty and therefore agnostic, and (2) presents as an ultimate the conviction that life at its deepest is reliable (impersonally, the basis of science; personally, the basis of life-confidence, faith, trust: "underneath are the Everlasting Arms"). Public schools are expected, by the community, to help (1) tradition the general and specific ("West") heritage and (2) prepare children for adult living in today's and tomorrow's near-and-far world. The second objective is impossible if the first is not taken with full seriousness: knowledge of and commitment to (with the cooperation and help of parents/religious insitutions) the Center as the West understood/understands it (Hebrew, Greek, Jewish, Roman, Christian), and knowledge of how other cultures understood/understand the Center. Without this attention to the Center, the schools are doughnuts, hollow, Centerless, uncentered, a-centric, "the philosophy of education" left to secular-trained educationists who are, if not Center-antagonistic, at least Center-ignorant.

3. Bucky Fuller (INTUITION, Anchor/73, 40ff) condemns this centerlessness and the upsidedown fragmentariness of current American public education: Neglect of "the innate intuitive awareness/Of the a priori mystery" leads to "such ignorant cerebrations/As that which for instance/Invents atheism." Schools promote the baneful science/religion split, which discounts both. Again: Public education is capitive to 19th-c. mechanistic materialism, which did not distinguish brain and mind; but "Knowledge is of the brain/Wisdom is of the mind," which by "a vast prior design" is able to begin with / arrive at "generalized principles" and intuit "Universe," grasp synergistically the "cosmic Scenario"--"Universe,/Whose intellectual integrity bespeaks/An a priori greater intellect/Than that manifest in humans"--but this faith public education blocks: we are "omnivictimized/By a universally specializing antisynergistic,/Anticosmological/Educational process." "All educational processes/Must henceforth commence/At the most comprehensive level," as children do.