

Writing.

It is a craft which aligns letters and similar signs according to rules called "orthography". Unlike other crafts it is not taught at special institutions like the schools of arts and crafts. Those who learn it are not free to choose it from among other crafts: they are forced in to learning it in primary schools. And this training is imposed at an age which precludes the understanding of what one is being trained for. This general, imposed and precocious training for writing deforms society as if it were forced into shoes which deform the feet of Chinese women.

This maiming by writing, (called "literacy"), was considered a sign of nobility in the past, (like the long finger nails of mandarins). And after the craft had become general in Western society, the maiming it causes was considered to be a sign of power, (like the tribal marks in African faces), throughout the Third World. Thus feverish attempts at general alphabetisation are being undertaken, so as to do away with the power Western society exercises. As if slaves could free themselves from one-eyed masters by plucking out one of their eyes.

The precocious mandatory learning of writing, of ordering signs in to lines, violates the learner, because it programs him for one-dimensional thinking. Which implies one-dimensional perception, desire, judgment and action. The masses of children which leave primary schools for puberty are programmed to experience the world as if it were a line of the type "newspaper head line". This is called "schola fundamentum vitae".

The general programming for one-dimensional thinking is a relatively recent institution. It was established during the Industrial Revolution. One of the problems then to be solved was how to condition people recently plucked out from rural surroundings for servicing machinery. Another problem was how to prevent this industrial proletariat in the making from obstructing industrial progress. The primary school solved both problems. By teaching how to write it programmed those people for one-dimensional thinking, which is a program appropriate for mechanical living, since the machines themselves are founded upon it. Simultaneously it erased previous programs from the minds of the learners, and thus a consciousness which tended to make them rebellious.

Thus originally primary schools were places which programmed people for mechanical living and made them forget other types of living. They were places for translations: from village to suburb, from field to factory, from feast to holiday, from myth to history, in short from program to program. The fact that such translations were ~~in fact~~ <sup>indeed</sup> violations and castrations may be seen in the following aspect: The training for writing forced the learners to translate from the living speech of the village into a

literary language tasting of paper. The consequences of such a translation were maining in a strict sense of that term;

The purpose of the paper-like literary languages, (called "national languages"), was to eliminate local dialects and thus destroy deep-rooted communities, but also to divide the proletariat into nations and thus avoid the formation of an international class consciousness. In sum: one of the purposes of teaching how to write was to teach national languages and thus program the learners for nationalism. The wars of th last and the present century show how successful the primary school was.

However the primary school no longer works as a place for translations. General alphabetisation has pushed all previous programs into forlorn nooks like mountain valleys or vaudeville stages under the name of "folklore". On the other hand new programs are coming about which have liberated themselves from writing and thus escape from the grip of primary school training. There are those who believe that the primary school, (and writing in general), no longer works. That at the very moment the Third world is becoming literate, Johnny can't spell in the First one, (a beautiful example for "colonial dephasing").

One may consider the crisis of primary schools to be an aspect of of a teaching system the "three stages" of which no longer lead upwards. Originally the primary school was meant to train for machinery servicing the secondary school to train for the administration of the industrial and connected, (social, cultural etc.), apparatus, and universities to prepare a bourgeois elite for decision making concerning this apparatus. This no longer works because universities can no longer fulfil their purpose:

Knowledge and know-how has become segmented into such a bewildering multitude of specialisations, that those who leave universities no longer form a decision making elite in any real sense of that term, but rather a complex clockwork of small interfering circles. The participants in those circles, the specialists, cannot be said to make true decisions even if their circle be located at or near the center of decision. Thus it has become possible for universities to permit proletarians to enter without any danger: they will not become decision makers, but functionaries.

Now if the "three stages" of the educational system no longer lead upward, but into the labyrinthical branches of the tree of specialisation (the "tree of life" of the present situation), the stepping into even the first stage, the primary school, may be held to be a frustrating effort and this may be considered to be the reason for its crisis. But such a point of view will not seize the root of that crisis, which is that writing itself is in a crisis. It is this root which need closer consideration.

The children who leave primary school for whatever lies in waiting for them are no longer suitably programmed for it. Had they only learned how to write, (and similar crafts), and not also watched TV programs and films, obeyed the traffic code and the code of shop windows and supermarkets, they would be completely lost within a world no longer primarily codified by linear writing. A world no longer meant to program for the production of industrial goods, (as was the linearly coded world), but primarily for the consumption of those products in the interest of continued performance of the apparatus. In such a world primary schools are palaeotechnical institutions, like steam boats. And writing is a craft no longer up to date in such a world.

It may be objected that primary schools and writing pose two different problems. It may be imagined that future primary schools will teach other codes besides writing, (or let writing go altogether), and that they may thus adapt themselves to a new situation. On the other hand it may be imagined that the craft of writing will regain, after the dissolution of primary schools and general alphabetisation, the lofty position it held before the Industrial Revolution. But closer examination will show that primary schools and writing can no longer be separated from each other, that they stand together and will fall together.

Primary schools cannot work for the new codes, because they are not suitably structured. They are "theaters": a teacher stands on a stage, and pupils sit in semicircles about him. The new codes work in "amphitheaters": there is an emitter somewhere in the open space and irradiates messages, (a TV emitter, a film producer), and receivers form circles to catch the messages irradiated. It is impossible to restructure schools to become amphitheaters, because, for schools, that is a deadly communication structure. It does not permit any feed-back from receiver to emitter, and thus transforms the receiver into an object of communications. Thus amphitheaters program receivers, while schools program for specific behavior of receivers. Attempts to show films or TV programs in primary schools show that they do not result in new school structures, but in the destruction of the very principle schools stand on.

On the other hand writing cannot work, if general literacy were abandoned. To write is to tell: to count little beads on a string, (calculi), be those beads letters, ciphers, or whatever type of symbol. Originally writers told what images showed; they took the elements out of the image frame, ordered them in a line, & counted them, (they explained the image content). Thus they were translators: from image into line, from "myth" into "history". When writing became general, and all the images were unrolled into lines, (when everything became explainable and society acquired historical consciousness), writers continued to spir

out their threads ever further, so that their tales became ever emptier and their explanations ever thinner. The rising flood of printed paper shows this process. Should society unlearn how to write by dissolving primary schools, should it lose historical consciousness, there would be nothing left for writers to tell about and to explain; everything would stop "happening" and begin to be there under some other form of existence. Even now one may observe a certain general weariness concerning tales and explanations, and the inflation, (devaluation), of books may be considered a symptom of the decadence of writing.

Still: there is an intermediary period between history and post-history, between programming by primary schools and by the mass media, and we are in it. During that period writing has a very specific function. The new codes consist of images, (f.i. photographs), which are based on linear texts, (for instance theories concerning optics). And there are apparatus for translations from text to the new type of image, apparatus which devour texts and vomit technical images, (for instance those which devour scripts and vomit films, and those which devour newspapers and vomit TV programs). Those apparatus may be said to feed on history and to secrete a post-historical situation. The function of writing in that stage is to supply those apparatus with texts, and writers are at present craftsmen employed by those apparatus to supply them with history to be transcoded into an unhistorical structure. This is so, even if writers declare, (and believe), that they are committed to history and against the apparatus.

Writing is a craft which orders specific signs to form lines, and it was originally meant to count the contents of images. It is thus the craft which produced history, (linear tales, linear calculations). Its highest achievement is scientific discourse, which resulted, in its turn, in the Industrial Revolution. From that point on writing became compulsory for the whole of society, and it programmed its existence. At present it produces those ultimate stories which serve as "pre-texts" for the establishment of a post-historical situation. For centuries it maimed those who were programmed by it into a one-dimensional existence. Still: those cripples now regret the approaching end of that ancient craft with such an intensity that one might think that for them it is the end of the world.