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Dec. 10, 87.

Dear Prof. Ellis

In reading a book, I happened to find a passing comment that IQ test on children in a northern Native Community improved by "personal talks" with them by the testers. Apparently, there is an approach called "Test-Teach-Test" for children in different cultural backgrounds. I need your help about this. If you kindly advise me about literatures and data about this, I would appreciate it greatly. The reason for this is as follows.

I am not interested in IQ test. But I read the comment with an interest in that it suggests;

- i) That thinking ability/performance, particularly learning ability is stimulated by interpersonal discourses,

[And further, this implies that thinking ability would not develop unless some interactions at a linguistic level take place. Verbalization and Communication of experiences are needed for the development of "Mind".]

- ii) "Knowing" is related with linguistic ability/performance. At least partly, Epistemology has to do with Linguistic ability/performance.

[Learning ability (efficiency) is greatly enhanced by having Verbalizing skill. Without language, (and language experience), one cannot learn on mental skills beyond a certain rudimental level.

"Playing with things, objects", doing experiments, working, constructing etc., are not sufficient for the Intellectual development, to reach, say, the level of intelligence to have "Creativity".

Saying things and having seen them communicated --- having "Discourse" --- is essential for the emergence and building-up of thinking capacity. Having a capacity of, or a level of competence in performing, "thinking" is called "knowing" something. Roughly speaking, "Theorization" in science does this "verbalization" and provide medium for the Discourses required, though I think "theorizing" is not identical with "knowing".]

iii) "Speaking-up" and being listened; i.e. Discourse is essential for Intellectual growth.

[I do not believe Western Science is the only model, let alone "standard", of what "Intellect" does. But, to reach a level of "knowing competence" to take Creative step in thinking, it is required that one has Discourse, (communication).]

I do not know if I am right in saying the above. But it may very well be the ease that those Native children were crying out for communication, as if it is a nourishment that is needed for their growth. And even a little bit that the tester gave made it possible for them to grow. It might have "triggered-on" their intellectual circuit in their brain. In this metaphor, brain is like unfinished computer, waiting certain "triggering experiences" to make "connections". And the connections so made can be used to build on more sophisticated circuits. That is the learned is more "learnable".

If I am right in this, then, the task of education is to provide the Discourse needed that is, of course, if the "education" is for liberation of people For the "Education of Industrial Slaves", thinking ability is not needed. Besides "Creative Thinking" of the sort you are talking of may be "dangerous" to the society. Hence, the school systems may not wish to provide Discourse. They prefer to "teach" in the sense of handing down ready made "knowledge claims". But, I would say that without Discourse, students would not come to "Know" anything. They just memorize, To have Discourse, students must be allowed to speak. Teachers have to be good listeners. In contrast to the present practice in "Teaching", this would be revolutionary.

It so happened that some writers are aware of the meaning of "Speaking Up". The "Chief" in One Flew Over Cuckoo's Nest was a "Dumb". His way out was "speaking out", but for a long time he could not do it. Many Native writers have pointed "Speechlessness" of Natives. Paula Gunn Allen, in The Sacred Hoop, writes;

"Tonguelessness. A dimension of alienation that is not mentioned in the literature concerning it but that occurs frequently in the works of American Indian poets and novelists. The inability to speak is the prime symbol of powerlessness in the novels of Momaday, Welch and Leslie Marmon Silko."

However, the repression of speech is not exclusive to Natives. Girls in schools are "Silent" on subjects

related to science, Math, Geometry. They would chat away their life on other matters, which are acceptable and even "fashionable" for girls and women to engage. Not that I think "science" as it is today is of any importance that is, there are many good reasons why they are not interested in science as such ---. But, by not speaking, they are denying ability to think. They can be very Creative in other things ---such as how to go about interpersonal relations, which is admittedly very important ---, but not in things like Science. [Boys are not any better in this regard, but I prefer to talk about Girls in science. You know the reason.]

For surviving the 21st century, "Creative Science," about Energy, Environment, Social systems/structures/Dynamics is essential. The "inability" imposed by the repression of speech is suicidal.

If they do not like the "Science" of today, then let them speak out and let them create their own science. In my view, "Science" is not a Noun, but Verb meaning "Creating, ". If Natives and women do that, it would be great. I think, it is a matter of removing the repression, inhibition, (negation, intimidation). And the first step is to provide for them to have Discourse.

[As to Discourse, see Habermas, Ricoeur, et al. They discuss Epistemological implications of "Discourses".]

Now, all I said above depends on the three premises cited in the beginning. Would you help me in making them "convincing"? Or better yet, would you please tell me where I am wrong?

Yours

Sam K.