

tion and cases related to its interpretation, especially those concerned with its end and due process. Massaro argues that (1) there is an "American *paideia*," a concept of formative education, that brings persons into cultural understanding and participation; (2) schooling has been and is a powerful force of cultural transmission and formation; (3) a curricular core that emphasizes constitutional literacy can revitalize schooling's cultural mission in U.S. society; and (4) such a constitutional curricular core can develop a consensus to accommodate both ethical and procedural commonalities and cultural conflicts.<sup>15</sup> Massaro's emphasis on constitutional literacy reiterates Liberal arguments that in order to maintain and renew itself in a continuous fashion, a society needs agreed-on processes that can keep conflict within a communal framework. When the framework does not exist or has eroded to the degree that it is ineffective, disagreements become noncommunal to the extent that the society can no longer maintain or renew itself in a peaceful, nonviolent way. Necessary to agreed-on processes is the building and creation of a consensus—a shared commitment to accept and use the processes. Liberals, historically, have been consensus builders. They seek to create a middle, moderate, or centrist position in politics, society, and education that can accommodate pluralisms within a shared framework of processes or procedures.

Massaro's argument for constitutional literacy seeks to develop a middle position to the current debates over multiculturalism and the need for a cultural core. Proponents of a national core curriculum, such as E. D. Hirsch, Jr., Allan Bloom, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., and others, have argued that the U.S. cultural commonality, its consensual core, is seriously disintegrating and needs restoration. Proponents of a national core curriculum attribute this cultural disintegration to both a declining historical and political public literacy and to a deliberate splitting of the strands of U.S. cultural identity by extremist multiculturalists. Proponents of a national core curriculum, preferring cultural diversity and multicultural pluralism, counter that the public school curriculum should no longer transmit a monocultural version of U.S. cultural identity as it did in its assimilationist past. Rather, it should encourage racial, religious, gender, and ethnic pluralism.<sup>16</sup>

Arguing for constitutional literacy, Massaro offers a theoretical synthesis that unites contentious factions in a procedural framework. She argues that (1) a national core curriculum is needed; (2) such a curriculum can embrace both the commonality which unites Americans as well as the diversity and pluralism that characterizes their society; and (3) the U.S. Constitution, its rights and processes, provides the context for constructing both the curricular core and for cultivating a sense of constitutional processes. Massaro contends that the Constitution and its liberal interpretation offer a coherent framework for a core curriculum that can be used to educate a constitutionally literate populace that is sensitive to the issues of freedom of religion and expression, and equal protection of the law. Her analysis confronts what she regards as Liberal democracy's essential educational par-

adox—promoting "neutrality among competing versions of the good life while trying to instill . . . the principles of the liberal democratic state, among them the nonneutral preference for critical deliberation."<sup>17</sup>

Meaningful conversation, informed by constitutional literacy and undertaken within a consensual framework of shared processes, will encourage productive explorations about religious, racial, ethnic, gender, class, and other differences. With a constitutional core in place, teachers and students then can critically examine the U.S. continuing multicultural issues—its racial, religious, ethnic, gender, and class conflicts.

For Liberals, a balanced state and society are best maintained by a division of powers that prevents an excessive accumulation of power in any one person or group. In the United States, for example, power at the national level of government is divided among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. A further division of power in the U.S. system is among the federal, state, and local governments. This division of power, or system of checks and balances, contrasts sharply with ideological orientations in which power is held monolithically by a single person, party, or group.

Among Liberals, an elected representative government is the ideal political order. Necessary educational corollaries to such a political order are (1) the existence of a generally educated public, (2) the cultivation of a particular kind of civic education that stresses participation, and (3) the acceptance of a sense of civic accountability that stresses the responsibility of officials to the public.

### *The Programmatic Nature of Liberalism*

Liberalism's most general programmatic orientation seeks to (1) protect the rights and corresponding liberties of individuals according to clearly defined relationships, (2) advance the welfare of individuals in the society, and (3) maintain the sociopolitical balance that allows the free interaction of persons. It is on the second point, advancing the welfare of individuals, that Liberals disagree among themselves. Classical Liberals generally believe that balance can best be achieved by maintaining competition among individuals with little or no government interference. Social Reformist Liberals, like the U.S. Progressives, believe that regulation is often required to keep the processes of change and interaction open. Social Welfare Liberals believe that definite social and educational programs may be needed to advance the welfare of individuals for their personal as well as social betterment.

### *Social Change*

For Liberals, the good society is a balanced one in which representatives of diverse interests interact within an agreed-on social, political, and economic institutional framework. The various interests use a common method to adjudi-

cate disputes and to resolve conflicts. The balanced society is not static, however, but is continually changing as interests shift, coalesce, and form new constellations at the center of the social order. This concept of the "vital center" is important; it is the moderate, nonextremist perspective that is crucial in maintaining balance and preventing the society from being pulled off center.

### **Adversaries of Liberalism**

Liberals challenged what they regarded as the coerciveness and repression of absolute monarchy and dogmatic churches. However, the adversaries of Liberalism have been the overtly totalitarian ideologies and regimes such as Nazism, Fascism, and Communism that condemn Liberalism as a rationale for economic selfishness, political indecisiveness, or moral relativeness. These ideologies offer a new absolutism based on the cult of the leader or on unquestioned doctrines.

While totalitarianism is an obvious threat to Liberalism, a more complicated issue is raised by the rise of a mass society, with mass media and a mass system of education. John Stuart Mill warned of the tendency of modern society to create homogeneous styles of life and standards of behavior that were intolerant of those who dissented from them. The industrial revolution, with its system of mass manufacturing, created a standardized material culture with products made for a mass market. Manufacturers wishing to sell to the largest market designed products for the tastes of the so-called average person. But appealing to what is "average" results in a leveling that pulls the extremes to the middle with the result that uniqueness is diminished. These same averaging or leveling trends similarly emerged in the social, intellectual, political, and educational spheres of society. The media—newspapers, the popular press, motion pictures, radio, and television—try to appeal to the largest possible audience. The result was not John Stuart Mill's competition in the marketplace of ideas but the creation of homogeneous persons inhabiting an homogeneous society.

In a mass society, institutionalized education, or schooling, also tended to diminish individualism and to create homogeneity. Liberal societies faced an educational dilemma of profound social and educational complexity—that of simultaneously cultivating excellence and equity. If progress resulted from open inquiry, invention, the testing of ideas, and innovation, then individual talent and potential needed to be encouraged and developed. At the same time, the individual in society needed access to education on a nondiscriminatory basis. Because of the tension between excellence and equity, educational policies in Liberal societies have alternated between these poles.

### **EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF LIBERALISM**

In this section, we will examine how the ideological concepts of Liberalism influence and shape education. The discussion focuses on such topics as popular edu-

cation, educational policy, the need for a generally educated public, the nature of civic education, freedom in a Liberal society, and procedures in the school milieu.

### **Popular Education**

In nations governed by Liberal political parties such as the United Kingdom, the United States, France, and Mexico, popular systems of education were established in the nineteenth century. These school systems turned the basic Liberal values into a set of pedagogical requirements and values. Liberals tended to value literacy, order, process, and utility, and the schools that they established emphasized these same values. Liberals such as Horace Mann believed that a representative government required literate citizens who knew and respected the laws and processes of the commonwealth. When schools were established under Liberal auspices, civic attitudes, values, and loyalties often replaced the older religious values that had dominated schools in earlier times. British, American, and French Liberals came to advocate publicly supported and controlled school systems as a necessary buttress of parliamentary institutions.

For Liberals such as Horace Mann and Henry Barnard in the United States, popular education was a necessary corollary of republican institutions. It was a means of social insurance against the ever-present danger that representative republican institutions could be subverted by demagogues and irresponsible mobs. French Liberals such as Guizot saw the extension of popular education—at least at the elementary level—as a means of preserving the status quo against socialism and anarchy.

In addition to the arguments that were cited by Liberals on the relationship of universal education to government, business interests saw organized education to be a means of training future generations to be industrious workers and efficient managers. Industrial intelligence could be diffused throughout the population through the schools. Thus, Liberals in Western Europe and in the United States could be counted among the friends of organized systems of education. While some Liberals were altruistic, others saw schools to be instruments of social control of unruly elements in society.

### **Educational Policy in a Liberal System**

In a Liberal ideological system, especially one such as that of the United States, policy development and implementation are often slow and uneven. This is especially true if one considers two prescriptions of Liberalism, namely, (1) that power should be diffused through a system of checks and balances; and (2) the need to maintain a vital center, or sense of balance. Although U.S. education is constitutionally a state responsibility, educational policymaking is also done by the federal government and local school boards. In particular, the U.S. historical tradition supports locally controlled school policies. The process of making edu-

cational policies, then, is slow and uneven, depending on a variety of policy-making authorities. This diffusion of power protects schools from monolithically imposed policies and also from rapid reform.

In public education, various individuals, groups, and associations have agendas for policy formulation. These organizations include such diverse groups as the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, parent-teacher associations, the National Association of Manufacturers, the American Legion, and many others. The result of these often conflicting educational agendas has been that policy tends to be centrist, not moving in radically different directions, at least in the public sector.

### ***Development Policy and Liberalism***

Holding an optimistic and progressive view of human nature, Liberals see human beings as possessing a capacity for rational and scientific inquiry. Liberals believe that societies—if at the necessary stage of development—can establish and maintain representative institutions. Indeed, such noteworthy Liberals as William Gladstone in the United Kingdom and Woodrow Wilson in the United States believed the establishment of representative institutions throughout the world was possible and desirable for human progress.

An important concept in the Liberal ideology is that of the stage of development of a particular society. Societies that have reached a stage of political, economic, and educational development are more likely to be successful in establishing representative institutions than those that are underdeveloped in these crucial areas. Extreme poverty, large-scale unemployment, illiteracy, inadequate health and sanitation services, and rigid class divisions are some of the symptoms of underdevelopment. The Liberal challenge is twofold: (1) to ensure that policies are designed and programs implemented that prevent developed societies from slipping backward into underdevelopment, and (2) to aid underdeveloped societies in becoming sufficiently developed so that they can establish representative institutions and parliamentary processes.<sup>18</sup>

In the areas of both internal (domestic) and external (international) development, education exercises a crucial role in providing the skills and knowledge that contribute to political and civic competency, social responsibility, and economic growth. Domestically, educational development is necessary to ensure that certain groups, because of race, ethnicity, or economic conditions, do not become underclasses alienated from mainstream institutional life.

In the Western perspective, programs of international education have emphasized development as well as the promotion of international understanding. Education is designed to increase literacy, introduce methods to increase agricultural productivity, and improve health and sanitation services. The anticipated result is a higher stage of development that will include representative institutions and political and social stability or balance.

### ***The Existence of a Generally Educated Public***

Liberal societies and governments have established systems of popular education designed to cultivate a generally educated public. While particular career, occupational, and professional training are also provided, schools at the primary level cultivate basic education, especially literacy, in the belief that the performance of responsibilities, such as voting in elections, requires a literate and generally educated citizenry. Secondary education continues the process and provides background into a range of subjects such as literature, history, mathematics, and the sciences. The assumption underlying general educational policies and programs is that citizens will be called on to make decisions in areas other than the specialties related to their occupations or professions. General education provides the knowledge base needed to make such decisions intelligently.



A portrait of John Stuart Mill (1806–1873), an English Liberal and Utilitarian, who advocated individual freedom and expression.

Still another argument for general education arises from the need to have educated persons who can be disinterested decision makers. John Stuart Mill believed that disinterested decision making was needed to maintain the sense of objectivity that Liberals see arising from the application of reason to the political, social, economic, or educational situation.

Liberals believe that an educated citizenry should have a general interest in the problems and issues of the society and also have a methodological commitment to the representative and parliamentary processes designed to resolve these issues. In addition to this general interest, individuals and groups have special interests. For example, teachers may have a special interest in the support given to schools but a general interest in trade or energy policies. In dealing with general interests, individuals can be disinterested (not having a special interest) in resolving them. On any given issue, a body of disinterested citizens can be expected to deal with the issue objectively.

### **Civic Education**

In addition to general education, Liberalism emphasizes a particular kind of civic education that is specific to both the cognitive and affective development of future citizens. In the cognitive dimension, civic education seeks to develop knowledge of the institutions and structures related to government. This would include an historical perspective on the organization and development of these institutions and an analysis of their functions in contemporary society. For example, the civic education of a U.S. student would involve an examination of federal, state, and local government and of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. Civic education also seeks to cultivate values that encourage a commitment to participate in the political process.

The affective dimension of civic education, according to Liberalism, is public accountability. All those who hold public office are expected not only to fulfill the requirements of the position but also to maintain the integrity of the process. Public service, though renewable, is temporary in that elected officials come from the public and return to it on completing their terms of office.

An important cognitive and attitudinal blending is found in the Liberal notion of civility. As indicated, Liberals tend to stress process or procedures both in politics and in education. They assume that individuals need to know what the process is, how it came to be, and how it works. Raising issues, then defining, discussing, and resolving them are to take place in a reasonable, nonviolent, procedural fashion in which the participants agree to the process, follow it, and exercise civility. For Liberals, civility means to have a respect for but not necessarily an agreement with the opinions of others and to follow the rules of orderly decision making. Obviously, Liberals in education would stress learning and playing by the rules.

### **View of the Past as "Freedom From"**

In the Classical Liberal view of the past, liberty is defined as freedom from coercive restraint. For Locke, "life, liberty, and property" were individual rights that were to be protected from an arbitrary government. For Utilitarian Liberals such as John Stuart Mill, freedom meant the free and open exchange of ideas. The freedom of speech, press, and assembly meant the absence of restraint by institutional authorities whether in the government or the church.

Educational policies derived from Liberalism give a special emphasis to academic freedom, or the freedom to teach and to learn. Teachers, at least in Liberal theory, are expected to exercise this freedom within the area of their particular competency and specialization. We will examine the impact of academic freedom in three areas: (1) as an expression of the negative freedom from institutional coercion, (2) as an expression of institutional freedom, and (3) as a component of methodological efficacy.

### **Freedom from Institutional Coercion**

As a general principle of Liberalism, originating with Classical Liberal doctrines but also carried into Reformist Liberalism, academic freedom is intended to protect the freedom of teachers and students from coercive and repressive agents of government, churches, or special interests. Academic freedom, as an extension of the right to free speech or freedom of information, seeks to keep education free of censorship, which may limit inquiry. Within an educational institution or school, academic freedom is also protection against school boards, trustees, or administrators who may attempt to interfere with freedom of expression and inquiry.

The Liberal guarantees of academic freedom exist within a framework that defines its exercise. Teachers are free to teach in the areas of their competencies. For example, a teacher of biology has the right to teach that subject matter. The privileges of academic freedom, however, do not extend to that teacher's right to make pronouncements, as an authority, on other subjects. To fail to recognize the limits of one's competency is to infringe on the rights of other teachers.

Students have the right to learn. Teachers violate that right when they fail to maintain a classroom environment conducive to learning. Students who are disruptive equally interfere with the right of teachers to teach and students to learn.

### **Academic Freedom As an Expression of Institutional Freedom**

Within the Liberal context, schools as institutions are to be free of overt politicization. They are not to function as ideological voices of particular political parties, platforms, or programs. The rationale for this separation from explicit politicization is that such identification interferes with freedom of inquiry.

The distinction between schools as separate from explicit political ideology and yet reflective of and encouraging of attitudes, values, and methods supportive of a Liberal civic outlook is a difficult and delicate one. In the Liberal orientation, the methodology associated with decision making in the broader society is also compatible with academic freedom within the school. Critics, however, allege that the school in a liberal democracy is a servant of the reigning political ideology.

#### ***Academic Freedom As a Component of Methodological Efficacy***

Academic freedom, as freedom of inquiry and expression, has a range of educational implications. It means that students can investigate controversial issues. Such investigation is regarded as a necessary condition in problem solving and the application of inquiry methods to instruction. It is also freedom to do research and to use the results of that research in teaching. Freedom of inquiry in teaching, learning, and research requires that there are no preconceptions that cannot be altered nor are there areas not open to investigation.

#### ***Procedures in the School Milieu***

The Liberal conception that life should be lived, especially socially and politically, according to well-defined and mutually accepted procedures has a particular relevance for the school milieu, or the hidden curriculum. Both early childhood education and primary education are likely to establish and reinforce procedural habits such as respecting other children's property and of taking turns and waiting to use certain items or playthings.

The concept that the group should establish its own rules of governance and conduct is also a Liberal derivation found in some classrooms. The assumption underlying this kind of discipline is that such rules will be more readily accepted and adhered to by members of the group if they arise out of common consent and consensus. In U.S. secondary schools, a wide variety of student organizations, clubs, and associations exist, each having its own elected officers who conduct meetings according to parliamentary processes.

It is anticipated that these procedural behaviors, learned by participating in the school milieu, will become habitualized standards of behavior that will be transferred to the larger out-of-school society. Membership in school clubs or associations provides experience and may lead to the skill of working well with others, which can contribute to success in business. Participation in school activities is expected to reinforce a civic outlook that sees voting in elections, running for office, and serving on juries as an ethical responsibility. These predispositions arising in the school milieu are also designed to create an attitude that disputes and conflicts should be settled according to nonviolent and fair procedures.

In all of these examples of student self-government and of discipline arising from the consent of the governed, there is an implicit understanding that the school is an essential social institution. Although some school procedures may be altered or reformed, the school's essential functioning role in a balanced society remains and continues.

## **CONCLUSION**

Liberalism is an ideology that has had a pronounced impact on Western thought and institutions. It has carried into the modern era its emphasis on human rationality, progress, and science. These concepts have been infused into the U.S. school system as has the stress on individualism and private property.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. How did John Locke's concepts of unalienable rights and the contract theory of government shape Liberal ideology?
2. How did Locke's theory challenge the sociopolitical position of hereditary classes, and how did it require a change in the processes of civic education?
3. How would a Liberal justify taxation for the support of public schools?
4. What are the educational implications of the Liberal concepts of rationality, science, and progress?
5. Why is a moderate point of view, based on maintaining the vital center, important to the Liberal concept of society? How should the school function in such a social order?
6. Analyze the role of the disinterested person in formulating public policy and in decision making.
7. Analyze academic freedom within the context of Liberal ideology.
8. Analyze how the school milieu can reinforce certain ideological attitudes and values.
9. Examine the tensions that exist between excellence and equity in the Liberal social and educational context.
10. Why do Liberals place such an emphasis on building consensus and following procedures?
11. Identify and analyze the ideological tensions that exist in Liberalism.
12. How would Liberals react to the debates regarding multiculturalism?