

(06) BILL HOWARD - JONATHAN, STAN AND EDUCATION

Subject: Re: Jonathan's paper
From: Howard, William A.
To: robtully
Date: Friday, 17 June 2016, 8:37

Dear Rob,

Thanks for Jonathan's paper. I had not seen it before. There was nothing about it at the memorial conference. I hope Juliette has a copy.

I am still pondering the paper. As an initial step, I have zeroed in on some items that call up concrete memories.

"Another very important influence was my father's experience working as a voluntary assistant in Bruno Bettelheim's school for autistic and schizophrenic children in Chicago. By understanding the extreme case of the damage done to those children, and how they could be helped, and comparing with many other experiences, he gained an extraordinary insight into the emotional side of education generally."

Yes, sometime before I met him, Stan worked for a few months as a counselor in Bettelheim's Orthogenic School. We talked about it quite a lot. From his experience as a counselor, and from Bettelheim himself, Stan became an expert on psychoanalysis; and I learned a lot from Stan, studied Freud's "Interpretation of Dreams", and in fact use a version of this (due to Ira Progoff) at appropriate times in my own life. Also, Stan analyzed two or three of my own dreams. Very impressive.

Agreed that what Stan learned from the Bettelheim experience strongly influenced his ideas about education.

"Indeed, one could say, that the greater part of scientific education at the University of Chicago in the 1950s, did not go on in classrooms, but rather in places like Steinway's coffeehouse on 57th Street, where my father used to hang out a lot of the time, often with me tagging along; and where young people could learn most of their physics, mathematics and chemistry by just sitting at the table with scientists, many of them already famous ones, arguing and fighting over ideas."

Yes indeed. I was there. It was Steinway's drugstore with tables for snacks and coffee, corner of 57th and Kenwood. More generally, both the undergraduates and the graduate students learned more from their informal interaction with the faculty and with each other than they did from actual classroom experience. The educational environment at the Univ. of Chicago at that time was very unusual.

High school math textbooks: "incoherent, kaleidoscopic, broken up with countless colored boxes, irrelevant cartoons and arbitrary symbols, supposedly to make them "interesting" (i.e. distracting) to the child."

I remember, on the farm, Stan showing me one of them. It was, indeed, pretty bad.

"But then, in Michigan, I fell into trouble, especially in mathematics, and the teachers got to me. I did not have my father's defiant character. Instead of fighting back, I caved in. My father was furious! He saw me being destroyed and finally decided to take me out of school entirely. That brought him into serious conflict with my mother, ..."

I visited Stan's farm in Michigan a few times, 1960-1962. Jonathan was being "home schooled". It did not seem like such a big deal to me. I did not realize that his mother, Carol, had misgivings about the situation.

"I was lazy and rather spoiled, and spent most of my time running around outside on the farm."

He is exaggerating. He was a serious person, mature for his age (9-11). The last time I saw Jonathan was when I visited Stan at Stony Brook. This was probably 1964.

"(In the sequel, I hopped and jumped in and out of school and home, without finishing either grade school or high school, sat in on some university courses, finally got interested in mathematics -- particularly Riemann's theory of functions of a complex variable and analytical number theory --, learned to work hard, finished a doctorate at the University of California and left, at the age of 22, for a teaching position in Europe. ...)"

Jonathan got his doctorate under Bishop in 1973. I would like to know more about his experience with Bishop. Stan was talking a lot about Bishop during those years, in particular in connection with the project of creating a new university. Stan recounted some of this to me (ie., his conversations with Bishop) during the late 1960s.

"One of the people who felt particularly resentful and threatened by my father was the wife of a faculty colleague, who was trying to build herself a career in "computer science". The particular colleague, while very brilliant, had a history of mental illness. Now, his wife went to my mother and confided to her, that she recognized the same symptoms of "manic-depressive psychosis" in my father, as her own husband had suffered from! ...

To make a long story short, my mother demanded that he go with her to see a university psychiatrist for "consultation". Smelling an attempt by Wallis et al. to obtain a pretext for removing him from his tenured position at the University -- mental illness being one of the two legal

justifications for such a move -- my father demanded that I go along as a witness ..

." Wow! Reads like a novel; but also has the ring of truth.

The educational films: Stan talked to me about this but I found it hard to relate to; it was not the sort of thing that I was very interested in. I remember him recounting a conversation with Gödel, who said, concerning the opposition he would encounter from the entrenched commercial interests, "They will destroy you *instantly*."

Concerning the importance of fostering the ability of children to "think things through by and for themselves -- the sovereignty of their minds --": well, of course. I don't recall Stan emphasizing this, but he probably did; it is just so obvious to me that I would not have noticed.

The fight at the IAS: As mentioned in my talk to the memorial conference, I was there during the year 1972-1973. Lots of memories from that year.

I have not had any contact with Jonathan since Stony Brook, 1964. I should send him an email. Could you give me the address?

Bill