A CRITICAL STUDY OF ASPECTS OF ROBERT M. HUTCHINS' POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND EDUCATIONAL THEORY

by

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PREFACE

The purpose of this study was to investigate the political philosophy and the educational ideas of Robert Hutchins during the period 1941-1951 and to determine, if possible, what relationship existed between those two areas of thought.

I am deeply grateful to the members of my committee, Dr. Peter M. Collins, who directed the study, Dr. Robert B. Nordberg, and Dr. Timothy M. Riordan, for the encouragement and the unfailing assistance they gave me all through the writing and the rewriting of this paper. All of them gave unstintingly of their time and their expertise. Whatever merits the paper may have are due largely to their insistence on my doing the best piece of work I could do.

Special thanks also go to my parents, my three children, and my daughter-in-law for their support and their firm belief that I could complete this study.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

At the time of his appointment to the Presidency of the University of Chicago in 1929, Robert M. Hutchins, at age 30, was the youngest college president in the United States. He continued as Chicago's president until 1945 when he became Chancellor of the University, a post he held until his resignation in 1951. However, youth does not, in and of itself, make for importance in education or any other field. Many college presidents had longer terms of service than Dr. Hutchins. Why, then, is this man important in American educational thought?

Robert Hutchins had very definite ideas about what was wrong with American society and its reflection in American education. Further, he believed he knew the way to right the wrongs. A prolific and forceful writer and a fluent speaker, Hutchins presented his ideas on American society and education to the American public and put many of his educational theories into practice at the University of Chicago. His ideas were not accepted by many American educators, and he was frequently criticized for his "classicism," his alleged "elitism" in choosing those who should receive the highest education, and his purported "anti-science" position. However, his importance in the history of American education has been acknowledged by many writers on the subject. Brubacher and Rudy stated that

> An . . . important service, which the writings of Hutchins and [Mortimer] Adler performed, was to focus such lay and professional attention on the underlying philosophy of higher education in America as had never before occurred in the over three hundred years of its existence.[1]

They added:

> For one thing it [the educational theory of Hutchins] provoked the exponents of naturalistic and pragmatic tendencies since the time of Eliot's elective system to come forward at last and state explicitly and systematically the principles upon which they were acting.[2]

Time acknowledged Hutchins' influence on American education when it stated in 1949 that, as a result of Hutchins' ideas, many U.S. colleges required a broad general curriculum in the first two years of study and that "the idea of a basic and common education had become the fashion."[3] It concluded that Robert Hutchins had brought the basic issues of education "into the open forum." Again, in a 1951 article, Time said that "he had forced U.S. education to re-examine their purposes."[4]

Perhaps his place in the history of American educational thought is best summarized by Frederick Mayer, who in 1963 called Hutchins "the greatest living American educator,"[5] and went on to say,

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[1]John S. Brubacher and Willis Rudy, Higher Education in Transition, rev. ed. (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1968), p. 301).

[2]Ibid.

[3]"Worst Kind of Troublemaker," Time, 21 November 1949, p. 64.

[4]"New Job for a Salesman," Time, 1 January 1951, p. 49.

[5]Frederick Mayer, "Robert Hutchins Revisited," Phi Delta Kappan 44 (February 1963):213.

> . . . we must acknowledge Robert Hutchins as one of the truly great educational thinkers of Western civilization. He has helped to clarify our problems; he has demolished some of our most cherished idols; he has strengthened the foundations of liberal education. . . . his is the voice of vigorous dissent and valiant individualism.[6]

Statement of the Problem

During ten of the years that Robert Hutchins was guiding the University of Chicago, 1941-1951, the United States and the world were in a period of tremendous upheaval. These years saw a cataclysmic world war, a life-and-death struggle between opposing political ideologies, and an end to that war brought about by the unleashing of the most awesome weapon thus far devised by man. The years following the war were fraught with the need to rebuild whole countries, the attempt to maintain a peace among erstwhile allies whose political philosophies had little in common, and, over all, the realization that the new weapon, the atomic bomb, might well destroy civilization.

Trained in the law and coming to the University of Chicago from his post as Dean of Yale Law School, it was only natural that Hutchins should be keenly aware of world and national events. Even more than being aware, however, Hutchins made it clear in his educational writings that his was a philosophy of education for democracy. He believed that the individual could achieve the highest good only in a democratic society.[7]

Given this general political basis for Hutchins' educational

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[6]Ibid., p. 214.

[7]Robert M. Hutchins, Education for Freedom (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1944), pp. 88-93.

theories, the specific problems considered in this study are the following: during the years 1941-1951, what political philosophy did Hutchins express in his writings, and what evidence is there of a relationship between that political philosophy and his educational theory during this period? The purpose of the study is to investigate Hutchins' political philosophy during the decade in question and to determine the relationship of that political philosophy to his educational thought.

The importance of this study lies in the fact that a review of the literature, as is shown in Chapter Two, reveals few references to the possible political bases for Hutchins' educational theories. Yet, that there is a need for such a study was brought out by Salvatore D'Urso in an article published after Hutchins' death. D'Urso reviewed Hutchins' philosophical, political, and educational thought in making a case for categorizing him as a "classical liberal" rather than as a "perennialist." D'Urso made the statement that there has been "little serious study of his [Hutchins'] position and influence in the political and educational life of his times."[8] He believed that there should be a "thorough and overdue evaluation of his [Hutchins'] place in the meeting ground of American politics and education."[9]

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[8]Salvatore D'Urso, "The Classical Liberalism of Robert M. Hutchins," Teachers College Record 80 (December 1978):354.

[9]Ibid., p. 356.

Method of Procedure

In investigating the relationship between Hutchins' political philosophy and his educational thought, the writer sought answers to several questions. It was necessary, firstly, to determine from Hutchins' writings the exact nature of his political philosophy and what basic ideas constituted the foundation of it. Secondly, the basis for and the exact nature of his educational thought had to be established. Thirdly, a comparison was made between the answers to the two preceding points to see not only where there might be areas of similarity and difference, but also if there was any indication that his political philosophy had sired his educational thought, if the converse was true, or if neither was true. The answer to this third point is, of course, the main purpose of the paper: to determine the relationship between Hutchins' political philosophy and his educational thought.

In seeking answers to these questions, the principal sources used were selected writings of Hutchins during the 1941-1951 period and especially his book Education for Freedom. A review of the secondary sources consulted--and these included sources written before, during, and after the period in question--produced very few references to Hutchins' political philosophy. These secondary sources are discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

Limitations of the Study

Although Dr. Hutchins was prominent in educational circles from 1927 until his death in 1977, the writer has chosen to concentrate on the years 1941-1951 for several reasons: (1) This period was one of

tremendous national and international upheaval. (2) It was a time when Dr. Hutchins, as President and Chancellor of the University of Chicago, was not only a practicing educator but also was outspoken in his statements concerning his political philosophy. (3) The book Education for Freedom, which most clearly showed the relationship between his political and educational thought, was published in this period.

This is not to say that the years prior to and those after 1941-1951 were not important. Prior to 1941, Dr. Hutchins was the instigator and proponent of many changes in the American educational system, most of which were put into practice at the University of Chicago. After 1951, as Associate Director of the Ford Foundation and later as one of the founders of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, Dr. Hutchins maintained his interest in education and politics, taking stands on such issues as academic freedom and teacher loyalty oaths. However, for the reasons cited above, this study does not deal with either of these periods. Neither does it investigate Hutchins' stance on the roles of the home and the church and whether these positions bore any relationship to his political philosophy or his educational thought. While all of these are undoubtedly important areas and would certainly have added depth to the picture, a study of such wide range was not intended.

No attempt was made to compare either Hutchins' educational ideas or his political thought to other writers such as Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Jefferson, and John Dewey, who also had much to say on both subjects.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE[1]

While much has been written about the very controversial ideas of Robert Hutchins, the focus of most of these writings is on his educational theory. While he made it quite clear in his book Education for Freedom that the basis for his educational tenets is his strong belief that democracy is the only viable form of government, there is little discussion in the literature of the political underpinnings of his educational thought. Hutchins as a man acutely aware of a world that badly needed education for democracy[2] was largely ignored, and the literature about him concentrated on his "classicism," his alleged "elitism," and his preference for philosophy over science. Thus, we find Mulhern saying,

> The uncertainties of our time and alarm over their possible social consequences have been, among other considerations, responsible for such educational demands as have come from . . . Robert M. Hutchins. Regretting the disunity in intellectual life in the modern age, which they attribute largely to the development of the sciences and to specialization in education, they would restore a oneness of purpose to university education and a unity of higher studies based upon a study of metaphysics.[3]

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[1]Because the purpose of this review of the literature is to show the extent to which the relationship between Hutchins' political philosophy and educational thought have been investigated and discussed by other writers, other than the first reference the sources cited in this chapter are secondary. Hutchins' book Education for Freedom, nine selected articles, and a speech by Hutchins are the primary sources for the remainder of the study.

[2]Hutchins, Education for Freedom, pp. 80-81.

[3]James Mulhern, A History of Education: A Social Interpretation, 2nd ed. (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1959), p. 663.

He adds,

> In periods of unrest and rapid change, there is always a hankering on the part of some to restore some "golden age" that has passed. That desire seldom accords with realities that change has brought and which men must face realistically.[4]

The possibility does not seem to have been considered that Hutchins' political philosophy was directed toward these "periods of unrest and rapid change" and perhaps was related to his educational theory.

Brubacher did hint at a possible political basis for Hutchins' ideas when he said,

> . . . after the "freewheeling" twenties, the depressing thirties, the war-torn forties, and the uneasy postwar fifties--. . . a large portion of the American public was in no mood for progressive theories of education which were so experimental as to be relativistic. . . . people turned for relief to "essentialist" philosophies of education in which progress could be calculated against more permanent aims and the curriculum was based on the enduring values of the past. As a result there was a revival of idealist and realist philosophies of education, especially that of Scholastic realism. Some found security in a reassertion of Plato's idealism. Others put their confidence in the rugged qualities of realism. But leading the van of resurgent conservatism by far were the Neo-Aristotelians, especially . . . Robert M. Hutchins.[5]

However, it appears that he looked at only one side of the coin when he stated that Americans who had passed through these decades of tremendous upheaval were ready for Hutchins' ideas, and he did not look at the opposite possibility: that Hutchins' ideas were directly related to these years of change.

Brubacher and Rudy came much closer to identifying the political

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[4]Ibid., pp. 663-664.

[5]John S. Brubacher, A History of the Problems of Education, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1966), pp. 134-135.

foundations of Hutchins' thought:

> . . . they [Hutchins and Mortimer Adler] maintained that the liberal education they had in mind was for everyone. This they could well do since the Industrial Revolution had now given everyone some measure of leisure and since the political revolutions of the late eighteenth century had made everyone free. If everyone was politically and economically free, then the objective of education should be, as Rousseau said on the threshold of these revolutions and John Stuart Mill a century later, not the vocational one of training a magistrate, soldier, or priest but the liberal one of making a man. Such an education, far from being illiberal or aristocratic, they claimed with pride and conviction, was the only one which would guarantee a common universe of discourse so necessary for the solidity of democratic institutions.[6]

We do find a rather lengthy discussion of Hutchins as a political theorist in Mayer's article[7] written two years before the period being considered in this paper. Mayer not only describes in some detail Hutchins' political ideas but also points out that there was considerable recognition of Hutchins' talents as a politician as evidenced by the fact that he was considered for several important political positions and was actually offered the post of head of the National Recovery Administration by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Mayer said that Hutchins, between 1932 and 1936, confined his "activities and utterances" to education, but that, about 1936, he "extended his challenge from education to the whole world and the things it honors."[8]

Mayer then went on to describe Hutchins in 1939:

> But then there is the inevitable circularity between education and the state that weighs upon him these days: the people get the kind of education they want, and they must be persuaded to want something

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[6] Brubacher and Rudy, Higher Education in Transition, p. 300.

[7] Milton S. Mayer, "Hutchins of Chicago. Part I--The Daring Young Man," Harper's Magazine, March 1939, pp. 344-355.

[8] Ibid., p. 353.

> different. They cannot be persuaded by a philosopher; they might be persuaded by a philosophical statesman.[9]

This "inevitable circularity between education and the state" becomes much more evident when we analyze Hutchins' writings of the 1941-1951 period, but, curiously enough, this writer found no mention of it in the other literature of the decade in question.

We find very little written about Hutchins and his educational theory and political philosophy during the years 1941-45 when the United States was embroiled in World War II. However, in the years following the war, criticism of Hutchins' ideas began to appear. In School and Society in 1947,[10] Denton Geyer compared freedom and education as defined by Hegel, Dewey, and Hutchins, and attacked Hutchins' definition of a free mind. Once again, the charges of elitism and an oligarchy of the highly educated were brought up. Geyer concluded his article by stating his preference for Dewey's definition of freedom because, according to Geyer, it involves experimentation, physical movement, and self-activity.

In 1947, Brigance[11] accused Hutchins of not dealing with things as they are, of living too much in the past, but he did not delve into the reasons, either political or educational, for Hutchins' stance on this issue.

From 1946 to 1951, Time periodically featured the thought and

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[9]Ibid., p. 355.

[10]Denton L. Geyer, "Three Types of Education for Freedom," School and Society 66 (29 November 1947):406-409.

[11]W. Norwood Brigance, "A Year of Decision in Education," Vital Speeches 13 (1 February 1947):246-249.

activities of Robert Hutchins. In "No Time for Infants,"[12] upon the occasion of Hutchins' taking a nine-month leave of absence from the University of Chicago to work full-time on the task of restructuring the Encyclopedia Britannica, space was given to his ideas on the vital importance of adult education in improving the condition of the world.

In "A Reprimand from Teacher,"[13] Time reported the stiff criticism Hutchins leveled at the National Conference of U.S. Editorial Writers, in which he accused them of not aiming at public enlightenment and of being neurotic about any criticism of themselves while feeling free to criticize others.

In the November 21, 1949, issue, on the twentieth anniversary of Hutchins' accession to the presidency of the University of Chicago,[14] Time featured Hutchins' picture on its cover and ran a long article describing his distinguished career as an outspoken critic of American education and as a crusader for his own educational ideas. While the article went into some detail concerning the changes at the University of Chicago, mentioned the reasons for the split between Hutchins and John Dewey, and defended Hutchins against the charge that he was opposed to the study of science, it did not mention Hutchins' political ideas nor any possible relationship between those ideas and the educational changes at Chicago, nor the reason for Hutchins' belief that science, while important, is not as important as philosophy in the curriculum.

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[12]"No Time for Infants," Time, 30 September 1946, p. 67.

[13]"A Reprimand from Teacher," Time, 29 November 1948, p. 59.

[14]"Worst Kind of Troublemaker," pp. 58-64.

In 1951, Robert Hutchins, saying that it needed a new hand at its helm, left the University of Chicago to become Associate Director of the Ford Foundation. Subsequently, he was one of the founders of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions at Santa Barbara, California, where he remained as Director until his death in 1977.

After Hutchins' death, the article by D'Urso already referred to in Chapter One did give a general outline of his political and educational thought and called for an evaluation of Hutchins' importance in the arena where these two meet.

Summary

From the preceding review of the literature about Hutchins, it seems that little has been written about his political philosophy and its relationship to his educational ideas. Even historians of education, while acknowledging his importance in the educational life of his time, do not explicitly describe any relationship between his political beliefs and his educational theory. Only Mayer, in his 1939 articles, and D'Urso, writing in 1978, brought out the point that Hutchins had very definite political beliefs and that these beliefs had a logical connection with his educational theory. This writer believes that the critical analysis of Hutchins' political and educational thought which follows provides a further insight into that "inevitable circularity between education and the state" that weighed so heavily upon Robert Hutchins.

CHAPTER III

THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF ROBERT HUTCHINS FROM 1941-1951

Any study of Robert Hutchins' political philosophy must start with his philosophical conception of man[1] because of Hutchins' basic premise that politics is an innate part of man's nature. Hutchins defined man as a "moral, rational, and spiritual being"[2] and also as a "social and political animal with social responsibilities."[3] Both of these philosophical definitions form the basis for Hutchins' political philosophy.

As a "moral, rational, and spiritual being," man is everywhere and in all ages the same; that is, these qualities of morality, rationality, and spirituality constitute the universal nature of man and differentiate him from all other animals. Human beings, as individuals, only seem to be different because varied cultures of other times and other places have imposed superficial differences which tend to obscure but not obliterate the eternal sameness of human nature.[4]

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[1] The words "man," "men," "mankind," and the masculine personal pronouns are used throughout this paper to refer to human beings of both sexes. The writer believes this preferable to the awkward "man or woman," "he or she," etc., and intends no bias toward either sex. This usage is also consonant with Hutchins' mode of reference.

[2] Hutchins, Education for Freedom, p. 44.

[3] Ibid., p. 46.

[4] Robert M. Hutchins, "Toward a Durable Society," Fortune, June 1943, p. 159.

Because of this sameness as rational and spiritual beings in their basic nature, all men are equal.[5]

The good for any creature is that which fulfills its basic nature, so what is good for man is that which develops his moral, rational, and spiritual powers to their fullest. In order for man to develop these powers fully, however, he must be free.[6] Hutchins gave us three orders of goods for which free man naturally strives. The first of these is the "private and individual good, our economic well-being."[7] Hutchins believed that, "Men must be able to live before they can think about what they are living for."[8] That is, man must have his material needs--food, clothing, shelter, his share of the world's material wealth--satisfied for himself and his family before he can think about other ends of life. However, Hutchins believed strongly that this lowest in his hierarchy of goods must not become the be-all and end-all of existence.

"Men must know what they are living for before they can organize a society which will let them live at all."[9] According to Hutchins, what they are living for is the third good, which, although known, can only be attained after the second good is realized. The second good can only be realized within the framework of a community or a

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[5] Ibid., p. 160.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Hutchins, Education for Freedom, p. 88.

[8] Hutchins, "Toward a Durable Society," p. 196.

[9] Ibid., p. 198.

state. That community will be a political one because man is a "social and political animal." A community is created by human beings having common principles and purposes.[10] The foremost common principle and purpose for Hutchins is the second good, "the common good: peace, order, and justice."[11]

In order to achieve peace, order, and justice, political organization, the state, is necessary. "Political organization is a means to the good of the community."[12] "The state is necessary to achieve justice in the community. And a just society is necessary to achieve the terrestrial ends of human life."[13] Even as man attempts to satisfy his material needs, he must have a peaceful and ordered environment in which to do it, an environment where justice prevails, for only through justice can man's material needs be satisfied and his material desires controlled. Only through justice can man ensure that there is a fair distribution of the community's material wealth. "The state is not an end in itself, but a means to the virtue and intelligence, that is the happiness of the citizens. It is held together by justice through which it cares for the common good."[14]

Hutchins, in fact, equated justice with the common good:

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[10] Hutchins, Education for Freedom, p. 84.

[11] Ibid., p. 88.

[12] Ibid., p. 83.

[13] Ibid., p. 84.

[14] Ibid., p. 45.

"Justice is the good of the community."[15] Justice holds the state together and determines all political, social, and economic relations.[16] He defined justice as "a fair allocation of functions, rewards, and punishments, in terms of the rights of man and the principles and purposes of the community."[17]

How did Hutchins propose that justice be attained in the state? Justice is to be achieved by law because men "are swayed by emotions and desires that must be held in check. Law is an expression of their collective rationality, by which they hope to educate and control themselves."[18] Law is "an ordinance of reason directed to the common good," "the product of virtue and intelligence . . . designed to foster the virtue and intelligence of the people."[19]

Thus far, we have discussed the first good, the economic good, and the second good, the common good of peace, order, and justice. Hutchins clearly subordinated the first good to the second when he wrote, ". . . since the production and distribution of material goods are one aspect of the common good, the economic order must be subordinate to the political order."[20] There remains the third and highest good, "the personal or human good . . .," the achievement of "the limit

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[15] Ibid., p. 83.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., p. 84.

[18] Ibid., p. 82.

[19] Hutchins, "Toward a Durable Society," p. 160.

[20] Hutchins, Education for Freedom, p. 45.

of our moral, intellectual, and spiritual powers."[21] It is the attainment of this good that, as cited earlier, Hutchins believed to be the end of the state. The "social and political animal" that is man is to bring about the total fulfillment of man as a "moral, rational, and spiritual being."

Obviously, Hutchins had a specific kind of state in mind for the achievement of the highest good, and that state would be founded on the innate dignity of all men (because of the universality of human nature) and the freedom necessary to pursue the achievement of the highest good. In speaking of the equality of all men, Hutchins said it "results inexorably from the eminent dignity of every individual,"[22] and would not only enable but would demand that every human being be a full participant in the state. "No man can be deprived of his participation in the political society. . . . human beings, to achieve their fullest humanity, require political organization and participation therein."[23] He returned to the theme of the commonality of human beings: "The one common calling [of all human beings] is that of citizenship."[24]

The only form of government that Hutchins considered to be cognizant of "the common humanity of men" and their "common human rights"

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[21] Ibid., p. 89.

[22] Ibid., p. 83.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Robert M. Hutchins, "The College and the Needs of Society," The Journal of General Education 3 (April 1949):179.

is democracy.[25] Only democracy, in Hutchins' view, combines the three characteristics of law, equality, and justice.[26] By the very fact that the purpose of the state is to help its citizens attain the highest good, the achievement of their highest moral, intellectual, and spiritual powers, it must be a truly democratic society "for its [a democratic society's] cornerstone is the dignity of every human being,"[27] and it must rest on the deliberate consent of its citizens. Only democracy is directed toward the end of moral and intellectual development to which the means of all human activities and all human desires must be ordered and by which they must be judged.[28]

In speaking of the government of the United States, Hutchins said (writing in the turbulent forties) that its citizens had not attained a true democracy because they had not fully grasped the principles of law, justice, and equality upon which a true democracy rests nor were they wholeheartedly devoted to them. Hutchins believed that, if we strived for and attained a true democracy in the United States, that form of government would eventually prevail throughout the world because its superiority to all other forms of government would be obvious.[29] This complete understanding and wholehearted support of democracy should be the responsibility of every American

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[25]Hutchins, "Toward a Durable Society," p. 202.

[26]Hutchins, Education for Freedom, p. 82.

[27]Hutchins, "Toward a Durable Society," p. 202.

[28]Hutchins, Education for Freedom, pp. 92-93.

[29]Ibid., p. 95.

citizen not only because it is the duty of every human being to participate fully in the state but also because "the character and ideals of a country are the character and ideals of the individuals who inhabit it."[30] It was imperative, then, for Hutchins, that all Americans understand and pursue the democratic ideal.

It was this belief that the United States had not yet attained a true democracy that caused Hutchins to oppose this country's entrance into World War II prior to December 7, 1941; he maintained that we could best serve the cause of peace by striving for a more perfect democracy at home. This would not only be an example to the rest of the world but would also give our people common principles for which they would live and work--and, if necessary, die.

The chief fault that Hutchins found in world and American society of the forties and the decades that preceded them was its excessive emphasis on the first good, the accumulation of material things. He characterized material wealth as the common aim, the guiding principle of the American people and the other peoples of the world, and believed that the accumulation of material goods had become the end of the state. This false goal of society had led to the war because the more things people accumulate, the more they want, not only as individuals but as nations,[31] a prime example of the character and ideals of a country being the character and ideals of its inhabitants. Once again, he made plain the subordination of the first good (economic well-being)

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[30]Hutchins, "Toward a Durable Society," p. 202.

[31]Ibid., p. 160.

to the good of the community (peace, order, and justice): ". . . one who acquires property beyond the needs of himself and his family must dedicate it to social purposes."[32]

However, Hutchins not only advocated democracy on a national scale but also on an international scale. Writing during and after World War II when a burning question was how to prevent such a catastrophe from ever happening again, Hutchins was a strong proponent of the world state. The invention of the atomic bomb made this world state mandatory in Hutchins' view, for he believed (and history has proved him right) that it would not be long before a bigger and a "better" bomb would be the possession of many nations. He did not believe that the enormity of that bomb's destructive powers would deter any nation from using it if that nation thought its use to be the most effective means of destroying the enemy.[33] Since he believed that peace is the real sign of self-sufficiency of any state, no state is self-sufficient while atomic weapons exist. Such an awesome weapon can only be controlled by a world state.[34]

This state, like the national state, would be based on the "identical humanity of human beings," which he called "the foundation of any world civilization."[35] "Above all nations is humanity; and beneath all

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[32]Hutchins, Education for Freedom, p. 46.

[33]Robert M. Hutchins, "The Atomic Bomb versus Civilization," NEA Journal 35 (March 1946):114-115.

[34]Robert M. Hutchins, St. Thomas and the World State. (Aquinas Lecture, 1949) (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 1949), pp. 16-17.

[35]Hutchins, "Toward a Durable Society," p. 160.

human law and custom lies the natural moral law which is the same for all men."[36] The citizens of the world state must have common principles to believe in and to act on together. "Unless it is admitted that men can and should have common ideals, that the natural moral law underlies the diversity of the mores, that the good, the true, and the beautiful are the same for all men, no world civilization is possible."[37]

As justice holds the national state together, so justice among states must hold the world state together. There must be world communication to produce "common understanding, a common tradition, common ideas, and common ideals."[38] Hutchins believed that the people of the world, led by the United States, must deliberately pursue a common ideal on a worldwide scale, that American citizens must determine this ideal and persuade all men by their example to join in its pursuit. That common ideal is, of course, identical with the ideal and end of the national state: peace, order, and justice.

The creation of a world state would not mean that national states would cease to exist. Every national state has the right to sovereignty, that is, the people of a nation have the right to rule themselves.[39] One state, however, may not forcibly impose its will upon another. Should this situation occur, common action by the sovereign members of the world state to insure justice would be necessary. As

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[36] Ibid., p. 199.

[37] Ibid., p. 159.

[38] Hutchins, "The Atomic Bomb versus Civilization," p. 117.

[39] Hutchins, St. Thomas and the World State, p. 35.

with the national state, justice would be achieved by law. International positive (man-made) laws would be enacted by a worldwide council composed of representatives of the sovereign states, and this international positive law would govern the common action of the members of the world state. When a state gives up its supremacy to the positive laws of the world state, it is not giving up any of its right to sovereignty. Rather, it is exercising its right to self-rule by the freedom with which it gives up some of that right to the world state.[40] Hutchins made it very plain that no state can be coerced into giving up its right to total self-rule to a world state--this abdication of some of its absolute sovereignty must be done freely because its citizens believe in and are dedicated to the end of the world state: peace, order, and justice in the world community, which, in turn, is necessary for the personal good of all world citizens, the highest fulfillment of their intellectual, moral, and spiritual powers.

In summary, Robert Hutchins' political philosophy is based on his definitions of man as a "moral, rational, and spiritual being," and a "social and political animal with social responsibilities." Because of these views of man, he considered all human beings to have a universal nature and to be seeking the same three basic goods. The first of these goods, the economic well-being of man, he conceded to be, of necessity, the first good that man must achieve for his survival. However, once this good has been satisfied, man strives for the highest good, the fulfillment of his moral, rational, and spiritual powers.

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[40]Ibid., p. 36.

This, according to Hutchins, could not be attained unless the second good, the common good of peace, order, and justice, was established. The achievement of the second good is the purpose of the state. The state is held together by justice which Hutchins equated with the common good. Justice is achieved by law, the "expression of the collective rationality" of men for educating and controlling themselves.

Hutchins believed that the only kind of state in which mankind could attain the highest good would be one that recognized the common dignity of all men and allowed them the freedom to pursue that highest good. The only kind of state that meets these criteria, Hutchins said, is the democracy. He believed that only in a true democracy are the common humanity of men and their common human rights recognized, and only in a democracy are peace, order, and justice combined. He did not believe that the United States had yet achieved a true democracy because the common aim of the American people was the accumulation of material goods and not peace, order, and justice.

Hutchins also saw the need for a world state wherein all peoples, on the basis of their identical humanity, would strive for the common ideals of peace, order, and justice to facilitate their achievement of the third and highest good. The United States must take the lead in helping to establish this world state by perfecting its own democracy as an example to people worldwide.

CHAPTER IV

HUTCHINS' EDUCATIONAL THEORY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO HIS POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Even as the study of Robert Hutchins' political philosophy began with his conception of man, so also must the study of his educational thought. As pointed out in Chapter Three, Hutchins defined man as a "moral, rational, and spiritual being" and as a "social and political animal with social responsibilities." Building directly on these definitions, Hutchins believed the purpose of formal education to be to "make rational animals more perfectly rational,"[1] and as a result of that to prepare citizens for development of and participation in a better society.[2]

The development of man's rational powers, that is, the cultivation of his intellect, is to be a lifelong effort accomplished by his seeking out and discovering the great truths of knowledge. Here we encounter one of Hutchins' major premises: that all knowledge is based on absolute, eternal, and universal truths.[3] These truths are to be sought and found in the study of the liberal arts,

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[1] Hutchins, Education for Freedom, p. 37.

[2] Ibid., p. 38.

[3] Hutchins, "Toward a Durable Society," p. 159.

especially as found in the classic writings of Western civilization. These classics contain all the wisdom that the human race has thus far attained. They demonstrate the fact that man has had the same basic human nature down through the ages that he has today and will have in the future, that he has pondered the same questions, and has arrived at some answers. By following the thought of the great thinkers of the past, modern man learns how to think and so develops his rational powers. He grasps the fact that men have a common heritage, a common human nature, common ideas and ideals, and that these truths which were applied to the problems of another time are equally applicable to understanding the problems of today.

Of great importance to Hutchins was the study of metaphysics and the arts of communication. He believed that metaphysics was the most important subject in the curriculum. Man must know who he is and why he is here before he can determine what is good and how he must order his life to attain that good. "How can we talk about preparing men for life unless we ask what the end of life may be? At the base of education, as at the base of every human activity, lies metaphysics."[4]

Being able to communicate freely and with meaning with his fellow

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[4]Hutchins, Education for Freedom, p. 24. Hutchins, who was not primarily a philosopher, frequently equated metaphysics with the philosophy of man. For example, in Education for Freedom, he said, "... to find the good life and the good state, we must inquire into the nature of man and the ends of life. The minute we do that we are metaphysicians in spite of ourselves. Moreover, if ethics is the science of human freedom, we must know at the beginning whether and in what sense man is free. Here we are metaphysicians once again" (p. 24). Here and in the quotation cited in the text above, what he refers to as metaphysics would seem to be what philosophers term the philosophy of man.

men is important because man can thus share and discuss his ideas with his fellow human beings. This sharing of ideas enhances the individual's sense of the commonality of human nature and helps to develop him as a social animal. The common study of the classics by all students also gives them a mutual framework for discussion. Hutchins decried the overspecialization, as he saw it, of students who, in specializing in a certain area of knowledge, learn more and more about less and less and, in effect, wall themselves away from other human beings because they have no common base for communication.

We have already seen that both Hutchins' educational thought and his political philosophy arise from the same definitions of man. It has been noted that the purpose of the state is to achieve peace, order, and justice to enable men to seek the highest good, the fulfillment of their moral, intellectual, and spiritual powers. Since the purpose of formal education is to develop to their fullest the rational powers of man (part of the highest good), it seems obvious that developing a more perfect state is vital to the aim of education, and education is essential for the development of the more perfect state. "Nobody wants to develop the student's rational powers and immerse him in the stream of our cultural history as an end in itself. The object of doing so is to make him an effective citizen of a free democratic country,"[5] which, we have already noted in Chapter Three, was Hutchins' ideal state. Here, he has explicitly stated that the purpose of the education he proposes is to make the student an effective citizen of a

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[5]Hutchins, "The College and the Needs of Society," p. 180.

democracy.

Hutchins believed that man must be free to develop all his powers to the fullest. The free mind figures largely in his educational thought. He defined the free mind as "the disciplined mind" for discipline "forms the habits which enable the mind to operate well,"[6] and he said that "the first step in education is to give the mind good habits." The second step is the "understanding of what is good."[7] In elaborating on these two steps, Hutchins said that the mind is free "if it is enslaved to what is good. To determine the good and the order of goods is the prime object of all . . . political education."[8] To develop a disciplined mind (thus, a free mind) and the formation of good moral and intellectual habits, Hutchins believed that the study of the true liberal arts is essential.

> The liberal arts are the arts of freedom. To be free a man must understand the tradition in which he lives. A great book is one which yields up through the liberal arts a clear and important understanding of our tradition. An education which consisted of the liberal arts as understood through great books and of great books understood through the liberal arts would be one and the only one which could enable us to comprehend the tradition in which we live. It must follow that if we want to educate our students for freedom, we must educate them in the liberal arts and in the great books.[10]

His emphasis on the importance of philosophy also has a political

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[6]Hutchins, Education for Freedom, p. 91.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Robert M. Hutchins, "Dark Hours in Our History," Vital Speeches 7 (1 July 1941):570.

[10]Hutchins, Education for Freedom, p. 14.

basis: "We want to lead the good life. We want the good state as a means to that life. . . . to find the good life and the good state, we must inquire into the nature of man and the ends of life."[11] He further underlined this point when he said, "Only those who recognize the important place that philosophy and the wisdom of the race must hold in education for citizenship can hope to educate men and women who can contribute to the improvement of society and who will want to do so."[12]

Hutchins' belief that all men are equal and that it is the right and responsibility of all men to be full participants in the state is another reason he gave for the importance of a liberal arts education. "The foundation of democracy is universal suffrage. Universal suffrage makes every man a ruler. If every man is a ruler, every man needs the education that rulers ought to have. If liberal education is the education of rulers, then every man needs a liberal education."[13]

However, as pointed out in Chapter Three, Hutchins believed that the United States did not yet have a true democracy, and he stressed that the one way to make the American state a more perfect democracy was through education. We must teach an understanding of the democratic ideal and prepare students for life in a democracy.[14] "The one thing we can do for them [students] to make them better citizens of a

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[11] Ibid., p. 24.

[12] Ibid., p. 38.

[13] Robert M. Hutchins, "Education and Democracy," School and Society 69 (18 June 1949):426.

[14] Hutchins, "Toward a Durable Society," p. 204.

more democratic society is to have them understand what a democratic society is, why it is the best, and how to think, as free men ought to think, about new problems as they present themselves."[15]

We have seen that it was imperative for Hutchins that all Americans understand and pursue the democratic ideal. He believed that education is "the deliberate attempt to form human character in terms of an ideal."[16] We must educate the citizens of a state "in the ideals and methods and duties of ruling and being ruled in turn like freemen for the good life of the whole."[17] In line with this education of the citizens, he thought it of the utmost importance that adults as well as the children and youth receive this education. If civilization is to survive, there is no time to wait for young people, trained and inculcated with the democratic ideal, to effect a more perfect democracy; there must be a mass adult education program in order to produce a whole nation convinced of and dedicated to the ideals of democracy[18] and to a democratic world state.

> We must expand it [education] and intensify it, until education in understanding becomes the major occupation of all our youth and the major activity of all adults in their steadily increasing leisure time. Every school, college, and university, every library, community building, and hall must become a center of the education of Americans of all ages in that common tradition and those common ideas and ideals upon which a world community must rest.[19]

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[15] Hutchins, "The College and the Needs of Society," p. 179.

[16] Hutchins, Education for Freedom, p. 104.

[17] Robert M. Hutchins, "Ethics, Politics and Education," School and Society 54 (4 October 1941):257.

[18] Robert M. Hutchins, "Where Do We Go from Here in Education?" Vital Speeches 13 (15 July 1947):594.

[19] Hutchins, "The Atomic Bomb versus Civilization," p. 117.

The colleges and universities should lead the way in this preparation for citizenship in a world community.

> The society with which the college should be concerned is the Great Society. This society includes the whole world and all the people living in it. It includes all men who have lived, who live now, and are to live. Our aim is to prepare our students to be a part of this society. I do not mean that the college shall conduct propaganda for world government. I do mean that the college needs to regard itself as a part of a world community and to take upon itself the duty of preparing its students to be members of a world community.[20]

The best method of doing this, according to Hutchins, was "to develop his [the student's] rational powers and immerse him in the cultural history of the race."[21]

In this chapter, it was brought out that Hutchins' educational thought had the same foundation in his philosophy of man and ethics as did his political philosophy. The purpose of education, according to Hutchins, is to develop to the fullest the rational powers of man in order to make him an effective citizen of a democracy because only in a democracy can man achieve the second good of peace, order, and justice that will enable him to attain the highest good. Thus, the "inevitable circularity" of education and the state is clear: educating the citizen for democracy is essential for developing the more perfect state, and the more perfect state is crucial to the accomplishment of the end of education.

Hutchins believed the study of the liberal arts, in general, and of philosophy, in particular, to be the only curriculum that would

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[20] Hutchins, "The College and the Needs of Society," p. 180.

[21] Ibid.

effectively educate a citizen for democracy. Philosophy causes the student to inquire into the nature of man, the purposes of life, and the goods that the student must be dedicated to attaining. The liberal arts, the "education of rulers," are essential in a democracy where all men are rulers. Through them, the student comprehends the accumulated knowledge of Western civilization and learns to think as a free man thinks.

In order for the United States to become a more perfect democracy, it is not only necessary to educate the youth in an understanding of the democratic ideal and to prepare them to be effective citizens of a democracy, but also there must be mass education of the nation's adults so that all citizens, young and old, are dedicated to a truly democratic national and world state. The leading role in this education for democracy should be taken by the nation's colleges and universities.

It seems evident that, to Robert Hutchins, his political and educational ideas were mutually interdependent; that is, his ideal state could not be achieved without putting into operation his educational theories, and a true education, as Hutchins viewed it, would not be possible unless his political ideas were implemented.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate the political philosophy of Robert Hutchins during the especially turbulent years of 1941-1951, years in which he spoke out vehemently concerning his ideas on politics, and to determine the relationship between his political philosophy and his educational ideas. A review of the literature revealed that, while much has been written about his educational thought, in very few references was any direct connection made between that educational thought and his political philosophy.

A discussion of Hutchins' political beliefs began with his philosophical principles concerning the nature of man and the three orders of goods that he derived as those concomitant with man's fulfilling his common and universal nature. The purpose of the state was to provide the second good, the common good, to create an environment wherein all men could strive for the third and highest good, the achievement of their moral, rational, and spiritual powers. Because men can only achieve this highest good when they are free and governed by law, as an expression of justice, Hutchins held that true democracy was the only state in which man could achieve all three of the goods Hutchins posits. The democratic form of government is essential not only for sovereign states but also, in the attainment of world peace (a mandatory

condition for achieving the highest good), the necessary form of government for a world state. This world state, he believed, could not be attained by coercion, which would be antithetical to the very idea of democracy, but (partially) by the United States setting the example in striving for a more perfect democracy within its own borders.

His educational thought was also based on the definition of man, the existence of absolute and eternal truths (the objects of knowledge), and the order of goods. Since the purpose of the state is the achievement of the common good, education must strive to inculcate the principles of freedom, law, and justice as epitomized in the democratic state in its adults as well as in its youth. This would be done by teaching the heritage of our culture through the liberal arts, with special emphasis on philosophy,in general, and on metaphysics,in particular, and by studying the great books of Western civilization to bring about a realization of the common nature of man, the great truths that have endured since the dawn of history, and to give men everywhere a common heritage whereby they could communicate with each other. The arts of communication--reading, writing, speaking, and calculating--would be essential so that free men could share their ideas and come to solutions of their problems. Since all men are by right rulers in a democratic state, all men should receive the same education so that they can be participating citizens in a democracy.

Conclusion and Evaluation

There seems to be no doubt that, trained as he was in the law, Robert Hutchins' political philosophy in large measure determined his

educational principles. So permeated are his educational tenets with the responsibility of the school to create a better society that it was extremely difficult for this writer to separate Hutchins' educational thought from his political creed. Could one, in theory, remove all reference to political ideas from his educational writings, there would be very little left, and that little would have no goal except the accumulation of knowledge and the development of man's rational powers. Moreover, that very accumulation of knowledge and development of mankind's intellectual powers, together with the obvious historical fact that man is a social animal, would in and of itself lead man right back to the goal of the development of a more perfect political state.

Equally important in Hutchins' thought was his expressed belief that a nation's educational system reflects the culture and the ideals of that nation's society.[1] Therefore, to improve the nation's culture and to foster achievement of its ideals, changes must be made in the nation's educational system "to bring the next generation somewhat closer to achieving"[2] a better culture and the more nearly perfect attainment of those ideals.

Two questions came to this writer's mind in the course of this study. The first concerned Hutchins' three orders of goods. He seemed to take it as an unassailable fact that an educational system founded on the liberal arts, with special emphasis on philosophy and the study of the cultural heritage of the world, would naturally bring all

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[1] Hutchins, Education for Freedom, p. 48.

[2] Hutchins, "The College and the Needs of Society," p. 179.

students to the realization that these are the three basic goods for which all men should strive. Then, again, it might not. Thousands of years of human history have not brought mankind to a universal agreement that the three goods Hutchins determines to be most essential are. However, in Hutchins' defense, his educational ideas have never been tried on a large scale to see what the result would be.

The second question that arose was whether or not an educational system as proposed by Hutchins would truly eliminate materialism and its accompanying evils from the world. Certainly, at least from the time of Christ to the present day, there have been voices decrying the acquisitiveness of man and extolling the virtues of an equitable distribution of the world's wealth--but greed and the desire to accumulate things, to have more than one's neighbor, whether he be the man next door or the nation that shares a common border, go on. Hutchins strived for an ideal that the great religions of the world have not been able to inculcate in their followers. This writer has only admiration for the ideal, but is a bit skeptical of its attainment, even if Hutchins' educational ideas were tried on a large scale.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study was limited to the decade 1941-1951. Hutchins was deeply involved with political ideas and educational thought for the remaining twenty-six years of his life. An investigation into his ideas of those years would be illuminating, especially with a view to determining if there was any significant change in his political or educational thought in light of world and national events during those years.

Hutchins defined man as a being with spiritual powers, but this writer was unable to find, in the primary sources used in this paper, a definition of what he meant by his use of the word spiritual. In one place, he said that religion deals with man from the spiritual point of view,[3] but this only raises more questions. Perhaps a more comprehensive study of all of Hutchins' writings would bring a clarification of what he meant by spiritual powers and how he believed man would most effectively develop these powers to their fullest extent. A critical analysis of this aspect of Hutchins' definition of man might shed further light on his educational thought.

This writer was struck, in the course of this study, with certain similarities and differences between the educational and political thought of Thomas Jefferson and Robert Hutchins. Certainly, Jefferson's theory of education was undertaken within the framework of politics. Educating the "intellectually elite" to the highest possible extent was a tenet of the educational thought of both. There were, however, also strong differences. A comparative study of the political and educational principles of both men would be a valuable contribution to the history of American thought and would perhaps also demonstrate a kinship between Hutchins' ideas and those of some of the founders of our country.

In addition to Jefferson, studies could also be undertaken comparing the political and educational thought of Plato, Aristotle, and John Dewey with that of Robert Hutchins. Not only would this be

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[3]Hutchins, "The College and the Needs of Society," p. 175.

a contribution of considerable value to the history of thought but, involving as it would a study of some of the heritage of Western civilization, it would be in the true spirit of Robert Hutchins.

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