

## Lecture Nine - The Tempest

Before I go into the subject for the day, I would like to make some comments on administration. The more I hear from you about your operation the more similar it seems to my own experience. The problems of running a university are not all that different from those of running a school. The major difference is in the freedom the college president has from the influx of regulations and accountability reports that surely must plague your office. You have an upper administration to satisfy, and that administration has a Board to satisfy. I reported to a Board, but only rarely; it ruled on matters of policy and had fiscal responsibility. And it hires and fires the president. Otherwise it kept its hands off, as a Board should.

The principal, then, whatever his style, must, like the college president, have something of the Zeusian mind, a vision of things. And it is in his vision that the justice (the virtue) of his leadership lies. Let us go on and say that the principal must be the kind of leader of which Plato speaks in the "Republic"; he must have a political greatness (an administrative ability, we would say, in this instance) combined with wisdom. But the particular kind of wisdom Socrates spoke of is not the "possession of wisdom; rather, it is an awareness of one's own "lack -- and a desire to pursue -- that ultimate wisdom which, as Socrates put it, "the god" alone possesses. Hence, as Leonard Grob has written ("Leadership: the Socratic Model"), Socrates espoused a "critical [or inquiring] spirit" as the "moral ground of all human endeavor. If leadership is not nourished, he says, "by a wellspring of critical process at its center," it "'dries up' and becomes, finally, the mere wielding of power on behalf of static ideals."

I am more used to designating this eternal search, the inquiring spirit, as the "act of learning". The learning event, I maintain, is the central action of education. In ourselves, we know when insight occurs. We must go on and extend that joyous and enlightening event to others. We must long for it to occur with all our students. And this takes us into the question of liberal education for everyone.

Universal education is a remarkable accomplishment. It has managed to offer twelve years of schooling for all young people. This inclusion is a great moral achievement; but like most moral gains in the modern world, it came about when the situation for it became practical. Something has had to be done with the young, once factories and farms were mechanized. Society inaugurated schools, primarily to handle the problem of the child, and took the first step toward universal education. Schools developed in the eighteenth century in an industrial pattern, deserting the monastic and cathedral school tradition designed for postulants. As in other modes of industrial work, in the schools a work day was established, with laborers turning out a product in a batch process, organized around clock-time. And the system served

fairly well. But now that industrialization is approaching its own asymptotic limit, and the economic world is undergoing radical changes not yet fully envisioned, it is time to reconsider the pattern of schooling.

Most of the remedial schemes that have recently been suggested for public education are not far-reaching enough. Though mere reform of the system could alleviate many of our schools' ills, it can hardly provide the fertile ground for new growth. What is required is a radical restatement of the purposes of education, something beyond a selection of content, something that can guide individual schools in pursuit of their educational mission. How do we answer the question of what should be taught? Something much more basic needs to be undertaken before we turn to disciplines and specific content.

Few people, I suspect, would be willing to admit that education is more a matter of imagination than of intellect. Liberal education, that undertakes to educate the whole person, makes use of imagination from the very beginning and in so doing stocks it with images and constructs a communications network allowing various items to become interconnected or superimposed. Creativity lies largely in this process; so does ordinary learning, at least in the sense that learning is understanding. The verbal subjects, history and literature in particular, rather naturally exercise the student's imaginative faculty; but written composition tends to stifle it by an early reliance on rules. The process of logical thinking, like composition, can be end-stopped by formulae and prevented from expanding naturally to fit new material when memorized examples no longer apply. In the prevailing atmosphere of our schools, the quantitative subjects encounter even greater handicaps. Arithmetic is usually taught as a set of unbending rules, not an ingenious invention of the mind. Imagination could be employed in algebra, and certainly in geometry; but efficiency usually suggests a more limited kind of learning, based on relentless drill in rules and examples. %

The task of the teacher, Jacques Maritain has said, is "to awaken the learner's intuitive power." Once awakened, this essentially spiritual power can hardly be destroyed. The student who has tasted genuine learning in school will go on to be a lifelong learner.

Human beings can be fully human only when their souls are formed by the high aims and ideals of their myth; (and we have been suggesting in this institute that we are in the process of forming a new myth in our society -- a myth of equality, one that draws upon the richness of diversity, and does not "reduce" but revels in paradox and in what I have called redundancy (many ways of getting at the same thing). Young people can know their own capabilities only when they see themselves in the light of the heroic achievement of their traditions. Schools, we must remember, are aids, not dictators, of this endeavor. Individual differences will take care of themselves; what we are called now to consider is the great matrix of meaning in which each of us

participates in attaining the full dimensions of human feeling and thought. The society that would result from a universal liberal education would find its bonds as much in the arts as in the economy, as much in conversation as in politics. A widely shared active imagination would permit ready understanding and sympathetic hearing of multiple points of view. Liberal education, it should be seen, is the proper responsibility of society and is to be pursued for its benefit. If civilization is to survive, we can no longer avoid the need for nurturing all our young: in our time, nothing less than a universal liberal education will suffice.

LEADERSHIP AS DIALOGUE (this part is chiefly using Grob's words)

But if the Socratic ideal is to prevail, not only the principal must be engaged in the search. The faculty too must be engaged in this lifelong quest and should not be locked into a position of followership. "The very essence of dialogue consists in that mutual offering of perspectives which allows for--indeed promotes--the movement of followers into leadership roles, both in relation to others less aware than they of the need to acknowledge their Socratic ignorance and also in relation to those leaders whose horizon of meaning may now be more limited than those of their followers. In this sense leadership is a dialogical movement in which both participants engage in that process of critique --the love of wisdom -- in which their very identities as the leader and the led are continually in question.

"if, as Socrates teaches, the willingness to examine the conduct of one's life in all of its aspects serves as the moral ground of all human endeavor, then leadership, "more than any other kind of human activity", must demand of its practitioners a willingness to open themselves to critique. . . .If to lead is to assume to assume the initiative in a relationship with others (followers) toward the pursuit of some goal . . .then it must root itself in that exercise of humility which is the mark of the philosopher. [The leader must be the philosopher in the sense that he has humility -- that he knows he is perpetually, a lifelong "learner."]

Mine:

Yet this dialogical leadership should not be construed as hindering action, or diminishing authority.

Further, somehow, the faculty must be persuaded to drop its traditionally critical and skeptical stance -- it must be persuaded to enter into an affirmative relation with the principal. If it plays its traditional role of countering, or of substituting another plan for the one proposed, then dialogical relationship is prevented from the very beginning. How can faculty members be made to see that their role is not that of inferior -- but that it "is" different from that of the principal? Neither subservience nor the buddy=buddy alliance is the right one for the faculty-principal relationship. The teacher is in many ways in the superior position, if we must think in those

terms: the teacher is the Athena of the classroom, the channel through whom comes the wisdom of eternal things. The principal is the Zeus of the school (he may be an Athena to his faculty). We do not want teachers burdened with the multiplicity of problems the principal faces, some of them seemingly so trivial and yet all of them bearing upon the well being of the school. Perhaps the manner of the principal must convince his/her faculty that they are respected as the heart of the school; and that all the necessary regulations and restrictions -- the design that the school attempts to implement -- exist to further that learning that goes on in the classroom. But a principal that faces a faculty who will not cooperate is in difficulty. And for the time being the ongoing good of the enterprise is threatened. You have to learn to be effective persuaders.

Grob:

Socrates began with the image of the gadfly for his activity; he ends with the image of the midwife -- the one who enables others to examine their own lives, to give birth to understanding. Such an activity is the birth of all learning. Kierkegaard, more than two thousand years later, made the following comment: "Socrates entered into the role of midwife and sustained it throughout. not because his thought had no positive content, but because he perceived that this relation is the highest that one human being can sustain to another."

"For Plato, what distinguishes the ideal leader from his followers is the possession of wisdom, of an intellectual vision informing the principles of government." In the Republic, Plato declares, "until political greatness and wisdom meet in one, . . . cities will never have rest from their evils."