

Lecture Eleven - Beloved - What Leaders Can Do

The points I shall attempt to clarify this morning are so intertwined that it is difficult to say which thread to begin pulling. Testing, I suppose, is most nearly independent, so we might start out with a little theory of testing.

First, in order to be valid, the testing process must not have a noticeable effect (or an unpredictable effect) on the phenomenon being tested. (self-evident).

Testing is a sampling process. The samples must be selected at random from the entire array of possibilities.

Even on the basis of these two tenets alone, it is evident that most tests fail the validity check. Special coaching for a test or designing a curriculum for the purpose of doing well on the test obviates the evaluative possibilities of the test. While a sample test could familiarize the testee with the process legitimately if all testees are similarly exposed, special reviews can badly skew results. The only preparation that is both legitimate and effective is a thorough study of the subject that leads to understanding. It is best to disregard the prospect of the test -- to concentrate on the subject. The review is a good learning device; so is a test. But neither one should appear to be the point of a course. I suspect that if you check with principals that have had a marked increase in scores, you will discover that they have decided to cast their lot in with the joy of learning and have let testing be incidental.

Tests are good teaching devices when used as a kind of making. They should be fun, and indeed good students enjoy them. But they must be incidents, not ends of a course.

The concept of learning should guide the curriculum, rather than the acquisition of information or skills. Yes, the skills are important components and yes, rote memorizing and drill have their place in skill perfection. Despite my wanting every child to grow up with a calculator, I consider the memorizing of the multiplication table to be indispensable. Why? Because of its role in estimation, an essential element of understanding. And a lack of understanding is a widespread impediment to students' acquiring the skills of arithmetic. Somewhere along the route which mathematics pursues, probably in the secondary schools, imagination breaks down, with the result that math becomes merely a skill and a chore, instead of an expression of understanding. The small leap of the imagination that calculus requires is too formidable and too unrewarding for most students to undertake -- because, somewhere down the line imagination was set aside in favor of immediate efficiency. The result has been widely bewailed in the engineering community -- a growing innumeracy of the American public. For me, the discomfort is not so much the fear of Japanese economic supremacy, serious though it may be, as it is alarm at the rent in our culture which a widening of the division between the numerate and the literate accomplishes.

Repair on the quantitative side is certainly one of the

current needs of American education, but it is not the one undertaken in this present Institute. Rather, something more basic is at hand -- which, as you might suppose, is the stimulation of learning to learn. If this action is, indeed, the fundamental tenet of education, then it seems to us at the Dallas Institute that the necessary ingredient is teachers who are themselves learners, who can learn from their own disciplines the appropriate mode of knowing which their particular disciplines represent. This is to say that there is something much more general about learning than any one skill involved, or, for that matter, any array of skills. Call it an attitude, if you like; or say that every act of learning effects a physical change in the brain; call it a transformation, as is done around here, wherein the soul (in an Aristotelian sense) is altered, is enlarged. I shall call it a "habit", implying thereby an unconscious generalization of experience that remains with a person and shapes his intuition of reality.

Such subjects as testing, estimating, memorization, imagination are topics for discussion with teachers. Your meetings with them should not be merely occasions of passing out instructions. They need to be intellectual encounters -- not formidable ones but some open exchanging of ideas. Teachers are your most valuable asset. Your appreciation of them must be expressed in many ways-- an outright statement rarely but a frequent exchange. What do they think about a certain idea? What ideas might they have?

A faculty must not be just a bunch of teachers that gossip together and complain. It must be a community centered around learning. It is your job to make it so. I don't know what arrangements you have for regular meetings, but I'm sure you have one. From time to time you need to give a more or less formal lecture; certainly one at the opening of school. Here is an occasion where you establish that you are not so much boss as leader. In the preface of the book we gave you, "Unbinding Prometheus" are a couple of pages on speech-making that might be helpful. (viii-ix) Be humorous if that's your style, but not trivial. You might try being grave. But either way, be earnest. Be somewhat possessive about the faculty, enough so to express affection. And mean it. That might be hard, but remember Hamlet's advice to his mother, "Assume a virtue if you have it not." Draw up into your imagination images of each teacher, one by one, and find in each something admirable. Try admiring them. It's a good exercise.

Building a good faculty is your chief responsibility. You can't teach the students; they do. So think of them as your emissaries, extending your benign presence, but doing so with their own particular style, capabilities, genius. You need to promote their genius by letting them instruct you. Nothing so increases your intellectual stature in their eyes as does your learning something from them.

Making the faculty into a corporate body requires some cooperative activity. Having a series of seminars purely for

intellectual enjoyment is the most obvious way. Choose some important text that does not belong to any one of them. You might be the moderator for the first session or the first series but appoint one of the teachers to lead the discussion each time. Remember that the purpose is for them to admire each other, not you. (That's a side benefit.) Of course I'm fantasizing here, as you need to do when thinking of next fall. Your own genius will let you solidify a fantasy into a plan that will unify the faculty by admiring each other. an admiration in which you share.

You recognize, I suppose, that I am working back around to that sacred class room business. Of course your teachers are not to be trusted to prepare, to present, to work hard. No one will work hard if they are not observed. You'd be a fool to think otherwise. Well, I suppose we're in this business to be that sort of fool. You really can't do much about their not being trustworthy. But you can rephrase the statement to: "I don't trust them." "That• you can do something about, if your'e willing to be a fool.

Trust is a thin gossamer veil that the sea nymph Ino gives to Odysseus, and the raft is already breaking up. You really have no choice, "if• you want to get to shore, if you want a good faculty, if you want your students to learn. You must respect your teachers. You show that respect by trusting them to do well what they are commissioned to do -- most dramatically by not invading their classrooms. And not letting others do so. The students will get the message right away; something serious is going on here, and I'm part of it. As it is, the signals say: your learning is the lowest ring on our totem pole; we've put some one we don't trust in charge of your learning,

Now, that's not the experience you have, is it? I just don't know what it's like. When you go in the classroom, you praise the teacher, admire the students, say something entertaining, and offer some helpful suggestions. And the teacher thanks you. Is that thanks hypocritical? No, the chains have become so familiar that they don't even rattle much anymore. But they most surely eliminate the magic from the classroom.

Juanita Nix came to me after Duane Imajulu's presentation yesterday, and said, "I see what you mean. If we might have teachers like that in our classrooms, we need to change our ways." Well, you do have teachers like that. They're just encrusted in bad habits and terrible constraints. Release those Ariels from their trees and your spirit will wing its way through your whole community.

Trust and respect are the bases of "governance from below", the only way an effective educational enterprise can be run. You support your teachers, not constrain them, just as the district supports and not constrains you. Remember, all the people in the hierarchy, in the Board, in the state agency, and in the legislature are of good-will. They want the same as you, that the schools turn out virtuous, well-educated students. Treasure to yourself the maxim that you cannot be held accountable for both process and results. And your responsibility is to results. The

superintendent has said improvement will come school by school, meaning through each of you individually.

Noncompetitive learning
Equality
The making of the faculty team
The continued inspiration of the faculty by the principal:
 Seminars
 the principal's addresses
Sense of mission
Constant reminder of what the central purpose is
In a technological age, we need to teach the humanities

The role of the principal - some practical advice:
Alistair Mant: The final words of "Ten Good Schools" make clear the chief characteristic of those schools generally agreed to be 'good' ones:

"The schools see themselves as places designed for learning . . . Emphasis is laid on consultation, team work and participation. but without exception the most important single factor in the success of these schools is the quality of leadership at the head. Without exception the heads have qualities of "imagination" and "vision", tempered by realism, which have enabled them to sum up not only their present situation but also attainable future goals. . . They appreciate the need for specific educational aims, both social and intellectual, and have the capacity to communicate them to staff, pupils and parents, to win their assent and to put their own policies into practice. Their sympathetic understanding of staff and pupils, their acceptability, good humor and sense, of proportion and their dedication to their task have won them the respect of parents, teachers and taught. . . though ready to take final responsibility, they have made power-sharing the keynote of their organization and administration."

authority, not power; responsibility, not accountability;
the ideal vs the "norm"; justice (right order), not legalism;
even-handedness, not egalitarianism; unity (with diversity) not
uniformity; transformation, not reform; imagination, not
innovation

Qualities of the leader: rulership, governance,
guardianship; the tyrant; leadership of an entourage: by
virtue, by reward, by force; magnanimity, not ambition (egotism);
judgment; avoidance of mediocrity; risk-taking; rule-breaking; taste;

Aristotle:

Household management attends more toward men than toward the acquisition of inanimate things; and to human excellence more than to the excellence of property that we call wealth; and to the virtue of freemen rather than to the virtue of slaves.\

Specifics:

Less emphasis on standardized testing. Less competition.

More teamwork; more emphasis on the community;

Elimination of Tracking

Intimidation of new teachers by excessive supervision: why not have them observe more experienced teachers?

Option plan: that would have a few winners at the academic peak, a few at the athletic and social peak, each with its choice of appropriate teachers and selected students, followed by successive tiers of less fortunate schools and less gifted students below, down to essentially reform schools at the bottom.

In any analysis of the technological age now before us, we must recognize that human beings cannot effectively separate thought and action--that, in fact such an attempt may effect a dangerous split in our consciousness. Techniques cannot without danger be separated from content; skills cannot be learned without thought and judgment.

Seminars with the faculty

Addresses to the faculty

Mission statement: not simply the official one, but one's own educational philosophy, growing out of the particular ethos of the school for which one is responsible -- that sense of your school's being a special enterprise for accomplishing the good..

Sara Lawrence Lightfoot, the impressive faculty member of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, commented to Bill Moyer, "Good schools have a sense of mission that kids and adults can all articulate. They have an identity. They have a character, a quality that's their own, that feels quite sturdy. They have a set of values. If you walk down the hall, kids will say, in their own language, "This is what this school is about. This is who we are." And adults will echo those same kinds of values. There is a kind of ideological stance that brings coherence to the school."

"In a good school" she continues, "there has to be in the teaching and learning both seriousness and playfulness going on most of the time. Good schools tend to be a chemistry of extraordinary teachers, relatively good teachers, and mediocre teachers....but there has to be this chemistry of wonderful people who are rewarded for being wonderful rather than denigrated for being wonderful, and of good people who continue to be good, and of relatively mediocre folks who are inspired or encouraged or supported in becoming better.

Schools:, she says. It's terribly important to recognize that there is a culture alive and throbbing in a school. It takes on the character and color and vitality of those who live inside, the students and teachers. When it doesn't have that kind of reflection of who's inside, then there something askew."

Any statement of mission should comprehend her message. You probably are required to make a formal mission statement; and this is a slightly different thing from that sense of mission of which I have been speaking -- which is communicated in all your

dealings with faculty and students -- and stems from your vision. Drawing up a mission "statement" is an opportunity for collegiality, for working intimately with the faculty and getting teachers involved in the purposes of the entire school. It ought not be an off-the-shelf item nor an imitation of some one else's, but be unique to your school. The statement should guide the faculty, govern your curriculum and your choice of textbooks. I know textbooks are a touchy item in public schools, what with state approved lists, district inventory controls, Board mandates, and public outcries. Officialdom quakes when the subject arises. But textbooks cannot be allowed to throttle learning nor hobble imagination, neither yours nor your faculty's. You may have to raise funds from your community and battle red tape, but the fight would be worth it if it unifies your faculty in a profound concern for learning.

Constant Awareness of Ultimate Purpose: The awareness of belonging to a grand enterprise is a necessary ingredient in a faculty and to each of its members. I would say that is an obligation that sits squarely on the Principal. You simply have to shrug off the feelings of pretentiousness this task entails. You do it in your own inimitable style, be it grave or witty, high or humble, but you do not trivialize it. It is serious business for you, for your faculty, your school, your city, and your civilization.

As you would expect, I would probably start out, "The mission of this school is To make lifelong-learners out of everyone who comes to it, faculty as well as students." But I would have to make clear that learning is not a gathering of information, not a collection of arcane ideas, biographical data, or other preparations for a quiz show. It is the construction of intellect. The meaning of that term requires some reflection. It is, of course, that structure in the mind that I said before was the business of education, but now with an architectural plan -- not a developers house built on speculation but one designed for the person, not merely for utility, not only for comfort, but as an expression of the self, an art piece that cannot be traded in on a better one but must be altered and expanded throughout life.%

In one of our rare times of repose, it would be well to draw up a credo that can serve to guide ones actions and set priorities -- and to get down to the bedrock of our convictions. Do we not, as educators, believe, first of all that

All students can learn.

All deserve a truly humane education -- not simply

"training" that would make them useful economically..

Teachers are the essential element in any school.

In their educative role, they see to it that the noblest and most permanent ideals of culture are made real to the student.

In their role as mentors, teachers awaken the student's own intuitive powers.

In establishing a relation between the self and the cosmos, imagination (which works along with reason) is the key to both education and learning.

Hard work and rigorous intellectual discipline are pathways to freedom for the imagination. But these have to be motivated by a sight of the goal.

Individual schools need their own particular character and goals.

Principals are the leaders of schools and therefore responsible for their quality and character.

Each of these points is worth discussing, but that can wait a bit. Implicitly we have been discussing them during the whole institute.

We need to remember a distinction the noted educator Jacques Barzun made when he said that Americans are long on intelligence but short on intellect. (His book *The House of Intellect* was an important influence on our early life, and I would still recommend it to you as a resource for your reflective moments.) His distinction: intelligence is that "know-how," that ingenuity, the sharpness, acuteness, that we consider to be important in problem-solving. Americans have, until fairly recently, cornered the market on this quality. But intellect, Barzun maintains, is a large web of thought, communal, shared by the thinkers in all civilizations: a realm in which one can dwell and be in contact with more wisdom, more depth than one could muster on one's own. In this realm of intellect, it is not important to measure how smart one is; one has only to take one's place in this realm of thought in order to be, like the souls in Dante's *Paradiso*, as close as any others to the source of truth and goodness. This realm of intellect is not competitive, whereas problem solving always ends up being so.

Moyers to Lightfoot:

If the president asked you how to solve the school crisis, what would you say?

I would ask him to focus on teaching and learning, on the essence of the enterprise rather than on how to restructure the institution. Somehow the American public has to get back to the great richness and mystery of learning, the playfulness and seriousness of learning, and how that can be nurtured in schools by teachers in the classroom. . . .etc.

The unfolding of expectations rather than an imposed plan is the accepted American manner of the peaceful pursuit of liberty and happiness for all. A hope must first be planted, allowed to flower into desire, be broadcast into expectation before action takes over. When patience is exhausted before

desire blooms, then the unfolding process can become explosive. Who then will pick up pieces, reshape hope, and begin the process again?

The rejection of tracking and the elimination of honors courses, practices long favored in my view of education, fit in well with the new sense of equality that we see all about us: and it is this equality that will rule the land beyond economics where love is an operative component of culture.

Diane Ravitch: Why shouldn't children read the fabulous Greek myths when learning about Greek history and culture? Education is debased when the curriculum is stripped of its content and when skills, free of any cultural, literary or historic context, are all that is taught."

Principals occupy the key role in educational reform. Although teachers are the actual purveyors of instruction, the valve that controls the flow is in the hands of the Principal.

We want our students to be able to work together and boost each other toward excellence. The give and take of real learning -- the exchange, something we might call the dialogical imagination -- is an essential if people are to acquire their true identity and achieve their highest purposes.

1.1 Repressive control of a faculty may be necessary if rebellion and revolt are in action, but long-lasting reform cannot come about in such an environment. THE TEACHER MUST BE RELEASED TO HIS OWN GENIUS . He must be protected, comforted, guided, inspired.

1.11 Protected from what? From the apparatus, from regulations, from accountability. It is up to the Principal to understand regulations thoroughly, seeing what the real intention is behind any regulation. Trust it. Something good was intended to come about because of the regulation. That intention must be recognized and satisfied. This responsibility cannot be passed on to the teacher. To do so is to allow an unwarranted invasion of the Principal's authority. The teacher cannot be distracted by paperwork that does not contribute to his teaching. The Principal must understand, interpret, inform, consult and respond. Similarly for accountability. This one action on the part of the Principal can undo most of the harm that the Perot reforms have brought about.

1.2 The Principal must make a faculty out of his disparate set of prima donnas, the teachers. It must become a coherent body, its members respecting one another, joined in a uniform purpose. That purpose is learning, not only learning by students but also by every faculty member. This ongoing concern provides the dynamics, the vitality, that elevates the faculty and excites its members into being better teachers than they knew they could be. I suggest frequent, though not routine, faculty meetings at which the Principal makes some trenchant remarks and some designated faculty member contributes a short account of some

current thinking in his discipline -- not about methods but about intellectual content. It is in this manner that the community of the school comes into existence. In this manner, too, the authority of the principal is confirmed.

1.3 What gives a Principal authority? Appointment, of course, gives power. And power can get things done, rightly or wrongly. But authority is not so simply attained. It arises from a profound understanding of the fundamental purposes of the enterprise underway, so pervasive as to seem intuitive. Decisions, actions, leadership issue from the character of the person with authority.

2.0 The purpose of the enterprise. (See Curneed2.PRN)
The power of learning; other aspects are subordinatr. etc.

3.0 Administration involves a multitude of responsibilities, great and small. All of them are intended to serve the central purpose of the enterprise.

Non-Competitive Learning: Elitism has other expressions in education. We need to run a motivation-to-learn audit to see if the stimulation of the few provided by honor societies, contests, and prizes outdoes the disheartenment of the many who won't even try. We are an aggressive society quite convinced that every one loves a fight, every one loves to compete. In truth, only the top few do, only the select who might win. The others accept their role as second-class students and take no joy in having it confirmed. Competition just may not be the best motivation for learning.

We understand the epic tradition and place ourselves easily in the genre. We want our young people to grow up with courage, honor, magnanimity, and too we want them to hold a stiff upper lip, be gallant in defeat, and be a gracious loser. But learning is of a different genre entirely. You know by now it is comic, in that it seeks a happy ending in a general concordance of joy. The comic hero is an efficator, one who seeks to eliminate differences, to avoid competitions (except when absolutely necessary), to bring together opposites, and initiate the celebration of harmony. He is an Odysseus and not an Achilles. Of course Odysseus can get rough in a crisis, but what most distinguishes him is the skill, the tact, the courage, the imagination, the endurance, the patience, the resourcefulness, the love that must be called upon if Odysseus is ever to be able to "go home" again.

What I say here may not fit your own style of administering. You must respect your style. It may be that you make good use of competition, that you are highly effective in pitting one person against another in such a genial way that all achieve excellence. If so, I would not urge you to change. You know what works, and you have been well advised by many experts on management techniques. I do suggest, however, that you look carefully at faculty morale, and at how they reflect your style in their own.

I confess that I worry about experts. Few people, in or out

of academia, comprehend the nature of the teaching enterprise and, if given an opportunity, would interfere with it, seeking to improve its efficiency. Most people, including legislators and board members, tend to see it as an industry, responsive to the same motivational incentives as salesmen or factory workers-- bonuses, contests, prizes, merit raises,-- or, on the negative side, the power tools of evaluations, demerits, reprimands. Honor, where it is due, is a worthy prize, but I have never known a professor to teach better because of a monetary incentive. (This subject is explored rather thoroughly by Thomas Popkewitz and Kathryn Lind in the recent summer issue of the Columbia "Teachers College Record".) Further, such incentives are poor morale builders, stimulating, as for students, a few but disenchanting the many. And I've never seen an evaluation device not subject to capture by the good old boys.

Actually, good teaching is a communal activity, the whole faculty interacting; so, too, is learning in the classroom. Quite generally, learning is a non competitive sport. These two aspects of learning -- communality and non-competitiveness -- are difficult for an aggressive society to accept. We ourselves might reflect on it from time to time.

Any development of non-competitive learning should be undertaken only for the enhancement of instruction and the quality of learning. The comfort of student or instructor, the reduction of stress, is not sufficient reason in itself to introduce it. Tests, for example, are stressful but may be necessary. Still, the measurement of an ability to take tests may hardly be the best way to evaluate people. When tests are conceived of as learning devices, they are most commendable; but when used as accountability reports, they are destructive of the teacher's authority.

. . . . government by the aristoi that characterized Greek society: the best, those most excelling in virtue and nobility. This concept lay at the very foundation of our nation: Thomas Jefferson spoke of a "natural aristocracy of virtue -- that would rise like cream to the top." Perhaps we can no longer use this as our ideal -- though we should examine its implications seriously: this concept of "the best" -- not by inheritance nor by measurement, not by popularity or wealth -- seems innate in our way of viewing life. To recognize an outstanding ball player or a singer is not elitism; similarly, we need to have an education in which the "talented and gifted" are among all the others, with the entire group benefiting from and rejoicing in their special abilities.

The Greeks had another term, with which we are familiar, for excellence: arete. And each hero had his own arete, his own perfection of potentiality, never exactly like any other's yet all fitting into a code of heroes, all co-existing in mutual respect. Each person and thing, each existent object, has its arete; and the excellence of different persons and things makes up a world of far greater interest and variety. All these remarks are meant to imply, not a lowering of standards, but

their elevation.

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